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A Resource-Oriented Investigation into the Community College Matriculation and Persistence of U.S.-Educated English Language Learners

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A Resource-Oriented Investigation into the Community

College Matriculation and Persistence of U.S.-Educated English Language Learners

by

Naomi Mardock Uman

A DISSERTATION

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Under the Supervision of Professor Deryl K. Hatch-Tocaimaza

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A Resource-Oriented Investigation into the Community

College Matriculation and Persistence of U.S.-Educated English Language Learners

Naomi Mardock Uman, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2018

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The purpose of this qualitative single case study with embedded units of analysis was to provide evidence of the personal, institutional, and community resources leveraged by U.S.-educated English language learners (US-ELLs) to matriculate and persist at community colleges and of how their educational experiences were shaped by community college policies and practices. By considering the experiences of multiple students through in-depth interviews and drawing on additional insight provided by interviews with institutional agents, this resource-oriented investigation into US-ELLs' matriculation and persistence was designed to counter the prevailing deficit orientation that may limit educational opportunity for US-ELLs at community colleges. The study was guided by the following questions: 1) What resources do US-ELLs describe drawing on to matriculate, navigate through ESL and basic writing courses, and successfully complete a first-level college composition course at a community college? 2) How did students leverage these resources to expand their educational opportunities at a community college? 3) How did community college policies and practices for US-ELLs shape these students' matriculation and course-taking experiences? Participants included seven US-ELLs who were enrolled in a large public community college in the Midwest and 11 faculty and professional staff members who worked with US-ELLs at that

community college. Data was collected at the individual level through two interviews with each student participant and at the institutional level through interviews with the faculty and professional staff and through document review. This study found that three types of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth were most salient for the student participants in this study: aspirational, linguistic and social capital. However, the ways in which US-ELLs leveraged these resources to support their community college matriculation and persistence was influenced by the institutional policies and practices they experienced in the course of matriculation and persistence. Community college policies and practices towards ELLs, specifically those surrounding assessment and placement and ESL course content, materials, and instructional methods, may be limiting the educational opportunities of US-ELLs.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Community colleges serve a highly diverse population of nonnative speakers of English from a wide variety of language learning and academic backgrounds. Those students considered English language learners (ELLs) at community colleges may include international students, temporarily in the U.S. for educational purposes; resident students educated wholly or partly in the U.S; adult resident immigrants with high school or college degrees from outside the U.S.; and refugees whose primary and/or secondary schooling was interrupted by war and/or forced migration (Blumenthal, 2002; Bunch & Panayotova, 2008; Ferris, 2009). Some students' backgrounds include experiences characteristic of more than one of these groups. While this diversity is a hallmark of the ELLs served by community college English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, the placement practices, course and program curricula and materials, and pedagogies that students encounter there are likely "one-size-fits-all" (Ferris, 2009), designed for the strengths and language and culture learning needs of international students or relatively newly-arrived adult immigrants (Bunch & Panayotova; 2009; Evans & Andrade, 2015; Nero, 2005; Roberge, 2009). As a result, community college ESL and English departments have struggled to effectively assess, place, and teach resident language minority (LM)[1] students, particularly ELLs who come to the community college after graduating from U.S. high schools (Ferris, 2009; Gawienowski & Holper, 2006). Yet

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[1] The term *language minority (LM)* is a broad term used in the United States to describe students who speak a language other than English at home (Flores & Drake, 2014), while *English (language) learner (EL* or *ELL)* refers to students within the LM population who are in the process of acquiring English (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). The terms associated with students from non-English language dominant backgrounds are defined in a later section of this chapter.

these U.S.-educated English language learners (US-ELLs) make up a growing, if frequently overlooked, proportion of ELLs in community colleges (Núñez, Rios-Aguilar, Kanno, & Flores, 2016).

Background of the Study

Students from LM backgrounds are one of the fastest growing subgroups in U.S. K-12 schools, comprising around a fifth of this student population (Kanno & Harklau, 2012)., Nearly half of LM students are in the process of learning English as an additional language: ELLs accounted for 9.3% of U.S. public school students in 2013-2104 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). While the public school graduation rate for ELLs (62.6%) is lower than that of the national average for all students (82.3%), the graduation rate for ELLs increased more quickly (up 5.6%) than the national average (up 3.3%) between 2011 and 2014, a trend that is projected to continue (U.S. Department of Education Office of English Acquisition, 2016). If college-going trends continue, an increase in high school graduation rates for ELLs is expected to lead to increased college enrollment for ELLs overall (Kanno & Cromley, 2013), especially in community colleges, where LM students, particularly those who are not considered English proficient (ELLs), tend to enroll (Núñez et al., 2016). There are concerns, however, about how well postsecondary institutions are serving this growing number of US-ELLs. Previous research has found that US-ELLs lag behind both monolingual English speakers and English-proficient LM students in attending college and earning postsecondary credits and bachelor's degrees (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). The disparity was smaller, but still significant, for certificates and associate's degrees (Núñez et al., 2016; Núñez & Sparks, 2012; Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009).

One focus of studies that seek explanations for the lower rates of college access and success of US-ELLs has been their college preparatory experiences while in U.S. high schools. Secondary classification as an ELL, and the accompanying placement into ESL courses, can impact students' preparation for college by limiting opportunities to take advanced coursework and exposure to other college preparatory resources such as college counseling and assistance with financial aid (Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010; Carlson & Knowles, 2016). When ESL courses feed directly into remedial level coursework, access to advanced classes may be limited even for students reclassified by their high schools as English proficient. If ELLs graduate from high school without having taken the advanced coursework that would prepare them for entrance into four-year colleges or universities, open-enrollment community colleges may be the only route to postsecondary education available to them (Salas, Portes, D'Amico, & Rios-Aguilar, 2011). Depending on the length of time they have lived in the U.S. and other factors, ELLs may be proficient in spoken English yet in the process of developing academic language proficiency, particularly in reading, writing and study skills (Ferris, 2009; Lambert, 2015) when they matriculate.

Once in community college, US-ELLs face a wide variety of challenges that the higher education literatures has tended to present in ways that reinforce perceptions that frame US-ELLs in community colleges as deficient academically and linguistically. For instance, the descriptions of their language proficiency have typically focused on the disparity between oral and written language use. Blumenthal (2002) described US-ELLs' spoken language as "smooth and effortless" (p. 49), and Gawienowski and Holper (2006) asserted that "they certainly speak English with only slight accents" (p. 118). But both

articles also mention fossilized and non-idiomatic language structures that appeared in the spoken language of US-ELLs. Blumenthal (2002) wrote that their "academic skills, including reading, writing, critical thinking, and general knowledge, are often weak" (p. 50). A similarly dim view of the state of US-ELLs' language production and academic preparation be found in literature on their participation in college composition courses; for example, in the description of students as " 'dual nonnative speakers' because they are not fully proficient in either their L1 or L2-English" (Singhal, 2004, p. 2). While some instructors interviewed by Bunch et al. (2011) recognized the strengths and resources available to LM students, "others emphasized how these students' language deviated from monolingual norms or how they lacked the kinds of backgrounds and experiences common among students from more dominant groups" (p. x). The relative social and cultural ease of the U.S.-educated students in community college classrooms may also be perceived negatively, for example as being uncooperative and rude in contrast to the common perception of typical ESL students as compliant and grateful (Harklau, 2000). Perceptions such as these held by community college ESL and English teachers and TESOL authors have contributed to a perspective that frames US-ELLs in community colleges as deficient academically and linguistically.

Moreover, the research on LM students at community colleges, including US-ELLs, greatly oversimplifies their diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds (Blumenthal, 2002). In practice, too, assessment testing processes and the available program options of ESL and basic writing or developmental-level courses rarely account for this diversity (Bunch & Panayotova, 2008). Assessment testing practices are typically designed based on a simplistic dichotomous native / nonnative English speaker construct

that does not account for biculturalism or bilingualism, despite the lack of evidence of the validity of commonly used ESL assessment tests or the appropriateness of traditional ESL placement for bilingual students (Blumenthal, 2002; Harklau, 2000; Harklau, Losey, and Siegal, 1999; Salas, et al., 2011). Because there is no evidence that the standardized ESL and English placement tests in use were normed with students of similar language learning backgrounds, there is concern that they do not accurately reflect the language use abilities of US-educated LM students, potentially resulting in inappropriate placements for US-ELLs (Llosa & Bunch, 2011). Further, the ESL, developmental writing, and college English composition courses that comprise the typical placement options for community colleges were, in most cases, designed for the strengths and needs of adult ESL students and international students or monolingual English speakers (Nero, 2005; Patthey, Thomas-Speigel, & Dillon, 2009; Roberge, 2009). US-ELLs are ill-served by these approaches. To compound these placement issues, instructors and staff may be unaware of the differences in the language learning and academic backgrounds of US-ELLs compared to other LM groups and be uncertain of which placement tests or course options are most appropriate (Bunch et al., 2011).

The simplistic and common notion of there being only native or non-native English speakers, combined with a wide-spread deficit-perspective of US-ELLs, has created detrimental circumstances for the large and growing number of US-ELLs in community colleges, including a lack of information for making informed choices about placement testing and placement options during the matriculation process (Bunch & Endris, 2012); inappropriate course placements (Bunch & Panayotova, 2009; Salas et al., 2011); potentially unaddressed language learning needs (Hodara, 2015); extended

educational pathways; isolation and marginalization (Salas, et al., 2011); and resentment and resistance toward ESL courses (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008).

The negative impact of these circumstances on educational outcomes of US-ELLs in the higher education has received some attention in the higher education research literature. The length of the ESL and developmental sequence has been associated with negative effects on persistence to college-level coursework (Hodara, 2015; Patthey-Chavez, Dillon, & Thomas-Spiegel, 2005). Several recent studies have asserted that the marginalization of LM students from college-level (post-remedial) courses has an overall detrimental effect on their educational attainment (Benesch, 2008; Razfar & Simon, 2011; Salas, et al. 2011). When community college programs and practices have the result of excluding US-ELLs from coursework that fulfills degree requirement, they limit these students' access to the opportunity structures provided by higher education (Salas et al., 2011). However, without a better understanding of how US-ELLs experience these community college programs and practices, researchers and practitioners will be limited in the steps they can take to address their impact on higher education outcomes for this population.

Statement of the Problem

US-ELLs' "complex and overlapping racial, ethnic, and linguistic identities" (Benesch, 2008, p. 295) challenge the commonly held notions of simple binaries (native speaker/nonnative speaker, native born/recent immigrant, first generation/second generation, monolingual/balanced bilingual [Nero, 2005]) that community college assessment testing and instructional practices are based on. As a result, US-ELLs' position both in community colleges and in the higher education literature is

characterized by a pervasive sense of being in-between, of being neither/nor, that manifests as a view of ELLs as academically, linguistically, and even culturally deficient (Benesch, 2008; Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015; Harklau, 2000; Salas, et al., 2011).

To counteract these simplistic, dualist notions that have resulted in the pervasive characterization of US-ELLs in community colleges as deficient and led to an environment that may be limiting their educational opportunities, a more nuanced understanding of US-ELLs and their experiences in these institutions is called for. Previous research has already identified a number of resources potentially available for multilingual students such as the ability to move between various cultural contexts, a strong sense optimism and motivation to be successful, and the cognitive benefits of bi- or multilingualism, among others (Núñez et al., 2016). In fact, multilingualism with English proficiency has actually been associated with higher levels of postsecondary access (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). But just how US-ELLs, who may not yet be proficient in academic English, draw on and make sense of their multilingual capabilities is not well explored.

In addition to the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism, higher education researchers have also begun constructing a picture of the sources of motivation and support, overlooked by deficit-orientations, that US-ELLs may draw to increase their educational opportunities such as student agency (Varghese, 2012; Fuentes, 2012), self-efficacy, and supportive elements from among families, communities, and the institution (Harklau & McClanahan, 2012; Oropeza, Varghese, & Kanno, 2010). These resource-oriented studies have contributed important nuance to our understanding of US-ELLs in higher education. However, these studies have largely been conducted with university

students, so we do not know whether US-ELLs who attend community colleges differ in their access to and operationalization of these resources. In particular, it stands to reason that the prominent placement testing and often extended ESL and developmental education sequences, which are largely based on the simplistic and problematic native/nonnative speaker binary, and which US-ELLs experience in due course of simply seeking to enroll, impact the ways in which US-ELLs are able to leverage their strengths and resources. Nevertheless, the question of how these systems of the community college environment mediate the ways in which US-ELLs are able to exploit their resources remains unexplored.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to provide evidence of the personal, institutional, and community resources leveraged by US-ELLs to matriculate and persist at community colleges and of how their educational experiences are shaped by community college policies and practices. By considering the experiences of multiple students through in-depth interviews and drawing on additional insight provided by interviews with institutional agents, a clearer understanding of the US-ELLs' experiences at community colleges will emerge. Ultimately, this resource-oriented investigation into US-ELLs' matriculation and persistence is designed to counter the prevailing deficit orientation that may limit educational opportunity for US-ELLs at community colleges.

The following questions guided this research:

1. a. What resources do US-ELLs describe drawing on to matriculate, navigate through ESL and basic writing courses, and successfully complete a first-level college composition course at a community college?

b. How did students leverage these resources to expand their educational

opportunities at a community college?

2. How did community college policies and practices for US-ELLs shape these

students' matriculation and course-taking experiences?

Definition of Terms

The terms used to describe and categorize students who learned English as an

additional language and the programs that were designed to serve their language learning

needs vary in definition, connotation, contemporariness, and by education sector (Núñez

et al. 2016). In the K-12 system, terms derive from state and federal policy on the

provision of English language services; there are no equivalent policies on services for

this population in the postsecondary education.

- *Linguistic minority (LM)*, *language minority, language minority student, non-English background students*: Student who speaks a language(s) other than English at home; typically, but not always, understood as a student who has attended U.S. K-12 schools. While these terms are most often used in the literature to refer to students who began their education in the U.S. in middle or high school rather than those who immigrated to the U.S. as adults, this is not always the case. In addition, these designations provide no indication of English proficiency and may include students who consider English to be their dominate or native language (Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010).

- *English learner (EL)*, *English language learner (ELL), Limited English Proficient (LEP)*: Institutional designations for a linguistic minority student who is considered not proficient in English and in need of English language support

services; typically, but not always, understood as a student who has attended U.S. K-12 schools.

- *U.S.-educated linguistic minority (US-LM), U.S.-educated English (language) learner (US-ELL or EL)*: LM or ELL who has attended U.S. K-12 schools; used in higher education. US-ELL is the term that I employ throughout the study to designate the population of interest. While there are issues inherent in this label, I adopt it to indicate that the participants in this study graduated from a U.S. high school and were placed into one or more ESL courses upon entering community college. Thus, the term is an institutional designation rather than a description of English or bilingual proficiency.

- *English proficient (EP):* An institutional re-classification label for an ELL who is no longer considered in need of English language support services.

- *Emergent bilingual* (Garcia, 2009*):* Proposed as a term that positions language proficiency as a spectrum in place of the dichotomous categories of ELL and EP and reframes developing language skills as a resource rather than a deficiency. While this term is congruent with the conceptual framework of this project, I do not adopt this term for the study because I am not considering the linguistic proficiency of students per se.

- *Generation 1.5 student:* A student who was born outside of the United States and immigrated as a child or adolescent, therefore completing some or even all of K-12 schooling in the U.S. (Hirschman, 2016; Kanno & Harklau, 2012); used to distinguish this group from *first generation* and *second generation* immigrants. The term is not in itself a descriptor of language proficiency, but because the vast

majority of immigrants to the U.S. originate from non-English-language-dominant countries (Rumbaut & Massey, 2013), the terminology of immigrant generation is also sometimes used in the literature on English learners, particularly in postsecondary education. In research of postsecondary contexts, the term is often used to differentiate linguistic minority students who attended K-12 schools from those who immigrated as adults or who were admitted to the U.S. with an international student visa; the term therefore often overlaps conceptually with terms referring to non-English language background or English learner status. Ferris (2009) divides the group referred to by the label *generation 1.5* into two categories by the timing of their arrival in the United States: *late arriving resident students* (arriving after age ten and less than eight years ago) and *early arriving resident students* (arriving before age ten and more than eight years ago).

- *First generation college student:* To avoid confusion, I note here that in the higher education literature this term describes college students who parents had no experience in higher education; the term is not related to immigrant generation or linguistic minority background.

- *English as Second Language (ESL):* Refers to programs, both K-12 and postsecondary, designed to provide instruction in English for ELLs.

- *International students*: A student in the U.S. on a nonimmigrant, temporary visa for the purpose of attending an academic or vocational institution (Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. State Department, n.d.). In higher education settings, the term is sometimes used colloquially, but inaccurately, to refer to LM or ELL students.

Research Approach

This study employed an *embedded case study* design (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009) to examine resources for matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs in the context of one community college, Arbor Bridge Community College (ABCC), a pseudonym. Case studies, which "investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" are especially appropriate "when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The primary unit of analysis, or case, for this study was the ABCC's ELL-specific policies and practices encountered by students during matriculation and through persistence to a college-level composition course. The activities and experiences (Stake, 2006) of matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs -- as shaped in part by these policies and practices -- constituted the phenomenon of study. Embedded within this case were smaller units of analysis, US-ELL students themselves. The case and embedded units of analysis are further defined in the section that follows.

Definition of Case

The ELL-specific policies and practices at ABCC constituted the case in this study. Distinct from single case study where, for instance, the entire institution or one of its organizational units constitutes the case, or a multiple case study of two or more individuals, the case in this study was defined by drawing a boundary around the policies and practices at ABCC that were designed for ELLs specifically. The policies and practices towards a particular group can be seen as enactments of the institution's perspectives or beliefs about the particular group of students for which they are designed. Naturally, many practices and policies flow from particular programs. But here the case

is not drawn around any program per se, including what might be identified as ABCC's ESL program, since programs of all sorts may contribute in various ways to practice and policies that affect US-ELLs. For example, some programmatic elements, such as ESL and developmental writing curricula and materials, can also be seen as enactments of institutional perspectives toward ELLs and shape US-ELLs' activities and experiences of matriculation and persistence; however, the ESL or developmental writing programs are not considered in their entirety for the purposes of this study.

Defining the case as the policies and practices designed for ELLs necessarily excluded numerous other policies and practices that may impact US-ELLs' experiences. Certainly, in the course of matriculation and persistence, US-ELLs will encounter policies and practices *not* designed for ELLs in particular but for all students, such as registration deadlines, financial aid policies, and general advising practices, for example. However, for the purposes of this study, these policies and practices are considered outside of the bounds of this case even though they surely shape US-ELLs students' matriculation and persistence. This is because the phenomenon of interest in this study is not matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs in general but the matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs as shaped by the policies and practices designed for ELLs in general – a group that US-ELLs may have little in common with yet are subject to the same policies and practices as.

Embedded units of analysis. Within this case, there are embedded units of analysis, or *mini-cases* (Stake, 2006): the US-ELLs themselves, whose experiences are shaped both by the resources they bring to bear toward matriculation and persistence and by the policies and practices designed for ELLs. College matriculation and persistence is

a complex process, involving not only students but their families, peer groups, and other relationships including those with faculty and staff and other campus entities, enacted both within and outside the institutional context, which itself effects students' opportunities and experiences (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt & Moll, 2011). An embedded case study design allows for the exploration of the phenomenon under investigation, or the quintain (Stake, 2006), at the level of case, here, the ELL-specific institutional policies and practices; at the level of the embedded units of analysis, the student participants who experiences these programs and processes; and as a phenomenon in its own right. In this study, each embedded unit of analysis each student participant, illuminated specific resources which risked being overlooked were a single holistic case study design employed.

Theoretical Framework

To conduct the study and frame the analysis, I relied on two theories to highlight the knowledge, support, and other resources available to students through their families, peers, and their wider communities and to situate student identity and community college persistence and matriculation within the institutional contexts: community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and intersectionality for higher education research (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). The broad, inter-related categories of resources identified within the community cultural wealth framework offered clear starting points for data collection and analysis while still providing space for concepts to expand the categories. I drew on the conceptual model of intersectionality for higher education research to sensitize my analysis to the ways in which intersecting identities such as immigration status, race, gender, and religion,

among others, might have influenced the experiences of participants and to situate

participants within institutional and broader contexts.

Delimitations

Several delimitations bound the scope of this study. The first is the use of the

public community college as the institutional context of interest to the exclusion of other

types of higher education institutions, such as public or private four-year college or

universities or private junior colleges or trade schools. Linguistic minority students,

especially English learners, attend community colleges more than other types of

institutions (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009), making community colleges a natural place to

turn to better understand their experiences seeking postsecondary education. For US-

ELLs in particular, open-enrollment community colleges often serve as the access point

for higher education (Kanno & Varghese, 2010) if they lack the college preparatory

coursework required by four-year colleges and universities for admission (Callahan,

Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010). US-ELLs who are prepared for admission to a four-year

institution may also choose to enroll in a community college because of a lack of

confidence in their academic abilities coupled with low expectations and attendant lack of

support on the part of high school staff (Callahan & Humphries, 2016). In fact, of all

college-ready high school graduates, college-ready US-ELLs are most likely to enroll in

community colleges. Finally, US-ELLs who begin their postsecondary education at a

four-year college or university are just as likely to complete as English proficient LM

students and English majority students (Hirschman, 2016), an indication that the

community college context itself warrants attention.

I have defined the population of interest as graduates of U.S. high schools who are placed into ESL courses (US-ELLs) at the community college, even though community colleges serve a diverse population of linguistic minority and multilingual students, many of whom do not enroll in ESL courses there. There are several reasons for focusing on students with lower levels of English proficiency. First, US-ELLs are overrepresented among U.S. high school graduates who earn no postsecondary credentials (Kanno & Cromley, 2013); therefore, better understanding the experiences of students from this group who do, in fact, matriculate and persist is an important step in addressing the difficulties US-ELLs face in earning college credit. Additionally, previous research has found that linguistic minority students who graduate high school as English proficient have patterns of access and attainment in higher education that more closely match that of monolingual English speakers than US-ELLs, so it makes sense to investigate entering community college at a lower level of English proficiency as a factor in postsecondary outcomes (Núñez et al., 2016).

US-ELLs' overrepresentation among high school graduates who earn no postsecondary credentials (Kanno & Cromley, 2013) is also the reason for this study's focus on matriculation and persistence through the first-level of college composition rather than on longer-term outcomes such as an associate's degree or successful transfer. The fact that fewer US-ELLs are earning any credits indicates that access and, potentially, matriculation are areas of difficulty for students.

Finally, while I do not discount the significant economic, linguistic, and other barriers that US-ELLs face in pursing postsecondary education, the theoretical frameworks used in this study created an additional delimitation of sorts in that all

aspects of the study were sensitized to resources rather than deficits, as way of countering the prevailing deficit-oriented framework that predominates in the literature (Benesch, 2008; Núñez et al., 2016).

Significance of the Study

This study responded directly to Salas et al.'s (2011) call for inquiry into "the sources of information that guide [US-ELLs] through the high-school-to-postsecondary transition phase and within the community college setting" (p. 129) and sheds light on the "unmeasured motivational or cultural characteristics" (Kanno & Cromley, 2013, p. 125) leveraged by US-ELLs which advance our understanding of these students' experiences in community college beyond those perspectives that cast US-ELLs as linguistically and academically deficient. Practitioners, researchers and policy makers can draw upon this study's findings in designing instructional practices, institutional policies, and research studies that build on these resources to expand rather than limit educational opportunities for US-ELLs.

Organization of the Study

The presentation of this study is organized into five additional chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature to develop the picture of what we know about the experiences of US-ELLs' transition to and progress through community colleges, and how researchers have approached inquiry in this area. To fill in the gaps in the literature where studies have not been conducted at community colleges or with US-ELLs in particular, the literature on issues related to matriculation and persistence for other minoritized populations and in other contexts is also briefly considered.

Following the review of the literature, Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study including the research paradigm, theoretical frameworks, site and participant selection, methods for data collection and analysis, and presentation of findings. Using findings from the document review and interviews with institutional agents and student participants, Chapter 4 provides descriptions of the institutional context, a detailed description of the policies and practices that constitute the case and that also provide the context for understanding the student experiences that serve as embedded units of analysis within the case. Case findings are presented in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 offers discussion and implications.

CHAPTER 2: Review of Literature

The increase in the numbers of students from language minority (LM) backgrounds in U.S. K-12 schools exceeds the growth of any other subgroup of students (Kanno & Harklau, 2012), and the increase in the high school graduation rate of English language learners (ELLs), a subgroup of LM students who have been identified as non-English proficient, has now outpaced the overall high school graduation rate in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education Office of English Acquisition, 2016). This is expected to lead to increased LM student enrollment in higher education (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). While students from LM backgrounds comprise a highly diverse population with significant overlap with other minoritized and underserved populations in higher education such as Hispanic (nearly 80% of ELLs in K-12) and Asian students, students who are the first in their families to attend college, and students from poor families (Núñez et al., 2016). LM status, especially if also ELL, is a distinguishing feature for students in that both English proficiency and the ELL label itself have been shown to impact postsecondary access and attainment (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Núñez et al., 2016).

Students from immigrant backgrounds are more likely to enroll in community colleges (Hirschman, 2016). These institutions represent an important route to postsecondary education for U.S.-educated ELLs (US-ELLs) in particular (Bunch, 2009); in fact, for many US-ELLs, these institution are the only available option (Salas et al., 2011). Given the numbers of ELLs currently enrolled in K-12 schools in the U.S., research into postsecondary access and attainment through the community college needs

to take into account the potentially distinct ways in which this group of students experience these institutions.

I begin this review of literature with an overview of the fields and areas of interest within those fields that have included US-ELLs as subjects of research to show that US-ELLs have frequently been overlooked or marginalized in the research literature (Matusda & Matsuda, 2009), in spite of the long-term presence and current growth of the US-ELL population in colleges and universities. US-ELLs have not occupied a central role in the literature on student success in community colleges or in higher education in general, but where they have been the focus of research, it was most often related to their language development in college composition courses. More recently, however, researchers have examined how ELL status influences higher education outcomes, starting with access to college preparatory course work, which in turn affects postsecondary access and enrollment patterns and other college experiences. Thus, studies on the influences of ELL status on these areas are reviewed in the second main section of this chapter.

In the third section of this chapter, I describe the community college assessment and placement practices and course options available to US-ELLs. In addition, I review research into the effects of the various course options on persistence and college student identity. US-ELLs have been cast as linguistically and academically deficient, both in practitioners' viewpoints represented in the literature and even at times in the approach taken by researchers. Thus, in the fourth main section of this chapter, I review arguments by a number of scholars who have asserted that this deficit perspective has grown out of conflict between the characteristics of US-ELLs' emerging bilingualism and higher

education's institutional structures (policies, practices, programs) that reflect a prevailing monolingual ideology. This is significant because structures rooted in deficit-thinking can limit educational opportunities (Valencia, 2010). A number of higher education scholars have sought to identify the resources utilized by US-ELLs to navigate through these structures and increase their own educational opportunities and there have been calls for additional research on US-ELLs college-going to be conducted from a resource-oriented perspective (e.g. Harklau and McClanahan, 2012). The fifth body of research reviewed in this chapter addresses what is known about the resources drawn on by US-ELLs in higher education as a counter to deficit-oriented perspectives.

The final two sections address frameworks for studying higher education access and attainment of minoritized groups, such as US-ELLS. The first identifies the limitations of capital frameworks to study higher education outcomes for this group of students. Frameworks utilizing Bourdieuean conceptualizations of capital have been utilized to study access and attainment of US-LM and ELL students, but have been shown to be less predictive for US-ELLs' than for monolingual English speakers (Kanno & Cromley, 2012; Kanno & Cromley, 2015; Núñez & Sparks, 2012). Scholars have proposed alternative frameworks that seek to identify resources overlooked by the conventional capital framework and others that have tended to cast minoritized populations as culturally deficit, and two of these are described in the final section of this chapter. To frame the study conceptually, I draw on one of these, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), along with an additional framework to situate students' multiple identities within the power dynamics of the institution in order to draw attention to the

ways in which the institution itself is responsible for the educational inequities experienced by some groups.

The Marginalization of U.S.-Educated English Language Learners in Higher Education and in Research

Generation 1.5: "In the Interstices"

US-ELLs typically immigrated as children or adolescents. To distinguish these students from first-generation immigrants (those who arrived in the U.S. as adults) and second generation (the U.S.-born children of first-generation immigrants), the term *generation 1.5 (*Benesch, 2008) has been frequently employed by practitioners and researchers. Since its coining in 1998 by Rumbaut & Ima (1998) in their report on the cultural adaptation of young Southeast Asian refugees in the San Diego area, the term generation 1.5 has been used in education research to refer to English learners in U.S. high schools and in colleges, but it primarily has served as a reference to *how* and *where* students learned English (as ELLs in U.S. K-12 schools) rather than their level of English proficiency. These are "students born outside the United States who received part, or most, of their formal education in the United States" (Benesch, 2008, p. 294). Gawienowski and Holper (2006) described this population as consisting of students whose primary or secondary education was "interrupted" (p. 117) by their families' immigration to the U.S. Blumenthal (2002) defines generation 1.5 in higher education students as "U.S.-educated ESL students" (p. 49).

While acknowledging the cultural and socioeconomic diversity within the group they studied, in comparing the youth in their study to first and second generation immigrants, Rumbaut & Ima (1998) observed that

They are in many ways marginal to both the new and old worlds, for while they straddle both worlds they are in some profound sense fully part of neither of them… They generally share a common psychohistorical location in terms of their age and their migration status/role, and in terms of developing bicultural strategies of response and adjustment to that unique position which they occupy as "1.5'ers"--in the interstices, as it were, of two societies and cultures, between the first and second generation, between being 'refugees' and being 'ethnics' (or 'hyphenated Americans'). (p. 2)

Rumbaut and Ima recognized that their participants had developed distinct approaches to negotiating their bicultural positioning, but they still characterized this positioning as marginal in respect to both cultures. This *between-ness*, being neither first nor second generation, and therefore having none of the perceived advantages of either immigrant generation, also surfaces in the way this population is represented in higher education literature (Benesch, 2008), primarily in the fields of TESOL and composition studies.

Before the publication of the first major volume on US-ELLs in higher education, *Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition* (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999), there had been, Matsuda and Matsuda (2009) argued, an "erasure of resident ESL [generation 1.5] writers" (p. 50) in both the profession of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and in the field's literature stemming from its origins serving international students in selective research institutions; later in this section, I will show that this near absence also extends to the newer field of college success literature.

US-ELLs in TESOL and College Success Literature

Early ESL pedagogy, materials, and curricula were heavily influenced by the University of Michigan, which offered the first English language support course in 1911 and created the first intensive English program for international students in 1941. As the number of international students increased in the periods following both World Wars, the Michigan approach, which continued to focus exclusively on the needs of international students, was implemented at colleges and universities across the country. In addition to intensive English language institutes, colleges and universities also added special sections of college composition for international students (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2009).

As a result of the 1965 Immigration Act, more immigrants from Asia and Latin American arrived in the U.S. and a growing number of children from LM backgrounds enrolled in schools (Ovando, 2003). The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 attempted to address the need for English language instruction through the establishment of ESL programs in schools (Ovando, 2003; Wiley, Lee, & Rumberger, 2009). However, even after the nationwide increase in college-going in the 1960s, which included students from immigrant, linguistic minority backgrounds, there were few references to resident ESL students in the higher education TESOL literature until approximately 1990 (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2009). In contrast, research addressing the population appeared in the field of composition studies in the 1970s, and composition studies continued to be the home of scholarship on resident ESL students while international ESL students remained the domain of TESOL.

The volume *Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition* (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999) is credited with bringing this population to the wide attention of TESOL

practitioners and into the domain of TESOL scholars, by highlighting for the first time

the differences in the writing and academic literacy development of US-ELLs from

monolingual English speakers and from ESL students as traditionally understood

(newcomer, adult immigrants or international students) (Doolan, 2010; Ferris, 2009;

Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). Matsuda and Matsuda (2009) contended that part of what made

this text so influential was the use of the term *generation 1.5*, which allowed for a label

for students who, up to that point, had not fit within the two fields' established categories.

One of the effects of the sudden widespread use of the term, however, was that it gave the

impression that U.S.-educated, immigrant, linguistic minorities were a new presence in

the literature and in U.S. colleges and universities when, in fact, they were not.

Despite the broader awareness of US-ELLs and their long-time presence in higher

education, but consistent with the initial situation of research on this population within

the domain of composition studies (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2009) and applied linguistics

(Núñez et al., 2016), much of the literature on generation 1.5 students in higher education

continued to focus on LM students' literacy development in college composition,

primarily in the university setting (e.g. Leki & Carson, 1997; Singhal, 2004). An updated

version of the *Generation 1.5* volume (Roberge, Siegal & Harklau, 2009) took a

somewhat broader approach (Doolan, 2010), but overall the research on US-ELLs in

higher education has focused on their literacy development (e.g. Ferris, 2009), and

primarily in the university setting, such as studies on US-ELLs' success in mainstream

university writing classrooms (e.g. Riazantseva, 2012; Schwartz, 2004), differences

between US-ELLs' writing and that of international students (e.g. De Gennaro, 2009);

pedagogy for writing instruction of US-ELLs (e.g. Bloch, 2007; Losey, 2014; Singhal,

2004), and working with US-ELLs in writing centers (e.g. Thonus, 2003). There is no

doubt that these studies and others like them made important contributions to the

scholarship on US-ELLs in higher education; nevertheless, there has seemed to be

remarkably little investigation into other aspects of their postsecondary experiences

beyond literacy development, or in other settings. Of course, there were researchers who

sought to move the literature beyond composition and related areas, but even then the

most studied setting remained four-year colleges and universities (e.g. Kanno &

Varghese, 2010; Kim & Duff, 2012; Zamel & Spack, 2004). Further, the body of TESOL

research, primarily published by TESOL, Inc. in two peer-reviewed journals, *TESOL*

Quarterly and *TESOL Journal*, has included research conducted in the community

college setting but the field primarily focuses on ESL programs, students, and instruction

rather than on broader issues of LM student postsecondary access and attainment.

In the community college setting, much of the research into student access,

persistence, and outcomes has focused on underserved populations such as students of

color, students who were the first in their families to attend college, and low-income

students (Green, 2006; Kanno & Varghese, 2010). These student populations certainly

intersect with language-minority background, for example, the vast majority of LM

students in the U.S. are from Hispanic or Asian backgrounds (U.S. Department of

Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), but only a small proportion of

research in these areas has been conducted specifically on the experiences of students

who enter a postsecondary institution while still developing proficiency in academic

English (Flores & Drake, 2014; Kanno & Cromley, 2012; Szelényi & Chang, 2002).

While it is important to consider other intersecting factors, examining the effects of being

an English learner on matriculation, persistence, and outcomes for students at community colleges is important because of the large numbers of students from increasingly diverse immigrant backgrounds who seek postsecondary education at community colleges (Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2011).

In contrast to the large body of research conducted with ELLs in the K-12 sector, which typically distinguishes between LM students who have been reclassified as English proficient (EP) and those who receive English language support services of some kind (ELL), students from LM backgrounds have been understudied in the higher education literature (Núñez & Sparks, 2012; Núñez et al., 2016; Varghese, & Kanno, 2010). Among the studies that have been completed on the postsecondary access and completion of this diverse group, few considered ESL placement as a variable (Kanno & Cromley, 2012). As a result, much of what we know about the demographic profile of this group once they are in higher education refers to LM students in general rather than the subgroup of ELLs.

The publication of *Linguistic Minority Students Go to College: Preparation, Access, and Persistence* (Kanno & Harklau, 2012) brought the LM student population to the literature on postsecondary access and success. However, in their introduction to the volume, Kanno and Harklau (2012) noted how little was known about LM students' experiences at community colleges; the volume contributed two studies conducted in the community colleges setting (Almon, 2012; Bunch & Endris, 2012).

In sum, despite a recent increase in the number of studies concerned with the experiences of US-ELLs, this population remains understudied in higher education (Salas et al., 2011) particularly in the community college setting (Kanno & Harklau, 2012).

Much of the early research on US-ELLs in higher education was conducted by scholars working in composition studies and focused on writing and academic language development of US-ELLs enrolled in universities. The field of TESOL has included the community college setting but focuses primarily on issues broadly related to teaching and learning rather than access and attainment. Research in the areas of higher education access and attainment has focused on students from low-income families, those from minoritized ethnic backgrounds, and other underrepresented populations (Kanno & Harklau, 2012), but has not had a significant focus on students from LM backgrounds. Nor has the research sufficiently disaggregated by LM and ELL status in any higher education setting (Teranishi et al., 2011).

The Influence of ELL Status on College Preparation and Postsecondary Experiences

As explained in the previous section, research on the higher education experiences and outcomes of LM students lags behind that of other minoritized groups of students (Núñez et al., 2016). This is in part due to the absence of a reliable national data on the participation of resident LM students in higher education (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; Teranishi et al., 2011); as a result, data on the exact number, resident status, and linguistic backgrounds of immigrant students in higher education is scarce and few community colleges track enrollment data specific to immigrant or linguistic backgrounds (Flores & Drake, 2014; Szelényi & Chang, 2002). Nevertheless, significant contributions have been made by researchers since Harklau (2000) described the research on US-ELLs' transition to higher education "virtually nonexistent" (p. 36). This section reviews the body of literature concerned with how ELL status influences US-ELLs' postsecondary outcomes through its impact on college preparation and postsecondary experiences. To set the

stage, the first subsection summarizes what is known about US-ELLs' postsecondary enrollment patterns and attainment. This is followed by two subsections that review research on the impact of ELL status on 1) access to college preparatory coursework while in U.S. high schools and 2) postsecondary experiences.

Postsecondary Enrollment Patterns and Attainment of US-ELLs

While postsecondary completion rates for immigrants have been found to be equal to or even better than native-born students (Hirschman, 2016), there is significant variation among subgroups in patterns of access and enrollment, with students who arrived in the U.S. as teenagers (US-ELLs) having the lowest completion rates. In fact, just half of the first-generation high school students who were found to be college-prepared enrolled in a four-year institution after graduation (Hirschman, 2016).

As a group, LM students have characteristics that have been associated with lower levels of college-going. LM students are twice as likely to come from lower-income families as non-LM students and to have had less experienced and qualified teachers (Samson & Lesaux, 2015). LM students are more likely to be the first in their families to attend college (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009). Further, LM students comprise the majority of undocumented students, a group that faces additional barriers to postsecondary education including financial hardship due to scarcity of employment options and lack of access to federal financial aid programs, among others (Terriquez, 2015). Within this group, net other factors, secondary ESL placement for immigrant students (US-ELLs) was associated with not enrolling in college and with college under-matching (Callahan & Humphries, 2016).

In terms of postsecondary enrollment, Kanno and Cromley (2013) found that English proficient LM students (EPs) were more similar to English-monolingual students (EMs) than to ELLs, an indication that ELL status impacts college access. Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 from the National Center for Education Statistics, Kanno and Cromley (2012) examined the postsecondary access and attainment of a sample of 10,300 students and found that EP students were overrepresented in vocational programs and community colleges and that ELLs were overrepresented among students who never attended a postsecondary institution and underrepresented at four-year institutions. As would be expected given the disparity in ELLs' access to postsecondary education, ELLs lagged behind both EMs and EPs in earning postsecondary credits and bachelor's degrees. The disparity was smaller, but still significant, for certificates or associate's degrees, the reduced disparity likely a factor of ELLs' overrepresentation in two-year institutions.

Because ELLs spend the majority of their time in school in courses aimed at improving academic English proficiency while students who have been reclassified as EP are enrolled in courses with monolingual English-speaking students, Carlson and Knowles (2016), as did Callahan, Wilkinson and Muller (2010), suggested that EP students' access to college preparatory experiences and college counseling activities gave them an advantage over ELLs in postsecondary enrollment. Carlson and Knowles (2016), in a large-scale quantitative study using data from public school students in Wisconsin, examined the effects of reclassification from ELL to English proficient (EP) on a number of educational outcomes, including postsecondary enrollment. Carlson and Knowles (2016) found reclassification as EP in 10th grade had a positive effect on students' ACT

scores and postsecondary enrollment compared to students who remained as ELL status in 11th grade. The authors determined that the effect of reclassification on postsecondary enrollment was not solely related to the positive effect on ACT scores.

Influence of ELL Status on Access to College Preparatory Coursework

The previously cited increase in ELLs' high school graduation (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2016) which may reflect a focus of high school personnel on graduation for ELLs (Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010) is a welcomed improvement in secondary success rates for this population. Nevertheless, graduating from high school does not guarantee access to college-level coursework. The strength of academic and other types of preparation for college while in high school has a significant impact on postsecondary access and success (Kanno & Cromley, 2013).

ELLs who enter the U.S. school system as secondary students face a number of challenges in preparing for postsecondary education (Callahan & Gándara, 2004). The beginning levels of ELL services focus on language acquisition and basic literacy, often with ELLs isolated from other students and from content area instruction for the majority of the school day (Gándara & Orfield, 2012). As students advance, the focus may shift to high school graduation and drop-out prevention rather than the academic literacy skills that prepare students for college. Even after ELLs are reclassified as English proficient (EP) and move into mainstream coursework, they may have limited access to advanced coursework and receive instruction from teachers with little training in working with ELLs.

Whether and when ELL students are reclassified as EP impacts their remaining K-12 experiences and, relevant to this study, their transition to postsecondary education. The

reclassification process varies considerably among states; however, most states use results of English proficiency exams in addition to student performance indicators such as grades, content assessments, and teacher and parent input (Carson & Knowles, 2016; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013).

In their quantitative study of the effects of secondary ESL placement on 388 language minority (LM) students' enrollment in college preparatory coursework in math, science, and social science and their GPA and 12th grade math achievement scores, Callahan, Wilkinson and Muller (2010) found that LM students placed into ESL courses were 49%, 36%, and 56% less likely to take college preparatory science, math, and social science coursework, respectively, than LM students of similar linguistic proficiency not placed into ESL courses, controlling for relevant individual, family, and school factors. Likewise, ESL placement had a similar overall negative effect on GPA and academic achievement such as scores on standardized content-area exams. However, these effects varied according to factors that indicated a student's likelihood of being placed into ESL courses. For students with the lowest English proficiency, who had been in the U.S. the least amount of time, ESL placement was associated with a positive effect on math achievement while students with higher levels of English proficiency and who had been in the U.S. the longest experienced the negative effects more strongly. The ESL courses and, later, sheltered content-area courses and "specially-designed academic instruction in English" (Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010, p. 85) that ELLs participate in were designed to assist them in the acquisition of academic English alongside the acquisition of the secondary curriculum. However, ELL status and ESL placement "may shape [students'] access to academic content and alter [their] subsequent achievement" (p. 85)

by taking up space in student schedules that might have been devoted to courses more relevant to college-preparation and by perpetuating teachers' perceptions of these students as not ready for a college-preparation curriculum. The focus of ELLs' secondary trajectory may be limited to graduation rather than college preparation; thus, the consequence of long-term ESL placement is that ELLs miss opportunities for more advanced, college preparatory coursework and access to college preparatory resources such as college counseling and assistance with financial aid.

The suggestion, based on results of the quantitative studies reported above, that ELLs have less access to courses and experiences designed to prepare students for college than EP students have was supported by a 2014 qualitative study into academic tracking of secondary ELLs conducted by Kanno and Kangas. The case study of eight suburban high school ELL students included interviews with and observations of a sample of eight high school ELL students over the course of the second half of their junior year to their graduation, supplemental interviews of faculty and staff at the school, and a review of documents. Working from a framework of linguistic capital, the authors examined whether there were institutional factors that limited ELLs access to advanced coursework, how course selection was impacted by school counselors, and the responses of students and their parents to the recommended course of study. Kanno and Kangas (2014) found that all eight ELL students in their sample had limited access to advanced coursework, despite varying levels of academic performance indicators. One of the mechanisms identified by the authors as contributing to this was the flow charts used by counselors that depicted the typical course sequences. Because ELL courses fed into remedial-level courses rather than advanced ones, that was the path most students took. While students

at this school could demonstrate readiness for more advanced coursework through high

scores in writing and reading on standardized testing, this mechanism disadvantaged

ELLs who were still developing academic proficiency in English. Thus, a student might

be denied access to advanced science or math courses based on insufficient scores in

reading and writing. The authors also found that ELLs were diverted from advanced

coursework by well-meaning staff who were hesitant to place students in courses that

might prove to be too difficult such as courses designed without the supportive structures

and differentiated instruction of remedial or lower-level course work. In addition to the

impact on the students' college readiness, Kanno and Kangas (2014) reported that

remedial placement had implications for students' confidence in their academic ability

and further impacted their postsecondary choices. One student participant in the study

did not apply to any four-year institution and enrolled directly at a local community

college; another was not accepted at any of several nursing programs he applied to. In

their interviews, both students were aware of and expressed regret that they had not taken

the coursework that might have better prepared them for college. Kanno and Kangas'

(2014) findings offer two especially relevant points for the current study, both of which

will be explored in more detail in the following section. First, that ELLs may graduate

from high school without having taken the advanced coursework that would prepare them

for entrance into four-institutions or selective programs has implications for college

access and completion: only half of students who graduate high school before being

reclassified as English proficient enroll in any postsecondary institution and fewer than

13% ever earn a bachelor's degree (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Second, it is plausible that

the impact of low-level course work on the academic confidence of ELLs (Kanno and

Kangas, 2014) contributes, at least part, to college "under-matching" (enrolling in community college when prepared for admission into four-year institution) of higher performing ELLs, (Callahan & Humphries, 2016), which may account for the overrepresentation of English proficient students in community colleges and vocational programs (Kanno & Cromley, 2013), discussed in more detail below.

Developing proficiency in English through access to English language services is an essential component of ELLs' college preparation, but when ESL services are provided at the expense of access to advanced coursework and sources of information about college-going, ELLs opportunities for postsecondary education are negatively affected (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009).

Influence of ELL Status on Postsecondary Experiences

Once in postsecondary institutions, ELL status continues to affect the experiences of US-ELLs. Specifically, students' experiences are affected by how they are perceived by their institutions and instructors as nonnative speakers, by the linguistic challenges posed by college coursework conducted in what may be their non-dominant language, and by the additional structural complexities of being labeled an ESL student (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). A pair of related studies (Kanno & Grosik; 2012; Kanno & Varghese; 2010), conducted at large public research universities, one on each coast, contributed much needed nuance to our understanding of how the ELL status itself exposes students to structural barriers that are related to but distinguishable from those related to their level of English proficiency.

Nearly half of the 33 students interviewed by Kanno and Varghese (2010) about difficulties they faced in attending a public research university (19 enrolled directly out

of high school, 14 were community college transfer students) where they took ESL and

college-level coursework concurrently indicated that being an ELL was the most

significant barrier. While difficulties with reading and writing assignments and with oral

communication demands were the cited frequently, most students in the study reported

that difficulties with language were not insurmountable – they just had to work harder.

This attitude was in contrast to how students perceived challenges that they felt they

could not control, such as linguistic assessments for placement into college-level

composition beyond what English majority speakers were asked to do, additional costs

associated with required ESL courses; and a stigma associated with placement in what

they considered "remedial" coursework (p. 319). These "structural constraints" that

came with being labeled ESL students were "perceived by many students as a major

hindrance to their participation and legitimacy in the university" (p. 318). That the

participants in Kanno and Varghese's (2010) study were already enrolled in a selective-

admissions university indicates that challenges in postsecondary education for US-ELLs

are not automatically resolved by higher levels of academic preparation, suggesting that

academic preparation and linguistic proficiency, though the most salient and well-

examined variables for this population, are not as influential as ELL status itself.

     Kanno and Grosik (2012) expanded on the study conducted by Kanno and

Varghese (2010) by interviewing an additional 21 English learners at another large public

research university, this time on the East Coast. This additional study site provided a

different contrasting context in that it was less selective and more diverse than the

original site and structured its ESL program differently. Kanno & Groskik (2012), using a

student engagement framework, reported both similar and contrasting findings from the

two sites. At both universities, ELLs struggled with academic English literacy, which impacted both the college application process and their participation in their courses. The students reported avoiding writing-intense courses and having to spend three to four hours for every one hour their native speaker classmates spent reading, studying for tests, and preparing for class, using up time that might have been put toward involvement in campus activities. At both universities, ELL participants reported struggles stemming from a lack of information about college going and how to prepare for it, including limited access to advanced course work in high school and information about scholarships and financial aid. In fact, the researchers believed that several of the participants should have been eligible for need-based financial aid but had not applied. The majority of the ELLs in the study were low income and many worked long hours off campus, another blow to potential campus engagement. ELLs' difficulty with the reading and writing demands of college was related to their academic language proficiency; however, the other issues reported by students were also related to their *status* as ELs, both in high school and at their university. Despite the many similar challenges to matriculation and persistence ELLs at both universities reported, Kanno & Grosik identified two major distinctions. First, the way the universities handled English language course requirements for ELLs influenced how students saw themselves and the university. At the first university, depending on their performance on entrance exams, ELLs were required to take up to five ESL non-credit courses, each costing around $1000. At the second university, ELLs were enrolled in special but equivalent sections of the first-year writing course. Some students at the first university were resentful and felt isolated and demeaned; at the second, they felt they were getting a better deal for their

tuition dollars since the special ESL sections enrolled fewer students. Second, the two universities differed in their selectivity and diversity, with students at the more selective university more likely to report feeling inadequate and hesitant to engage. At the more diverse institution, the authors found that the ELLs had an easier time fitting in.

These two related studies (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Kanno & Grosik, 2012) were conducted with ELLs at large public research universities. While ELLs' experiences at selective universities is undoubtedly distinct in many ways from that of ELLs enrolling in community colleges, the two studies draws attention to the influence of ELL *status*, in addition to and distinct from the influence of English proficiency itself, especially as reflected in institutional policies related to that status.

Taken together, the research reviewed in this section supports the assertion that ELL status has a significant influence on ELLs' access to postsecondary education and to their experiences once enrolled in college. This influence extends beyond language proficiency in that it appears to be ELL status itself that affects courses students can take in high school, their patterns of postsecondary access, and college experiences.

Problematizing Community College Practice Toward US-ELLs

While the population of LM students at community colleges is extremely diverse in terms of linguistic, academic, and cultural backgrounds, often the only options presented to this population are binary decisions: ESL placement tests or "regular" placement tests, ESL courses or "regular" courses, programs administered by ESL departments or those administered by English departments. These "placement procedures, program designs, [and] department divisions" may "perpetuate static divisions of ESL and NES [native English speaker] despite the multilingual pluralistic

reality of higher education" (Maloy, 2016, p. 24). Placement processes and available

course offerings in educational institutions are premised on a native speaker construct

which reflects a monolingual bias through its privileging of standard forms of academic

spoken and written English (Nero, 2005). Proficiency in this valued form, and

qualification as native speaker, is assessed via standardized tests and/or essay writing

tests. As a result, students who are speakers of other varieties of English and students

whose bilingualism with English does not conform to the narrowly-defined standard may

be assigned nonnative speaker status and placed into ESL courses. Thus, the group of

students defined as ELLs at the postsecondary level can include: international students

educated in their first language and learning English as an additional language; recent

immigrants or long-term residents of the U.S. who arrived as adults with educational

experience in their first language; and US-ELLs, or generation 1.5 students, whose

bilingualism has developed non-sequentially and even simultaneously depending on their

educational experiences in the U.S. and elsewhere, in contrast to the first two groups who

have learned English as an additional language (Nero, 2005; Roberge, 2009). The

following section reviews literature that focuses on the implications of the ELL/native

speaker dichotomy for US-ELLs in community colleges, first as it is represented in the

testing and placement process that nearly all community college students face during the

matriculation and second in the placement options available for US-ELLs.

Language Testing

One of the places where conceptions of bilingualism, language proficiency, and

the educational experiences of US-LMs intersect is in the use of language placement tests

at community colleges. As open-enrollment institutions with no institutional admissions

criteria beyond a high school diploma or GED certificate, the vast majority of community colleges use assessments of students' language and other academic skills to determine whether students are to be allowed into college-level coursework or will be referred to developmental education programs (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011), or, for those identified as ELLs, to ESL programs. The validity of standardized testing for initial placement of community college students into developmental or college-level math and English courses has been the subject of inquiry in the literature, in large part by research conducted through the Community College Research Center at Columbia University (e.g. Hughes & Scott Clayton, 2011; Hodara, Jaggars, & Clark, 2012; Scott-Clayton, 2012). Similarly, inquiry into the validity of commonly-used standardized tests for the assessment of the language skills and community college placement for US-LMs appears to have been undertaken nearly exclusively by George Bunch and his colleagues at the University of California, Santa Cruz (see Bunch, 2009; Bunch & Endris, 2012; Bunch, Endris, Panayotova, Romero, & Llosa, 2011; Bunch & Panatoyova, 2008; Llosa & Bunch, 2011).

In 2011, Bunch et al. undertook an extensive mixed methods research project on the language testing and placement processes used by California's community colleges for their LM student population. (Note that the researchers used the term US-LM to indicate that the student spoke a language other than English at home, attended some years of K-12 in the U.S., and was identified by the community college as a "nonnative" English speaker, the same population labeled in the present study as US-ELLs.) Analysis of data collected through interviews with community college faculty and staff, site visits, and reviews of websites and other publicly available documents was used to generate

findings detailed in the large report (Bunch et al, 2011) and to produce two additional

reports, one focused on the information community colleges made available to US-LMs

as they navigated through the matriculation process (Bunch & Endris, 2012), and the

second on the ESL and English placement tests used in California's community colleges,

with a focus on implications for the US-LM population (Llosa & Bunch, 2011). Because

Bunch and colleagues' research was conducted in California only, the extent to which

their findings can be understood to transfer to community colleges in other types of

postsecondary systems and in other parts of the country may be limited. Even so, more

California residents speak a language other than English at home than in any other state

(Center for Public Education, 2012, based on 2007 U.S. Census Bureau data), and

California's schools serve the highest percent of English language learners of any state

(NCES, 2016), so findings from California do reflect the experiences of large portion of

LM students in the U.S.

The primary finding from the large report (Bunch et al., 2011) provided the

context for the following discussions of the placement tests themselves and the

information provided to students to aid them in navigating the process, discussed below,

and it could be argued, identified the problem underlying much of what we know about

the experience of US-LM/US-ELL students: there appeared to be very little

understanding or awareness on the part of community college faculty, staff, and

administration of the diverse backgrounds of these students, of what distinguishes them

from older or more recent immigrants and international students, and of the

characteristics of their emerging bilingualism. Especially relevant to the present study,

the researchers found that only some participants viewed their work with US-LM

students through a "focus on how they might support US-LM students' linguistic and academic development by capitalizing on their linguistic, cultural, and experiential resources" (p. x).

Drawing on the data collected for the main report (Bunch et al., 2011), Llosa and Bunch (2011), compared the tests in use in the California community colleges in the sample and suggested implications for US-LM students. Due to the unique characteristics of the emerging bilingualism of US-LM students, the results of these tests may not accurately reflect US-LM students' actual language use, although there is variation among the tests in how they operationalize the construct of language proficiency. In addition, the researchers were unable to find evidence that the standardized tests were normed on a population that included US-LM students. Another issue relates to the alignment of the constructs assessed by the test with the content of the courses students are placed into via the results of the tests, and, it follows, the relevance of the course content to the language and academic skills development potentially needed by US-LM students, a highly diverse group yet distinct from international students and adult learners of English.

These issues are critical because the language and other skills testing as used in community colleges have high stakes for students, particularly LM students who may be placed in courses many levels below college-level composition. This is especially concerning given the limited predictive validity of commonly used placement tests (Hughes and Scott-Clayton, 2010). In light of the unique characteristics of US-LM students, the authors argued that the existing ESL/English categorizations of tests and course sequences may need to be re-conceptualized. However, even though awareness of

this issue did exist among some faculty and staff at the institutions in Bunch et al.'s

(2011) study, it seems that it was not incorporated into the development or

operationalization of the community college matriculation processes.

Matriculation Process

Situating the placement tests within the matriculation process as a whole, Bunch

and Endris (2012) identified five points in the assessment and placement process that

were potentially problematic for US-LM students, in large part due to a lack of

information. The first step in the process for many US-LMs was the choice of whether to

take the ESL version or the "regular" version of the college's assessments. At some

colleges in the sample, the choice was made for the student through an automatic routing

function based on intake questions, but at others, students were referred to one or the

other by staff or made the choice themselves. The decision of which testing process to

start with is more complicated for US-LMs than it is for either recent immigrants from

non-English speaking backgrounds or monolingual English speakers because, as

discussed in an earlier section of chapter, US-LMs experiences include elements of both

backgrounds – having acquired English as an additional language at some point in their

childhood and having been educated for at least some years in the U.S. system. In

addition to being ambiguous, the choice of which test to begin with is also high stakes in

that ESL testing typically results in placement in ESL coursework while regular testing

places students in the developmental-to-college level sequence, a difference in results that

can impact students' educational pathways significantly (Llosa & Bunch, 2011; Salas et

al, 2011). Nonetheless, Bunch and Endris (2012) reported that ESL testing for US-LMs

appeared to be the preferred option for many of the community colleges in the sample.

In addition to a lack of information available to LMs about which tests to take, and lack of training on the part of the staff in working with US-LMS, Bunch and Endris (2012) found little information available to students about how to prepare for placement testing, which alternate or additional other measures were available and how they were used, how to use placement test results to choose appropriate courses, and how to challenge the results of placement test. In fact, the researchers came to the conclusion that some community colleges deliberately limited information and choices for students. There were some institutions, on the other hand, that attempted to provide accessible and detailed information specific to US-LM students. While there was significant variation among the 20 community colleges in the sample, the authors concluded that community colleges provided little information specific to US-LM students' needs that might aid them in understanding how to matriculate at community colleges.

Bunch et al. (2011), Llosa and Bunch (2011) and Bunch and Endris (2012) shed much needed light on the complex and high-stakes process of the community college assessment and placement, which may be a major obstacle to postsecondary matriculation for US-LMs. This is a valuable contribution both to other researchers and to practitioners working with this population. While research into the perceptions of US-LM students of the community college assessment and placement process does not appear to have been conducted, it is reasonable to assume that they share some of the same experiences as the overall population transitioning from high school to community college and, in some respects, with linguistic minority students transferring from community college to university; therefore, I will briefly describe relevant findings from two studies conducted in these contexts.

Student perceptions of matriculation process. From data gathered via student focus groups and interviews with counselors and staff involved in matriculation at five California community colleges, Venezia, Bracco, and Nodine (2010) reported findings that concurred with those reported by Bunch and colleagues. Many community college students in the focus groups reported that they got little information in high school about college entrance requirements or about academic readiness requirements at community colleges and were surprised to find themselves lacking necessary coursework. Students also reported being unprepared to take placement tests at the community college and unaware of how their performance on the tests would impact their educational pathway at the community college. A lack of access to community college counselors exacerbated students' confusion about college policies towards challenging results, re-taking tests, and interpreting results for course placement. Finally, students in the focus groups reported being surprised, disheartened, and frustrated by their placement in developmental rather than college-level courses. The findings show remarkable concurrence with those of Bunch and colleagues as described above. Because these studies investigated the same phenomenon from two different sources of data (institutions and institutional agents versus students), taken together their findings make a strong case for the assertion that a lack of information about community college matriculation is a significant issue.

Despite issues of test validity, interpretation, and alignment with available courses (Bunch et al., 2011; Llosa & Bunch, 2011) and concerns about uninformed decision making on the part of students and the community college staff who work with them (Bunch & Endris, 2012; Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010), standardized language and

academic assessments remain a nearly universal step for students in the community college matriculation process (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010). Assessment testing and the resulting course placement impacts student course-taking patterns, and ultimately, can impact the educational attainment of community college students. Due to the differences between the language development of ELLs such as international students and adult immigrants, who are the intended population for standardized ESL tests, and the emergent bilingualism of US-ELLs, US-ELLs may be most vulnerable to inaccurate placement results (Bunch & Panayotova, 2009; Ferris, 2009; Salas et al., 2011). Whether inaccurate placement negatively impacts outcomes for ELLs specifically has not yet been studied (Hodara, 2015), but it has been associated with lower levels of persistence among community college students in general (Scott-Clayton, 2012). Given this, a look at the courses and curricula into which US-ELLs are placed via the placement testing process is an essential part of understanding student experiences that may impact persistence and educational attainment. In other words, what are open-access community colleges providing access to (Bunch & Endris, 2012, p. 166; Cohen & Brawer, 2008)?

ESL and Developmental Education Courses

The initial assessment process for incoming LM students at community colleges typically results in placement into one of three types of programs: ESL courses, developmental writing courses (sometimes offered as ESL-supported developmental writing), or college-level composition courses (Patthey, Thomas-Speigel, & Dillon, 2009; Roberge, 2009) sometimes offered as specially sections for ESL or multilingual writers (Ferris, 2009). The structure of ESL programs at community colleges varies widely, with some programs offering credit-bearing coursework aimed at preparing students for

academic programs while others administering all ESL instruction from noncredit adult education areas (Blumenthal, 2002). What most community college ESL programs have in common, however, is that they were not designed for U.S.-educated ELLs (Nero, 2005).

ESL courses. Much of current ESL pedagogy and materials were developed for relatively new arrivals or international students (Evans & Andrade, 2015), who have cultural acclimation needs in addition to language learning needs distinct from U.S.-ELLs', potentially leading to resistance on the part of the US-ELLs (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008) and a negative impact on persistence due to the extended sequences of courses (Hodara, 2015). Despite this, ESL instructors may be better prepared to address language learning needs than instructors in English departments, and there is evidence that ESL courses do help ELLs create a supportive peer network that can serve as an important source of information about navigating the institution (Bunch, 2009) although not all ESL instructors feel that their courses are appropriate for US-ELLs (Hodara, 2015).

Developmental and college-level writing courses. Developmental English courses are typically designed to address academic literacy needs of monolingual English speaking students, and college-level composition courses are designed as continuations of college-preparatory English courses in high school, which many US-ELLs have not had access to. Composition and developmental writing instructors, even if willing address language needs specific to emerging bilingualism, may not be prepared to do so. Ultimately, course placement can "highlight or conceal, validate or invalidate, and define or convolute the histories experiences, and educational needs of individual students," (Roberge, 2009, p. 4), a process that can be particularly disadvantageous for US-ELLs

whose language, cultural, and academic development may not allow them to fit neatly into the student profiles expected by their instructors.

Because US-ELLs may exhibit some language markers typical of second language speakers and writers, they are often routed via testing or writing placement into ESL courses. English language proficiency, and ESL courses, become in effect, gatekeepers of access to college-level coursework (Razfar & Simon, 2011; Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009). Whether assessment testing and placement into developmental education programs, potentially including ESL courses, ultimately supports student success or is instrumental to the "cooling out" (Clark, 1960, p. 569) of underprepared students' plans for postsecondary education is contested (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011), but there are strong indications that the course sequence linguistic minority students begin in at community colleges influences student persistence (Patthey, Thomas-Speigel, & Dillon, 2009) and graduation rates (Almon, 2012) and has implications for students' identities as well (Maloy, 2016). The studies reviewed in this section support the assertion that ELL status, both as an indicator of linguistic proficiency and as factor in encountering structural barriers at both community colleges and universities, has been shown to have an impact on students' educational pathways. In addition, researchers have found that ESL placement and coursework has consequences related to student identity, particularly for those linguistic minority who were classified as English proficient in high school but who had their ELL status "reactivated" (Salas et al., 2011, p. 127) by placement in ESL courses in community college (Blumenthal, 2002; Harklau, 2000; Maloy, 2016).

Influence of course placement on persistence. One of the goals of both ESL writing courses and developmental-level writing courses is to prepare students for college

composition, but, in general, students who begin in ESL courses have a much smaller likelihood of making it to and through composition than students who begin at the developmental level, according to a study by Patthey et al. (2009), which evaluated the persistence of students along the various educational pathways available to LM students according to their ultimate success in English composition courses. The sample used in this study consisted of over 238,000 students, nearly 44,000 of which were identified as generation 1.5, all of whom began in one of five points of entry in one of nine community college and two universities in California: beginning ESL writing, advanced academic ESL writing, pre-collegiate writing instruction, applied associate's (AA) level composition course, or transfer level composition course. In the study, which used enrollment records and demographic profiles of students, only 8% of students who began in beginning ESL competed college-applicable coursework, mostly AA-level English, within five semesters. Twenty-nine percent of students who began in advanced ESL and 40% of those who began in developmental-level completed the AA-level course while 14 and 22% of those two groups, respectively, completed a transfer level course. There were some areas where LM students were more successful than the general population: those who began in advanced ESL had higher GPAs along the pathway than the students at any other starting point except those who placed directly into college transfer level, a result that the authors attributed to differing levels of academic preparation. In addition, the generation 1.5 cohort had significantly higher rates of transfer than the general community college population despite beginning in developmental level rather than college level coursework twice as often as the overall community college population. Nevertheless, "a large segment of the ESL population, particularly for the beginning

levels of the discipline, begins and ends community college studies in the ESL program"
(p.142). As the researchers acknowledged, this study of outcomes does not uncover the
mechanisms through which these pathways seem to act as gatekeepers for some students
and as needed support for the development of academic skills for others. The researchers
suggested that the finding that generation 1. 5 students who began in developmental level
courses saw better outcomes compared to the overall outcomes for that group calls for
further qualitative research into the "language and cultural factors that turn some
generation 1.5 students into successful college students" (p. 148). The large sample size
and attempt to distinguish US-ELLs from other students in ESL courses (through a U.S.
high school graduate variable) are strengths of Patthey et al.'s (2009) study.

   Almon (2012) attempted to account for the role in selected educational outcomes
of a number of demographic characteristics in addition to language proficiency including
age, enrollment intensity, residency status, race or ethnicity, gender, and economic
resources, using Pell eligibility as proxy, through transcript evaluation. While Almon
accounted for more demographic variables in the regression than Patthey et al. (2009)
were able to, Almon reported that the data used did not allow for distinguishing US-ELLs
from other subgroups enrolled in ESL courses. Nonetheless, the findings show attainment
for all ELLs well below that of the complete sample of over 7000 students at the
community college study site. First, despite data on ELLs' goals which indicated most
students intended to complete an associate's degree or higher, fewer than 30% of the 161
ELLs in the sample were still enrolled by their second fall semester and only 13% had
graduated four years later, compared to the college graduation rate of 23%. Within the
ELL population, there was significant variation: ELLs with lower GPAs, those who

started in lower levels of the ESL program, and those over the age of 25 were less likely

to persist or graduate. However, because little of the overall variation was explained by

the factors in the regression analysis, Almon (2012) suggested that further qualitative

research be undertaken to uncover factors that have not yet been accounted for in

research on the persistence and completion of language minority students at community

colleges.

To further explore the reasons underlying their finding that the majority of Latino

ESL students (data did not distinguish U.S.-educated or not) in one California community

college district did not persist into mainstream college coursework, Razfar and Simon

(2011) conducted focus groups with a selection of students who reported issues with

navigating the institution (understanding educational pathways, registration, and

placement issues), lack of confidence in English ability, a sense of isolation from the

mainstream courses and other students, and challenges related to obligations outside of

school such as work and family.

Lambert (2015) conducted a quantitative analysis which accounted for factors

impacting persistence of students in a community college ESL program which were not

explored by Patthey et al. (2009) and Almon (2012). In the case of Lambert's study,

however, the sample of 76 ESL students did not allow for the comparison between ELL

and non-ELL students. An additional, significant, difference between Lambert (2015)

and the two studies previously reviewed was that the main outcome variable was not

dichotomous (e.g. fall-to-fall enrollment, graduation, completion of transfer level course)

but continuous – the progress ESL students made over the course of one semester as

measured by a standardized writing assessment, taking a number of student

characteristics into account. The use of a variable measuring academic progress rather than persistence or completion represents a important distinction as academic progress is a potential factor in the poorer outcomes for ELLs identified in the previous research. In Lambert (2015), lower academic gains were related to employment, anxiety about using or learning English, and caring for children, among other factors.

Influence of course placement on student identity. Harklau's (2000) year-long case study of three US-ELLs as they transitioned from high school to community college was the first to investigate the impact of college ESL placement on ELL student identity, and, in the process, the study uncovered a shift in the ascribed identities of ELLs, who were perceived by their instructors in high school as the "good kids" – hardworking, model minorities -- and by their community college instructors as "the worst" – unmotivated and badly behaved. For some linguistic minority students, particularly those educated in the US, the institutionally-assigned identity of English language learner may not reflect their own identity and experience acquiring and using English (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008).

Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) examined how three students "negotiate[ed] their identities as second language writers in mainstream composition classrooms" (p. 391). Indeed, the three students who participated in Ortmeier-Hooper's case study, all of whom had immigrated to the U.S. during middle or high school actively resisted the "ESL label" (p. 392) they were assigned, even in mainstream composition courses. However, if we follow the lead of students who reject the ESL label, will we, as Ortmeier-Hooper suggests, unwittingly reinforce the assumption of monolingual composition classrooms and, as a consequence, deprive English learners of potentially useful language support?

As Benesch (2008) argued regarding the term generation 1.5, discarding outdated terms and developing new ones is not the way forward. Rather, the terms need to be interrogated and new conceptualizations developed of what it means to be multilingual and what institutions look like when they reflect multilingualism and multiculturalism (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996).

In Maloy's (2016) investigation into the experiences of two linguistic minority students in community college writing classes, one in an ESL writing class and one in the equivalent level of development writing, *both* students felt marginalized by their status as language learners or nonnative speakers. As with the three student participants in Ortmeier-Hooper's study, for the student in the developmental course, the label was not assigned by the institution but was perceived as being applied nonetheless and resulted in a perception of marginalization. Maloy reported that both student participants "yearned for more inclusiveness and cross-cultural interaction among students and viewed it as something that could benefit them" (p.32). The students interviewed by Maloy felt alienated by the dichotomous ELL-native speaker designations available to them in their community college. Interestingly, in the university ESL program in Shapiro's (2012) case study (discussed elsewhere in this chapter), the dichotomy was U.S. citizen-non U.S. citizen, with permanent U.S. residents having to prove their language proficiency alongside international students regardless of educational or linguistic background. Today this seems archaic, which perhaps will be the fate of the native-nonnative English speaker construct in the not-so-distant future.

Arguing that much of the research into the experiences of linguistic minority students in higher education has taken place within the context of academic coursework,

primarily in composition courses or has examined institutional policies and structures, Kim and Duff (2012) sought to broaden their inquiry into the experiences of ELLs as they moved from high school to university in Canada to include "the contextual factors that shape the language socialization processes and outcomes" of the students in the study and how those factors influenced students' "investments in their identities as Korean and English language learners" (p. 86). The two student participants in the study experienced dissonance while negotiating their evolving national and linguistic identities which, the researchers suggested, had not always be recognized by ESL teachers and others in educational institutions whose aim was the development of just one aspect of their identities (that of Canadian English-speakers, in this case), which, in essence, is an attempt to impose an identity choice. This may be particularly true in the case of generation 1.5 students whose English fluency may belie their strong affiliations with cultures other than the dominant one. By looking beyond ELLs' participation in ESL or mainstream composition courses to examine issues of linguistic and cultural identity, Kim and Duff (2012) drew attention to the important role of continued student affiliations with co-ethnic peers and community.

This third major section has problematized community college practice toward US-ELLs through the review of research that suggests that community college assessment and placement practices and the course options available are potentially inappropriate for US-ELLs and can have a negative influence on college persistence and student identity. In the next section, these practices are shown to be grounded in a deficit perspective towards US-ELLs

Deficit-Oriented Characterizations of US-ELLs in Research and Practice

Taken as a whole, the message from the literature around US-ELLs in community colleges, reviewed in the previous section, and to some extent higher education in general, is that they do not conform to our current structures for assessing, placing, teaching, and studying nonnative speakers of English in postsecondary institutions. The level of proficiency of their emerging bilingualism is not captured well by the standardized placement tests they encounter in nearly every community college (Llosa & Bunch, 2011). The assessment and placement practices and the course options available were typically designed for the strengths and needs of adult ESL students and international students or monolingual English speakers rather than bilingual students in the process of acquiring academic English (Bunch & Endris, 2012). Even the situating of research on this population among the fields of TESOL, applied linguistics, and composition studies has been unclear (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2009). Perhaps then, it should not be surprising that what we know about the educational attainment of US-ELLs is rather bleak: Many ELLs graduate from high school without having taken the advanced coursework that might have prepared them for college (Callahan et al., 2010). Fewer ELLs than English proficient LM students or monolingual English speakers ever enroll in college (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Those ELLs that do, tend to enroll in community colleges, the institutions with some of the lowest rates of completion (Shapiro et al., 2015). Given this, perhaps it is no wonder that well-intentioned practitioners and researchers seeking to better understand US-ELLs' experiences and outcomes in community colleges have had a tendency to note where and how these students do not conform to the expected profiles of nonnative or native speakers of English. And it

certainly can be useful to understand the distinctions between the writing of US-ELLs and international students when, for example, designing instruction and providing feedback (as in Di Gennaro, 2009), but when comparisons are made from a monolingual English ideal, emerging bilingualism, and US-ELLs, inevitably come up short.

The following section presents the argument that the deficit perspective frequently taken towards US-ELLs has its roots in the conflict between their emergent bilingualism and the practices of the monolingual community college, which was discussed in the previous section. I then give examples of research that characterizes US-ELLs in this way. This section ends with a discussion of the limitations of the capital framework frequently employed in higher education research.

Sources of Deficit Perspective toward US-ELLs

US-ELLs represent a multilingual, multicultural reality that challenges the monolingual, monocultural institution (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). Benesch (2008) argued that the use of the term generation 1.5 itself represents this "monocultural/monolingual ideology" (p. 295), which manifests in the literature through "discourses of partiality." Generation 1.5 is positioned in a deficient, "in-between" space demographically (neither first nor second generation; neither native born nor fitting conceptualizations of foreignness), linguistically (their emergent bilingualism not fitting expectations for native speakers or nonnative speakers) and academically (as high school graduates unprepared for college). This monolingual standard, or what Roberge (2009) called "nativist normativity" (p. 5), can be seen underlying the assessment and course options available to most community college students and in the use of placement exams to sort students

into ESL and developmental courses, limiting access to college-level coursework (Benesch, 2008).

Benesch (2008) also maintained that the role racism plays in the experiences of generation 1.5 students has been overlooked in the research literature on this population, an assertion that Flores, Kleyn and Menken (2015), built on through the conceptualization of *epistemic racism:*

> …we hope to push the discourse of partiality even further and argue that it, in fact, can be understood as a racial project that serves to perpetuate White supremacy through the marginalization of the language practices of communities of color through form of *epistemic racism* that situates the epistemology of privileged monolingual subjectivities as the unmarked societal norm. (p. 118; italics in the original)

Flores (2017) further argued that epistemic racism is the reason deficit perspectives toward, in particular, Latino bilingualism persist in spite of the reframing of bilingualism as a cognitive asset.

Examples of Deficit Perspective Toward US-ELLs

Examples in the literature of US-ELLs being perceived as academically or linguistically deficient or seen as "problematic" for the institution (Benesch, 2008) were not hard to find. In Harklau's (2002) case study of US-ELLs transitioning from high school to community college, the community college ESL instructors perceived the relative social and cultural ease of the U.S.-educated students in their classrooms as being "uncooperative and rude" in contrast to the common perception of typical ESL students as "compliant and grateful" (p. 54). Blumenthal (2002) wrote that "[Generation 1.5

students'] academic skills, including reading, writing, critical thinking, and general knowledge, are often weak" (p. 50). A similarly dim view of the state of US-ELLs' language production and academic preparation be found in literature on their participation in college composition courses; for example, in this description of students as " 'dual nonnative speakers' because they are not fully proficient in either their L1 or L2-English" (Singhal, 2004, p. 2). While some instructors interviewed by Bunch et al. (2011) recognized the strengths and resources available to LM students,

> others emphasized how these students' language deviated from monolingual norms or how they lacked the kinds of backgrounds and experiences common among students from more dominant groups. Given this latter orientation, it is not surprising that some colleges respond by placing US-LM students in multi-semester ESL or remedial English sequences, in an effort to prepare them to enter the academic mainstream. (p. x)

A perhaps extreme example of this orientation can be seen in *A Portrait of Generation 1.5 Students* (Gawienowski & Holper, 2006), an article from a volume on ESL in community colleges published by TESOL, Inc. (Blumenthal, 2006). In it, the authors proclaimed that "one of the most irksome characteristics of Generation 1.5 students is their inability or unwillingness to actively engage in or assess their own learning process" (p. 122). The students' "writing errors are compounded by second language grammatical errors, metalinguistic deficiencies, and gaps in fundamental world knowledge" (p. 118). Their language proficiency was described as "a semiliterate condition in both languages" (p. 126) and, demonstrating an appalling lack of understanding of the conditions that drive families to immigrate, blamed parents'

ignorance of adolescent second language acquisition: "parents choose to move their entire families to a better environment in the United States, not fully understanding the impact this will have on their older children's language development" (p. 126). Statements such as these not only betray a misunderstanding of the nature of bilingualism (Bunch et al, 2011) and perpetuate the notion that US-ELLs are deficient linguistically, but also suggest a degree of choice and control over the timing of the immigration process that is simply not reflected in the reality of the conditions that lead families to seek to leave their homes or the complex processes, the timing of which is rarely within their control, that families must undertake through the immigrant or refugee visa systems. The implication that, had immigrant or refugee parents been cognizant of the potential academic struggles of their children, they may have chosen to stay in their countries of origin in spite of the adverse conditions that force many immigrants and refugees from their homes is, at best, ignorant. Which conventional community college educational pathway would be appropriate for students viewed this way by their institutions and instructors?

In essence, as Flores et al. argued (2015), emerging bilinguals are viewed as deficient in both their first language(s) and in English, and the burden of proof they are required to meet is greater than that required of monolingual speakers: *academic* proficiency. US-ELLs are not considered proficient in their first language(s) because they did not finish secondary schooling in their places of birth, and they are not considered proficient in English because they have not yet demonstrated – via placement tests and ESL classes – mastery of academic English. Yet neither form of evidence of proficiency is necessary to be considered a native speaker for monolingual speakers of any language.

"It is clear that institutional policies reflect institutional ideology. Policies that are punitive toward linguistic minority students are underwritten by the assumption that those students are deficient and perhaps even undesirable" (Shapiro, 2012, p. 252). This is significant because institutional policies that arise from a deficit perspective can result in the alienation of students from their institutions.

Limitations of Capital Frameworks to Study Higher Education Outcomes of US-ELLs

Capital frameworks have been used to investigate postsecondary access and attainment for a number of different populations (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Sablan & Tierney, 2013), but they are limited in their usefulness to study the higher education outcomes of US-ELLs. Because LM populations have relatively limited access to economic, cultural (including academic & linguistic) and social capital (Nuñez & Sparks, 2012) as defined by conventional frameworks, capital frameworks promote deficit-thinking toward LM populations (Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2011). Further, there are indications that access to certain types of capital influences LMs' access, enrollment patterns and attainment differently than it does non-LM students. In the section that follows, I briefly summarize the theory of cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1990) and then review a trio of studies that, taken together, demonstrate the limitations of conventional capital frameworks in explaining postsecondary outcomes for LM students and US-ELLs in particular.

The concept of cultural capital was introduced to education research through the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1990) and has been used to study variations in a wide range of educational outcomes, often in combination with social capital (Sablan &

Tierney, 2013). Cultural capital consists of "cultural resources that have a concealed exchange value and that enable or foster social and educational advancement" (p. 155), which "can exist in the form of material cultural resources, habits and dispositions, and formal education and credentials" (p. 157). As conceived by Bourdieu, cultural capital is distinct from, yet inter-related with, the other forms of capital: economic (resources that can be converted into money, such as property), human (skills that can be converted into access to paying work), and social (networks and connections that can be converted into other forms of capital). Each form of capital can be conceived of as having six dimensions (Sablan & Tierney, 2013): objectified state (a physical object, e.g. a book), embodied state (individual "long-lasting dispositions" [p. 159] or preferences), institutionalized state (e.g. educational credentials), field (space in which capital is accrued and exchange, e.g. school), habitus ("class-based dispositions" [p. 159]), and social and cultural reproduction (the process through which social class is perpetuated, e.g. through testing or entrance requirements).

Cultural capital has frequently been operationalized as familiarity with the academic cannon privileged by the dominant class and as participation in accepted and valued ways of interacting in a particular field (Sablan & Tierney, 2013). In education research, social and cultural capital are often merged and not all studies that apply a capital framework to understand variation or inequities in schooling employ the complete theory including the six dimensions. In addition, because Bourdieu's writings on cultural capital typically offered only abstract conceptualizations, researchers have operationalized cultural and social capital in a wide variety of forms. For instance, while Bourdieu did not expand on academic capital in his writings, it has been used in studies

of higher education access to refer to aspects of students' secondary educational experiences (as in Núñez and Sparks, 2012). The concept of family capital, while also not a form of capital as conceived by Bourdieu, was used by Kanno and Cromley (2012) to refer to economic, social, and cultural capital available from the family.

The results of the trio of studies reviewed below (Kanno & Cromley, 2012; Kanno & Cromley, 2015; Núñez & Sparks, 2012) which used nationally representative databases to examine LMs' college choice, access, and attainment through capital frameworks, suggest that LMs, and ELLs in particular, have less access to forms of capital as traditionally conceptualized but also that these forms of capital are not as predictive of certain aspects of postsecondary participation for ELLs as they are for monolingual English speaking students.

Conventional capital frameworks do not explain institutional choice for LM students as well as they do for non-LM students according to the study conducted by Núñez and Sparks (2012). Demographic variables and family capital, which included family income and parents' level of education, did not factor significantly in the type of institution LM students attended but did for non-LM students, suggesting that there may be other, unmeasured "motivational or cultural characteristics" (p. 125) involved in the type of institution that LM students enroll in that are not accounted for by conventional conceptualizations of capital. Núñez and Sparks (2012) analyzed data from the 2004 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study using aspects of a capital framework to understand how access to various forms of capital influenced college choice for LM and non-LM students. The majority of LM students in the study were Hispanic and more likely than non-LM students to come from families with low incomes

and low levels of parental education. For LM and non-LM students alike, academic

capital (high school GPA, highest math completed, and AP credit), having a college-

going orientation (habitus), and factors related to college participation (e.g. delaying

enrollment, working full-time, attending part-time) were found to have significant

influences on whether students enrolled in selective four-year, nonselective four-year, or

two-year institutions. However, for LM students, unlike their non-LM peers,

demographic variables and indicators of family capital did *not* predict the type of

postsecondary institution LM students would enroll in, which further increased the

influence of academic capital for LM students in particular. LM status itself was not

predictive of choice of institution when demographic variables and variables related to

indicators of economic, academic, and social and cultural capital were accounted for;

however, due to limitations of the dataset, the study did not include English proficiency

variables, which has been shown to influence enrollment patterns (Kanno & Cromley,

2012).

The influence of economic capital on college outcomes also appears to be

different for LM students than non-LM students. To understand how English proficiency

mediated the role of capital in college access and attainment of LM students, Kanno &

Cromley (2012) used a large, nationally representative data set (NELS:88) that included

language proficiency variables, allowing for differentiation between two levels of English

language proficiency in addition to English monolingual (EM) speakers: English

proficient (EP) and English language learner (ELL). While ELL and EP students did not

match their EM peers in attending or graduating from college (with ELLs far behind and

EPs closer to EMs), when nonlinguistic variables were accounted for, ELL status was no

longer significant in predicting access or attainment, and EP became a positive predictor of access. For both for LMs and ELLs, within the category of family capital, parent education level and the educational expectations parents had for their children had a stronger association with increased levels of access and, to a lesser extent, attainment than did family income. The influence of family income, while not as strong overall, remained more stable from access to attainment. Delaying enrollment, working, and attending college part-time were associated with lower levels of attainment. First generation status was positively associated with attainment but not access. In addition to bringing attention to the potential benefits of multilingualism and the important role that encouragement and support from family and others can play in college-going, Kanno and Cromley's (2012) findings provide another indication family income is not associated with higher education outcomes for LM students in the same way it is for non-LM students.

Kanno and Cromley (2015) sought to explain their previous study's (2012) findings that ELLs had significantly lower levels of access to four-year institutions through an investigation of the college planning process. Drawing on traditional conceptualizations of economic, cultural, and social capital, along with additional resources identified previously in the literature as influencing postsecondary access and attainment, such as academic preparation and guidance and support from parents, friends, and school agents, the researchers analyzed a subset of the 2002 Educational Longitudinal Study. They reported that ELLs lagged behind their EP and EM peers in every college planning milestone, including aspiring to attend college, obtaining the necessary academic qualifications in high school, and applying to a four-year college.

However, the predictor variables were less significant for ELLs than for EP and EM students. For example, for ELLs, nonWhite race or ethnicity was a more significant negative predictor of college aspirations than academic preparation, which the researchers noted, may be an indication "that racial/ethnic minority ELLs are particularly vulnerable to negative stereotyping and low expectations from teachers and counselors" (p. 32) or that academically qualified ELLs do not have the knowledge they need "to translate [their] qualifications into viable academic capital" (p. 33). This was particularly true in the case of Hispanic ELLs, whose college access was not well described by the predictor variables. The researchers noted that the selected predictors, which were drawn from previous literature, were much more effective at predicting access for EM students than for ELLs, leaving the factors related to postsecondary access for ELLs largely unknown.

Together, these three studies conducted within capital frameworks provide critical pieces of information about college access and attainment for immigrants from language minority backgrounds, but they also support the assertion that new frameworks are needed to examine access and attainment of ELLs. In Kanno and Cromley's (2012) study, parent education level and parental expectations for their children's educational attainment outweighed the negative impact that lower levels of English proficiency had on college access for ELLs; high parental expectations for education were also reported by the first-generation immigrant high school students in a study by Hirschman (2016). Thus, in addressing the disparity in access and attainment of ELLs compared to EP, it is not sufficient to solely focus on improving ELLs' language proficiency. Given Kanno and Cromley's (2012) suggestion that the positive impact of bilingualism they found on

EPs' college access may have been a result of their ability to access capital for college in the form of resources and information from both English-dominant and minority-language school and social networks, it follows that researchers and practitioners should examine further ELLs' access to resources and information about college-going, in addition to continuing to focus on students' access to the college-preparatory coursework that could improve outcomes (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Addressing the non-linguistic factors for ELLs moving into higher education is especially important given the finding that the majority are not expected to be reclassified as EP until the end of 11th grade (Slama, 2012), making it likely that they will have had limited access to their high schools' college-preparatory courses, resources, and activities.

Countering Deficit Perspectives of US-ELLs in Higher Education with Resource-Oriented Frameworks

Studies examining matriculation, persistence, and attainment of community college students, whether in general or by focusing on marginalizing factors such as immigrant status, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or linguistic background, have shed light on both student risk factors and the significant structural barriers influencing educational attainment. Yet, despite the many barriers in accessing and persisting in college encountered by linguistic minority students, particularly those who graduated from high school with lower levels of proficiency in English, many do, in fact, succeed. Harklau and McClanahan argued "that it is equally, if not more, important to study cases of academically successful students if we are to develop effective strategies for getting more Latinos/as through high school and into college" (2012, p. 75), a call to action that

can reasonably be expanded to include students from other non-English language dominant backgrounds.

Recent currents in the higher education literature on US-ELLs have challenged the deficit orientation towards US-ELLs (Flores et al., 2015). In second language and writing pedagogy, for example, a number of new frameworks have been proposed for expanding notions of academic writing, language proficiency, and academic literacy development to better account for the presence of multicultural, multilingual writers (for example, see Bunch & Kibler, 2015; Nero, 2005; Holten, 2009). In addition, there is a growing body of research that investigates factors that *facilitate* matriculation, persistence, and attainment of linguistic minority students and other minoritized populations. Research in this vein offers a starting point for using resource-oriented frameworks to better understand US-ELLs' experiences in college. Researchers have adopted a variety of conceptual and theoretical frameworks and approaches to this work and, as a result, the studies contribute a diverse yet complementary set of findings as well as offer examples of ways to approach resource-oriented research. In their review of the literature on ELLs' transition to postsecondary education, Núñez et al. (2016) noted resources that are potentially available for multilingual students to exploit: the ability to move between various cultural contexts; for immigrant students especially, a greater sense optimism and motivation to be successful; and the cognitive benefits of bi- or multilingualism, among others.

In the following section, I first review studies in two areas that are receiving increasing notice in the literature: the roles of student agency and of institutional agents in contributing to educational opportunity for US-ELLs. I then present details about the

resource-oriented framework of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), which along

with intersectionality model for educational research (Núñez, 2014a, 2015b) comprise the

theoretical frameworks of the study, and discuss affordances of these frameworks for

studying the resources leveraged by US-ELLs in community college matriculation and

persistence and the ways in the which the institution's policies and practices may

influence these students' experiences.

Student Agency

While approaching the task from different frameworks, three studies in Kanno

and Harklau's (2012) edited volume on LM students' transitions to and experiences in

higher education investigated the role of student agency in successful college-going. Each

of the three qualitative studies were of single cases drawn from larger mixed methods

research projects (Fuentes, 2012; Harklau & McClanahan, 2012; Varghese, 2012).

Working from a theoretical framework of constraint agency and discursive

construction, Varghese (2012) analyzed the college-going narrative of a US-ELL for

discursive evidence of the how the student presented herself as exercising agency within

the structural constraints of educational institutions, "such as knowledge of the difference

classes needed to apply for college, the establishment of a strong relationship with the

school counselor, working on and writing the college application, and becoming aware of

and applying for scholarships" (p. 158-159), and access to capital. Varghese (2012) noted

that the student didn't include herself as experiencing these restraints but saw them in the

experiences of other ELLs. Instead, to narrate her college-going, the participant drew on

discourses of individual effort, family capital in the form of emotional support, and,

despite contrasting it negatively with the Kenyan educational system where she was in

school through 7th grade, a view of the U.S. system as offering more opportunity for personal advancement through education.

Facilitative factors framed the study of the case of Paola, a Mexican-American student and the subject of Harklau and McClanahan's (2012) longitudinal study *How Paola Made it to College*, despite the barriers she faced to pursuing higher education including numerous school moves, a fluctuating economic situation, her undocumented immigration status, and a diagnosed learning disability. In contrast to Varghese's narrative discourse analysis approach, Harklau and McClanahan drew on 35 interviews conducted with Paola over the course of four and a half years, up to high school graduation, to identify obstacles and resources that influenced her college-going. The facilitative factors identified by the researchers were family support for continuing her education, attendance at a relatively resource-rich high school, participation on several athletic teams, participation in church activities, and a strong sense of self-efficacy. The researchers' noted that, taken together, these factors, which had all been previously identified in the literature on Latino/a students' college-going "may not just facilitate or hinder Latino/a students' progress in the college pipeline but may do both simultaneously" (p. 87). Further, the factors' influence on college-going is not static but fluctuates over time. The researchers suggested that longitudinal studies are especially illustrative in light of this characteristic and that case studies can show how factors that had been previously identified in the large-scale quantitative studies on this population (e.g. Kanno & Cromley, 2012; Kanno & Kangas, 2014) "actually operate on the ground" (p. 86).

Reminiscent of the dual action of the factors influencing Paola's college-going, both facilitating and impeding her progress (Harklau & McClanahan, 2012), Fuentes (2012) found that a student's exercise of agency increased her marginalization while at the same time contributed to her educational attainment. Again drawn from a larger project, this single case study of an ELL university student, Nasim, examined the influence of university culture on student engagement and personal agency. The framework of institutional culture and the exclusively higher education setting differentiates this study from the other single case studies discussed above (Harklau & McClanahan, 2012; Varghese, 2012). The features of university culture explored in this study were the institution's standards for academic achievement and the monolingual English dominant environment, both of which privileged particular native English speaker and "historical, cultural, and social experiences" (p. 228). Nasim perceived that "multilingual students' knowledge was viewed as deficient while the knowledge of the dominant NES [native English speaker] group was considered the only knowledge of value" (p. 228). As a response, Nasim resisted this culture in a number of ways, a process Fuentes called "selective acculturation" (p. 231) and developed coping strategies. For example, by taking courses at a nearby community college because she believed she would earn a low grade in the same courses at the university, which raised her GPA and got her admitted to an optometry program, Nasim both rejected (what she perceived to be) the university's unreasonable expectations for academic achievement and attained her goal. However, this and other coping strategies Nasim employed alienated her from the university and decreased her already tenuous engagement with the campus. Fuentes (2012) suggested that investigating how ELs practice selective acculturation of school

culture can lead to contribute to knowledge of the "pressure, aims, and constraints" of this population (p. 235).

Each of these three studies applied a different framework to the study of US-ELLs' college-going, but taken together Fuentes (2012), Harklau and McClanahan (2012) and Varghese (2012) represent a resource-oriented approach to research on the college-going of LM students with a focus on student agency. As pointed out by both Harklau and McClanahan (2012) and Varghese (2012), the structural barriers or restraints related to institutional cultural that surfaced in their respective case studies had been previously identified in the literature; the primary contributions of these studies, then, was to demonstrate different approaches to investigating the factors that *contribute* to language minority student success, without discounting the very real barriers experienced by the student participants. In these studies, students drew on personal and other resources for information and support even as they exercised their own strength of will – as seen through the lenses of agency (Fuentes, 2012; Varghese, 2012) and self-efficacy (Harklau & McClanahan; 2012). These authors also problematized the notion of *facilitative factors* in that resources typically viewed as beneficial, such involvement in a religious community, may also work against student success if, for example, participation interferes with needed study time; in addition, the influence may fluctuate over time between being advantageous and detrimental to student success.

Although the studies conducted by Varghese (2012) and Harklau & McClanahan (2012) followed the participants into college, neither includes considerations of how their respective frameworks might be applied to their subjects' college matriculation and

persistence experiences. I point these out not as limitations of these studies, but simply to say that the delimitations of these two projects leave those questions for future research.

Institutional Agents and Supportive Environments

There is evidence from the literature that faculty, staff, and other institutional agents can help create environments that promote the success of students from diverse racial and culture backgrounds (Museus & Neville, 2012; Museus, 2014). Museus and Neville (2012) examined the role of institutional agents in providing social capital for students from racial minority backgrounds. Institutional agents can have a positive influence on the experiences of community college students from racial minority backgrounds through the development of a trusting relationship, frequently built upon a shared racial or educational background, by providing "holistic support" (p. 443), or support that went beyond one aspect of students' experiences, by approaching their support of students from an authentic and caring perspective rather than one of professional distance, and by proactively connecting students to other sources of support. Considering how frequently language minority status intersects with minoritized racial or cultural backgrounds, it is reasonable to expect that this holds true for ELLs as well, and there is some evidence to support this expectation. For example, ESL instructors and courses play a critical role in providing affective support to community college ESL students, especially for those who struggle with confidence in speaking (Razfar & Simon, 2011). While not specifically including LM status, the model of culturally engaging campus environments proposed by Museus (2014) based on findings from Museus and Neville (2012) provides a structure for ways in which campus environments can impact success for students from marginalized populations. A complete description of the model

is not the purpose of this section, but it is illustrative to consider the indicators of culturally engaging campus environments here. According to the model, the campus environments that most successfully engage students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds give students opportunities to interact with faculty and staff from similar backgrounds and provide opportunities for students to stay connected to, continue to learn from and contribute to their communities of origin. In addition, opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural engagement are associated with a number of positive outcomes for students. Museus (2014) also proposed that a collectivist, rather than individualist orientation, contributes to student success, particularly for students of color. Other indicators of culturally engaging campus environments are validation of the culturally diverse backgrounds within the student population, the presence of caring, committed institutional agents that "humanize" (p. 213) the environment, a proactive stance toward student support, and the availability of at least one institutional agent that can provide needed information or can connect students to other campus resources.

Theoretical Frameworks of the Study

While Bourdieu intended to critique social reproduction through education, one result of the application of the theory of cultural capital has been the labeling of some cultures and communities without access to forms of cultural capital valued by the dominant White middle class as culturally deprived. In comparison to other forms of capital, cultural capital is especially insidious because it is largely unseen and therefore its role in perpetuating class advantage can more easily be attributed to individual ability. And because the cultural knowledge carried by marginalized communities is de-valued, it is frequently overlooked (Yosso, 2006).

Two complementary frameworks have recently been proposed by higher education researchers to extend conceptualizations of capital beyond the Bourdieuean forms in order to better understand the resources available to students, particularly those from minoritized populations with potentially less access to conventional forms of capital, and to use that understanding to enhance the ways in which these students are served in higher education: 1) *funds of knowledge*, which had been in use primarily as a research and pedagogical tool in the K-12 context and has now been proposed in an expanded form for higher education research contexts (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012), and 2) *community cultural wealth*, which emerged conceptually from critical race theories (Yosso, 2005). Both frameworks offer an alternative approach to studying resources, one that highlights the knowledge, support, and other resources available to students through their families, peers, and their wider communities.

I adopted community cultural wealth as the primary theoretical framework for this study rather than funds of knowledge because community cultural wealth subsumes the resources included within funds of knowledge (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012), and the community cultural wealth framework, by naming broad, inter-related categories of capital, offers a clearer starting point for data analysis while still providing space for concepts that expand the categories. To sensitize my analysis to the ways in which intersecting identities such as immigration status, race, gender, and religion, among others, might have influenced the experiences of participants I also drew on Núñez's (2014a, 2014b) conceptual model of intersectionality for higher education research.

Community Cultural Wealth

Community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) is a framework developed as a challenge to deficit-based explanations of minoritized populations' educational attainment, in particular Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. The framework of community cultural wealth is used to highlight resources available within "Communities of Color" through the lens of critical race theory, which "refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and centering the experiences of People of Color" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74).

Community cultural wealth consists of "at least six forms of capital such as aspirational, social, linguistic, familial, navigational, and resistant capital" (p. 77). Each of these forms is summarized below as proposed by Yosso (2005). *Aspirational capital* is a form of cultural wealth related to resiliency and hopefulness for the future in spite of barriers and difficult present circumstances. *Linguistic capital* refers to the benefits available through and derived from multilingualism and multiculturalism. *Familial capital*, which extends family to the broader notion of kin or community, refers to the cultural knowledge gained through connections and ties with family and community. *Social capital* consists of the networks and communities through which information and assistance is shared. *Navigational capital,* which has also been referred to as academic invulnerability, is the skills for successfully moving through educational or other potentially racist systems not designed for the success of minoritized communities. *Resistant capital* includes skills and abilities to challenge inequality and subordination. Part of resistance is also passing on other forms of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).

Following the proposal of the community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005), Yosso (2006) published a collection of studies, *Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline,* and since then, a number of higher education scholars have employed the framework to challenge deficit-orientations towards students from marginalized groups and to highlight resources overlooked in conventional conceptualizations of capital. The community cultural wealth framework has been employed in a number of studies that seek to better understand the factors the contribute to postsecondary and persistence of students from groups who have been underrepresented in higher education, for example, undocumented Chicana students at a top research university (Huber, 2009); black students in a college preparatory program (Jayakumar, Vue, & Allen, 2013); Mexican Americans in doctoral programs (Espino, 2014), students of color in engineering programs (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016); and first generation college students in Australia (O'Shea, 2016).

The community cultural wealth framework was also utilized to better understand the resources drawn on by LM students as they negotiated institutional barriers and labels to access and navigate through a research university (Oropeza, Varghese, & Kanno, 2010). This qualitative, interview-based study focused on four participants from a larger study of LM students' transition from high school to university. For all four participants, a self-ascribed immigrant identity and family members' encouragement were sources of aspirational and familial capital. (The researchers noted that these two forms of capital were highly connected in their data and were therefore reported together.) Participants drew on family, community members, and institutional agents for information about applying to colleges and scholarships. Once at the university, some support programs,

such as a course for transfer students, provided access to additional navigational capital. However, the ESL program actually served to limit two of the students' access to navigation capital since, as ESL students, they were not eligible for tutoring and advising services offered to students identified as first-generation or "disadvantaged" (p. 226). Thus, the labels assigned to students could increase or decrease their access to certain capital. Linguistic capital was highly related to aspirational and familial capital for the participants in this study, according to the researchers, but the participants did not perceive that their multilingualism and multiculturalism was valued at the university. The researchers also reported that the four students resisted labels such as ESL, which for one student enabled access to services that had initially been denied, but for another meant a refusal to take advantage of services she was eligible for.

The study by Oropeza, Varghese, and Kanno (2010) demonstrated how the community cultural wealth framework could be employed to investigate how LM students mobilize capital from their community contexts and at the institution to successfully matriculate and persist in higher education. However, due to the study's setting at a research university and the participants' relatively greater access to cultural capital (as conventionally understood) than is typical of US-ELLs, the findings may not transfer to LM students in community colleges. For example, three of the four student participants had taken AP or IB courses in high school, and the parents of two of the four participants had college degrees. These characteristics set these participants apart from the profile of the typical US-ELL, who has had more limited access to advanced coursework in high school and is more likely to have parents who have never enrolled in

higher education. In addition, this typical US-ELL is more likely to be enrolled in a community college rather than a research university.

While the community cultural wealth framework has not yet been employed to study US-ELLs in the community college context, it was used to frame a recent investigation into the role of cultural and social capital in African American and Latina/o students' success in community colleges (Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014). While the researchers did not specify that they were working from this framework when describing the methodology of the study, they based their conceptualizations of social and cultural capital on Yosso's (2005) expanded descriptions of these resources and used Yosso's (2005) six forms of community cultural wealth to code the data in the first round of data analysis. Based on analysis of data drawn from focus group discussions with students and students' demographic data and academic records, the key sources of social capital reported were relationships with faculty, family support, and campus engagement and support. This study identified key sources of support for African American and Latino/a students at a community college, but because this study did not report where students began their coursework at the community college (e.g. ESL, if applicable, or developmental or college level), how many course or terms they had persisted or other individual student data, the results that are presented are quite general, and it was not clear how the demographic data and transcript information collected contributed to the findings as reported. More insight is needed to further understand how multiple student identities and institutional characteristics intersect with mobilization of resources to shape educational opportunity for students from traditionally marginalized groups.

Intersectionality for Higher Education Research.

Previous research has shown how the community cultural wealth framework can be applied to higher education research to identify the resources, knowledge, and skills that US-ELLs use to expand their educational opportunities, resources which might be unaccounted for by research based on frameworks of conventional forms of capital and overlooked by community college policies and programs based on a rigid native-nonnative speaker dichotomy informed by a monolingual ideology. Yet, though US-ELLs' ascribed identity as ESL students or English language learners is arguably one of the most salient of their identities as they matriculate, assess, and enroll in ESL courses, they also come to community college with multiple other identities that may both positively and negatively influence their educational experiences and attainment within educational institutions where some identities and not others are privileged (Núñez, 2014a). To "understand and describe the educational experiences of those with multiple social identities, [and] to explore how power dynamics and systems of oppression like racism interlock with other systems of domination to enhance or constrain educational opportunities for those with some identities and not others" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 49), Núñez (2014a, 2014b) proposed a multilevel model of intersectionality for higher education research. Because this model situates an individual's multiple identities within the power dynamics of the institution and society in general, it draws attention to the ways in which the institution itself is responsible for the educational inequities experienced by some groups. This is an important counter to the deficit thinking that is present in much of the literature on US-ELLs in higher education, which places responsibility for inequitable outcomes on perceived characteristics of certain groups. Embedding students' multiple

identities within the power structures of the institution and the broader societal context is key in better understanding how these socially constructed identities, including ESL or ELL status, are created and influence students' experiences. Drawing on theorizing from research in sociology, Núñez's model consists of three embedded levels: multiple social identities, domains of power, and historicity. These levels correspond to the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels that have been specified within existing theories of college student access, development, and success.

The first level, multiple social identities, when approached qualitatively, can "reveal how individuals make meaning and perceive power structures in shaping educational experiences according to their multiple identities" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 50) such as socioeconomic status, immigration status and documentation, race and ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexuality, and gender expression among others. In terms of the present study, given the tremendous diversity within the group identified as US-ELL (gender, nationality, immigration status, language proficiency, sexuality, language background, etc.) it might be argued that ESL placement or ELL status is not the most meaningful identity to highlight. However, evidence from the review of the higher education literature on this population shows that, despite the heterogeneity within the group, this ascribed identity impacts students' educational opportunity and, therefore, is a distinct identity that merits attention. Research that accounts for this identity, among multiple others, has the potential not only to improve our understanding of students' unique experiences but also to lead to policies and practices that can enhance US-ELLs' access and persistence at community colleges.

The second level of the multilevel model, domains of power, represents the (at least) "four domains of power that construct and reify" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 50) the multiple categories of student identity. In higher education, the organizational domain refers to the power institutions have to sort and channel students into different educational opportunities, for example, policies regarding assessment and placement of US-ELLs or additional course prerequisites for ELLs only. The representational domain highlights how the categories of identities are represented in the media and prevalent discourses and can include the impact of stereotype threat on groups of marginalized students. The intersubjective domain examines relationships and how those relationships can impact educational outcomes, such as students relationships with institutional agents. The experiential domain refers to individual interpretation and lived experiences, for example, how students see themselves and explain their own academic progress within the context of the institution.

The third level situates the first two within the broader context of the society at a certain place and time that shape how identity categories are perceived and how power is enacted toward them. It can include, for example, economic conditions, attitudes about immigration, social movements, and support for public education.

Núñez (2014a) suggested that qualitative methods which use interview techniques can be used to "collect data that speak to intersectionality" (p. 77). A multilevel model of intersectionality is especially apt for a case study because it moves beyond individual positionality to allow for inquiry into multiple levels of context. An intersectional analysis takes into account 'contextual influences' that are an essential aspect of case studies.

Because Núñez proposed this framework relatively recently, there have been few examples of its use in the literature beyond those provided by Núñez (2014a, 2014b; Núñez et al., 2016). Relles (2016) recently employed the framework to explore the implementation of experiential learning model of writing remediation. Beyond this, higher education researchers have recognized its utility and have called for its use to better understand how Latino/a students' multiple identities and contextual factors intersect to impact their experiences in higher education (e.g. Gonzales, 2015; Hatch, Garcia, & Sáenz, 2016).

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the fields and areas of interest within those fields that have included US-LLs as subjects of research. In doing so, I began to make the case that this group of students has been frequently overlooked or marginalized in the research literature. I then reviewed research that focused on the influence of ELL status on preparation for college while in high school, on postsecondary access, and on placement in college-level coursework. Community college testing and placement practices for US-ELLs were reviewed in some detail as studies in this area form the background for better understanding US-ELLs' community college matriculation and course-taking experiences. Evidence regarding the appropriateness of the educational pathways available to US-ELLS at community colleges was also reviewed, including what is known about the effects of ESL, developmental, and college-level placements on US-ELLs' persistence and attainment.

From this literature, the following picture emerged of US-ELLs in community colleges: US-ELLs, though a highly diverse group, are characterized by emerging

bilingualism (Garcia, 2009) and bicultural expertise (Nero, 2005), two characteristics that challenge the simplistic but commonly held notions that community college placement testing and instructional practices are based on: native speaker-native-born and nonnative speaker-newcomer and the valued states of English monolingualism or balanced bilingualism. In the perspective of this ideology, US-ELLs are framed as deficient. This has resulted in detrimental circumstances for US-ELLs in community colleges that limit their educational opportunities: Students may lack the information they need to make informed choices (Bunch & Endris, 2012); be placed into courses too low or too high for their language and academic proficiency (Bunch & Panayotova, 2009; Ferris, 2009; Salas et al., 2011); have unaddressed language learning needs (Hodara, 2015); experience extended educational pathways; experience isolation and marginalization (Salas, Portes, D'Amico, & Rios-Aguilar, 2011); and express resentment & resistance (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008).

I then turned to scholars who have argued that the placement testing and course options available to US-ELLs at community colleges are based on a monolingual ideology that sees these students' linguistically, academically, and culturally deficient. Because much of the previous research into US-ELLs' experience in higher education, particularly in community colleges, was oriented to identify what these students were missing, we are limited in we know about the resources they use might contribute to their success in higher education. However, there are currents within higher education research that have sought to understand the facilitative factors and resources, including conventional forms of capital, available to US-ELLs, and research in this area was included in this chapter.

Given that capital frameworks tend to reinforce a deficit perspective of non-dominant groups and are not as predictive of US-ELLs' postsecondary access and success as they are for EM and EP students (Núñez & Sparks, 2012; Kanno & Cromley, 2013; Kanno & Cromley, 2015), alternative frameworks are needed to inform research that counteracts the wide-spread deficit representations of US-ELLs in community colleges by identifying the resources utilized by US-ELLs who have successfully navigated matriculation and persisted, the purpose of this study. I identified two such frameworks, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and intersectionality for higher education research (Núñez (2014a, 2014b) as meeting the needs of this study. I concluded the chapter by describing in greater detail the use of these two frameworks for uncovering the resources US-ELLs employ to matriculate and persist in community colleges and to account for institutional and other factors in their experiences.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

The migration, school, and language learning backgrounds of US-ELLs may result in language and academic skills development distinct from that of ELL international students and adult immigrants, the students for whom ESL materials and pedagogy are frequently designed (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2009; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). In the higher education literature, US-ELLs are often characterized by the ways in which their language and academic skills deviate from that of international students and adult immigrants, a description that tends to cast US-ELLs as lacking reading, writing, and critical thinking skills (Blumenthal, 2002; Gawienowski & Holper, 2006) or even as academically, linguistically, and culturally deficient (Benesch, 2008; Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015; Harklau, 2000; Salas, et al., 2011). In addition, US-ELLs are potentially ill-served by the placement testing practices (Bunch et al., 2011) and ESL and developmental education programs (Patthey et al., 2009) commonly found at community colleges, which were constructed around the simplistic dualism of native-nonnative speaker, into which US-ELLs may not neatly fit (Benesch, 2008; Salas et al., 2011). There is evidence in the research literature that these circumstances may have a negative impact on US-ELLs' higher education outcomes (Benesch, 2008; Hodara, 2015; Patthey-Chavez et al., 2005; Razfar & Simon, 2011; Salas, et al. 2011).

As a way of countering deficit perspectives of US-ELLs and contributing to a more nuanced understanding of US-ELLs and their experiences in higher education, scholars have begun studying the strengths and resources drawn on by US-ELLs which are likely overlooked by deficit-based orientations. This study sought to contribute to this line of research by identifying the resources used by community college US-ELLs and

examining how the environment of the community college, and in particular the policies

and practices designed for ELLs, largely based on a simplistic and problematic native-

nonnative speaker binary, might mediate the ways in which students exploit these

resources. Thus, the purpose of this study was to provide evidence of resources leveraged

by US-ELLs to matriculate and persist at community colleges and of how their

educational experiences were shaped by community college policies and practices.

Ultimately, this resource-oriented investigation into US-ELLs' matriculation and

persistence was designed to counter the prevailing deficit orientation that limits

educational opportunity for US-ELLs at community colleges.

The following questions guided this research:

1. a. What resources do US-ELLs describe drawing on to matriculate, navigate

through ESL and basic writing courses, and successfully complete a first-level college

composition course at a community college?

b. How did students leverage these resources to expand their educational

opportunities at a community college?

2. How did community college policies and practices for US-ELLs shape these

students' matriculation and course-taking experiences?

This chapter describes the methods used to answer these questions. I begin with the

assumptions of the constructivist paradigm that informed the study's methodology and

the affordances of the frameworks of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and the

model of intersectionality for higher education research (Nuñez, 2016a, 2016b). This is

followed by a reflection on my positionality in respect to the study and its participants,

the personal and professional experiences that led to my interest in this area, the ways in

these may have biased the study, and how addressed these potential influences on the findings, including methods for establishing the trustworthiness of the study. The chapter ends with a detailed description of the study procedures. I describe the rationale behind the selection of the site and the participants, methods for participant recruitment, the types of data and methods for collecting and analyzing the data.

Research Perspective

The design and methodology of this study were guided by the principles of the constructivist paradigm as described by Mertens (2010) and Creswell (2007). The constructivist approach relies on the perspectives of the participants to construct knowledge around the research questions through research-participant interactions rather than working from the worldview that there is one objective view of reality that can be uncovered. And because researchers' experiences and background influence their interpretations, researchers working from this approach attend carefully to reflexivity. Grounded in constructivist principles, this study's data collection and analysis methods included in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant checks of analysis, both methods aimed at the co-creation of knowledge between researcher and participant. I also took the opportunity afforded by the dissertation format to compose an extended statement of positionality.

Theoretical Framework

This resource-oriented investigation drew on the frameworks of *community cultural wealth* (Yosso, 2005) and *intersectionality framework for higher education* (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) to guide data collection and analysis.

Community Cultural Wealth

The framework of community cultural wealth is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT). A way to "identify strengths that have been ignored or unrecognized among marginalized communities" (Hurtado, 2015, p. 294), the community cultural wealth framework is a challenge to racism, deficit-thinking toward communities of color, and conventional notions of capital (Yosso, 2005). The framework identifies at least six additional forms of capital that are overlooked in conceptualizations that rely on conventional notions of capital: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital. (These additional forms of capital were defined in Chapter 2.) In employing the community cultural wealth framework for a study of US-ELLs, I have followed the example of Oropeza et al. (2010), who applied the framework to an investigation into how LM students mobilized capital from their community contexts and at the institution to successfully matriculate and persist in higher education, though the present study is differentiated from Oropeza et al. (2010) through its focus on the community college sector, its relatively less-advantaged students, its consideration of broader institutional factors. (Oropez et al. [2010] was discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.)

Intersectionality for Higher Education

The model of intersectionality for higher education (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) was employed to "not only understand and describe the educational experiences of those with multiple social identities, but to explore how power dynamics and systems of oppression like racism interlock with other systems of domination to enhance or constrain educational opportunities for those with some identities and not others" (p. 49).

Especially appropriate for case studies, which situate individuals within their contexts, the three levels of the model of intersectionality for higher education (multiple social identities, domains of power, and historicity, described in more detail in Chapter 2), provided a framework for analyzing data at the individual level, within the institutional context, and within the broader contemporary context and for interpreting the findings. The model informed the development of the interview protocols and the first-round coding techniques.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

The qualitative research literature makes clear that a researcher's positionality in relation to the people and contexts under consideration is an inherent characteristic of the research process and that critical reflexivity is part of the foundation of high quality research (Mertens, 2009). My statement of positionality and reflexivity in the following section is informed by the *framework of researcher racial and cultural positionality* proposed by Milner (2007), which leads researchers to engage in critical self-reflection as well as reflection on their relationship with the people they conduct research with and then to expand the reflection to the broader contexts within which the research takes place. With this organizing principle in mind, in the following section I reflect on the personal and professional experiences that ultimately contributed to the development of this study. In the subsequent section, I then specify the ways that positionality may have influenced the study and how I attempted to address these potential influences.

Critical Reflection

I characterize the narrative that follows as one of overcoming ignorance. I am grateful for the greater understandings I gained as a result of the experiences I describe

below, but I acknowledge that overcoming the ignorance of members of the dominant group is never the responsibility of people from marginalized populations but the obligation of those from the dominant group. As a White, native born, (essentially) monolingual English speaker, I approach the study of US-ELLs as an outsider: I am not part of the immigrant linguistic minority communities of the population this study is concerned with, a population which includes students of diverse and marginalized linguistic, cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual identities, among others, and from various socioeconomic backgrounds. No recent relative of mine has experienced migration or schooling in a language other than their first.

I acknowledge that I have had the privileges of the White middle class in the United States and have never had my educational opportunities limited because of race, ethnicity, religion, or language and that this differentiates my experiences from those who are part of marginalized populations. Since immigrating to the U.S. in the late 19th century, my extended family has never been wealthy but had farm and business properties; today, we have access to favorable credit to buy reliable cars and houses in low-crime neighborhoods with relatively well-funded schools. There was never any uncertainty about whether my brothers and I would go to college. My grandmother completed the coursework towards a doctorate, both my parents attended college – my father completed a master's degree in his 60s – and I am a third-generation educator. I credit my parents for modeling a critical perspective toward educational, economic, social, and political systems, but as a family we have in general been beneficiaries of these systems which were designed to operate for the benefit of Whites in the U.S.

Within my teaching and research contexts, however, the most salient privilege I have is that of native speaker of English and proficiency in a high-status variety of the language. Through accident of birth, I acquired a language that has given me privileged access to schooling, banking, government, and employment, and I have not experienced discrimination based on perceived accent or varietal differences. I realize that the access to and success in education that came so easily to me was only tangentially related to my effort and intentions, yet the benefits have been fully mine to reap. I also acknowledge that as a community college instructor, I am in a position of power relative to community college students.

Personal and professional experiences. I grew up in the small town of Schuyler, Nebraska about 60 miles west of Omaha. My parents owned the bakery there, which had been my grandfather's. When I was a child, most of Schuyler's residents claimed German, Irish, or Czech heritage (Bohemian rye bread and *kolaches* were the bakery's biggest sellers), but beginning in the late 1980s immigrants from Central and South American began moving to Schuyler, mostly to work in the meat packing plant at the edge of town. A large extended family from Mexico moved into the house next door to ours, and my parents hired a baker from Peru whose family became close to mine. From these two families I learned something of the reasons behind their migrations, the challenges they faced with documentation, finding work, parenting or growing up in a new culture, learning English, and making connections in the community, though I was only vaguely aware of what I know now was the racism mixed in with the gratefulness of a previously shrinking tax base in the reception of the new arrivals in Schuyler.

During an internship for my master's program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and later after I graduated, I taught in Morocco. It seemed to me to be more obviously stratified by socioeconomic class there than in the U.S. (or perhaps I had just been unable to see it here), and I became acutely aware of the relationship family income and social networks had with greater educational opportunity. Later, as I studied higher education, I learned of the extensive empirical evidence of this correlation in the U.S., along with other factors such as race and ethnicity, and how our systems of merit- and need-based financial aid and open enrollment institutions can mask inequities in higher education access.

I have had the experience, then, of living in a country where my first language was not dominant, but my position there was one of privilege as an instructor at a prestigious private university, where English was the language of instruction and university operations. Outside of the university, when I tried to use Arabic at the little *hanoots* and the *souk* where I bought my food, the shopkeepers and anyone else standing in line typically laughed, corrected my pronunciation, and taught me new words. They seemed pleased at my effort and didn't seem to mind when my Arabic failed and we fell back on French. The language of our interactions was driven by my needs, not theirs, though I was the foreigner. It is impossible for me to imagine a similar scene unfolding in a 7-Eleven or Wal-Mart in the U.S., where many people do not seem to have patience for those learning English or an interest in people who speak other languages, especially if those language learners are Asian, African, or Latina/o. It had always puzzled me, this disinterest in and even active dislike of speakers of other languages learning English, coming from the same people who feel pride in their heritage and the few words of Czech

or Polish their grandmothers taught them. I was slow to understand that it is White supremacy that idolizes the Czech grandmother and resents and even hates the Guatemalan one.

I attended a large public research university for my undergraduate degree and small private college for my master's program. When I began teaching ESL at the community college where I am, at the time of this writing, in my tenth year on the faculty, I had had no experience with community colleges beyond a poetry class I had taken as a distance student (by mail!) in the summer after I graduated from high school. I had no understanding of community colleges' institutional history or role or positioning in the U.S. system of higher education, other than the feeling that they were not for students who got good grades in high school. Through my faculty role, however, I soon became immersed in the community college rhetoric of open access and the promise of educational opportunity, even as, over time, my role in the institution has problematized these notions for me.

In my first few years of teaching at a community college, my students were primarily adult U.S. resident learners of English, some long-term, some newcomers, and a few international students. Later, students who were recent graduates of U.S. high school would become more common, likely a result of changing placement testing practices. As a coordinator of the ESL program, when I started getting complaints from our ESL instructors about "the high school students," I made some adjustments to materials and topics. As my colleagues and I worked to understand the language learning histories, strengths, and needs of this group of students, which we referred to as generation 1.5, we found that our approaches to language instruction and our materials

did not serve them well. We were not sure what to do, but we did realize that there were few adjustments that could be made within our existing course sequences and testing and placement processes that would address the needs of US-ELLs.

While I have worked with many students whose stories stay with me and inform my teaching and research, I can trace the beginning of my awareness of the need to transform community colleges to make space for multilingual and multicultural students to two students with very different educational experiences. (Because I am no longer in touch with them to ask permission to share their experiences, I focus here on what I learned rather than providing personal details of their stories.) A few years after I started teaching community college ESL, a student was placed into my reading and writing course who told me she had moved to the U.S. with her family as a toddler, received all of her education here, and considered English her dominant language; she had even written for the school newspaper in high school. I tried to understand the testing and placement process that had resulted in her being classified as an ELL and discovered that, as Bunch et al. (2011) reported, the test you begin with is likely where you will end up: whether because of her surname or phenotype or for some other reason, she had been administered the ESL test and, scoring in the top range, been placed in the top ESL course. Later, when she was administered the English, rather than the ESL test, she placed into college composition, and I realized that her placement in ESL was not linked to her English proficiency but rather to how she was perceived by the institutional agent(s), whether advisors or testing center staff, that she encountered during the matriculation process. This was the beginning of my awareness of the classifications of

native-nonnative speaker as negotiated labels rather than linguistic descriptors, although I did not yet understand it in those terms.

The experiences of a second student alerted me to the deep problems within the native/non-native dichotomy that underlies the institutional systems that emergent bilinguals encounter. This student had primarily been living in the U.S. since he was seven, but he had migrated with his family between the U.S. and his country of birth several times. All of his formal schooling, through age 16 when he left high school and earned his GED certificate, was in the U.S.; he considered himself equally proficient in spoken English and Spanish and felt more comfortable writing in English. He had come to the community college to train as a medical interpreter, and, after the placement testing process, had been told to enroll in ESL and Spanish foreign language courses. I did what I could – based on a writing sample and our conversation, I moved him out of my ESL class into a developmental writing course – but I knew it was inadequate. As I learned more about community colleges' testing and placement processes and the courses available to students, I saw how these institutional structures had reduced this student's linguistic abilities and cultural experiences to make them worth less than their sum. Within these structures, this student, equally comfortable in two languages, who moved easily between two cultures, had successfully navigated an alternative pathway to a secondary credential, and now wanted to use his experiences and abilities to help others access health care was perceived as "semilingual" (Flores, 2017) and prevented from enrolling in the courses that would enable him to meet his educational goal. I don't know if he made it through the developmental writing, composition, and Spanish as a foreign language courses to get to and through the medical interpreting program. I hope he did –

he seemed motivated, and it is a growing field – but he would have had to beat the odds to do it.

As an ESL instructor at a community college, I have lots of opportunities to feel good about the work that I do helping students develop the English language skills necessary to participate in college courses, and since we first took real notice of US-ELLs in our classes, my department has made some revisions to the testing and placement process that help students move between ESL and English testing rather than getting dead-ended in one or the other and that provide more opportunities to move out of ESL coursework. But these adjustments were only achieved through contortions of the existing system rather than whole-scale transformation.

Broader Context of Study

Despite these positive changes, my position as community college ESL instructor is located within a structure that I have seen systematically limit educational opportunities for emergent bilinguals. In light of this, my stories of Mexican neighbors, Peruvian family friends, and Moroccan shopkeepers seem quaint, naïve, and entirely unnecessary to explain an interest in conducting a study that seeks to counter "raciolinguistic ideologies" (Flores, 2017, p. 79) that oppress students from language minority backgrounds. I also happen to be drafting this section on the day that President Trump pardoned former Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio for criminal contempt of court for defying an order to stop illegally detaining Latino/as on suspicion of being in the country illegally when there was no evidence that a state law had been broken. Arpaio, a notoriously corrupt and abusive sheriff, who terrorized the Latino/a population of Maricopa Country, held his elected post for *23 years*. In these days the news is also full

of reports of increasingly open activity of neo-Nazis and other White supremacists, the continuing police brutalization of Black men and women with almost no one held responsible, and the precarious position of hundreds of thousands of young people who had found some measure of stability and protection under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. In this current environment, non-action is indefensible. While this study, of course, does not address any of these issues directly, it does address theoretical and practical issues related to the educational opportunities of a group of students whose identities frequently intersect with those of other oppressed groups; further, it addresses a system in which I am complicit, so it seemed like a good place to start.

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers establish the credibility, or trustworthiness, of their studies' findings using practices which are distinct from those that build credibility in quantitative research (Tracy, 2010). Heeding Mertens's suggestion that "…validity is strengthened by critical self-reflection" (Mertens, 2009, p. 73), I engaged in critical reflexivity, as documented in the previous section. In this section, I address the tensions and challenges in conducting this research related to my positionality (Chadderton, 2012; Mertens, 2009) as someone who is both an outsider (does not identify as a member of a marginalized linguistic or racial group and has not experienced forms of oppression related to language or race) and an insider in relation to case, as an ESL faculty member at the study site, and the potential tensions of a White researcher utilizing a framework, community cultural wealth, which grew out of (Latina/o) Critical Race Theory (CRT)(Yosso, 2005).

Addressing Outsider Status

As someone who does not identify as a member of a marginalized racial or linguistic group, my experiences, perceptions, and biases may unconsciously influence my analysis of data drawn from interviews of US-ELLs who may identify as members of these groups. To address this, I retained a peer debriefer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2000 and Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) who identified as a member of a marginalized linguistic and ethic group to potentially challenge my assumptions and interpretations and suggest alternative perspectives if appropriate. In the end, while I did discuss emerging findings and potential implications with this peer, ELL status and English proficiency were the only aspects of student participants' identities that they reported playing a role in their community college matriculation and persistence experience. That is not to say that other aspects of their identity were not salient in their experience but that this did not emerge in my analysis of the data. I also sent each participant a summary of my analysis of data from their interviews for feedback but did not receive comments from student participants.

Addressing Insider Status

Mercer (2007) argued that insider-outsider status is more accurately seen as a continuum than a dichotomy in that, while some individual identities are fixed, others are bound by the research context (both time and place). While I was not an insider in terms of my personal and social identity with the student participants in this study, I was, as an ESL faculty member, an insider with respect to the case, the institutional agents, and the institution. This aspect of my positionality within the study context brought advantages and disadvantages related to access, intrusiveness, rapport and familiarity (Mercer, 2007).

Insider status can facilitate increased access to the research context. Because I am an ESL faculty member at the institution, students, faculty, and staff were likely more willing to participate in this study as it was seen as related to my position within the institution. I also could offer more flexibility to participants in scheduling interviews as I did not have to factor in travel time. Ease in recruiting and scheduling, however, were countered by the potential that my positionality may have intruded upon the research by increasing the possibility that student or institutional agents self-censured to avoid expressing opinions they believed I might disagree with or avoid criticizing courses or practices they associated me with. On other hand, the rapport with participants that comes from insider status may have allowed them to feel more comfortable speaking candidly. My familiarity with the institution brought with it competing possibilities as well. I have extensive knowledge of the policies and people that the student participants described encountering; however, this familiarity can also bring with it a blindness to preconceived notions about how things work that may have increased the risk of overlook conflicting perspectives offered by participants.

I used several of the commonly employed methods of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research to address concerns about these ways in which my insider status as a community college faculty member may have been able to influence the results of the study. Specifically, I employed the practices of *thick description*, *crystallization,* and *multivocality*, as described by Tracy (2010), to enhance the trustworthiness of my findings. A *thick description* of the research contexts results in a significant level of detail which enables readers to make conclusions of their own rather than relying on mine. Chapter 4 includes detailed descriptions of the community college site and its

relevant policies and practices from document review and from interviews with

institutional agents. *Crystallization* is an alternative to the more commonly employed

construct of triangulation (Mertens, 2009) which uses a variety of data sources,

frameworks, and/or multiple researchers to establish validity in qualitative research.

While both notions encourage the collection of multiple types of data from multiple

sources viewed through multiple frameworks, triangulation implies that these viewpoints,

or sides, come together to confirm a finding whereas crystallization suggests multifaceted

perspectives that do not necessarily converge on a single truth. Rather, crystallization

serves to increase the complexity and nuance of findings through the inclusion of

potentially conflicting perspectives. In this study, data from students, institutional agents,

website and document review, and my own observations and notes were used to represent

multiple perspectives. I did not attempt to reconcile these various perspectives but

employed them towards a better understanding of the case.

A commitment to *multivocality* prompts researchers to listen to participants with

empathy, work to understand them within their contexts, and center participants' voices

in the qualitative reporting. In a case study, however, there is a constant tension between

the centering of participants' voices and the attention paid to the quintain (Stake, 2006),

here, the resources leveraged by the student participants to matriculate and persist, as the

focus of the research. While this tension is never entirely resolvable, it can be addressed

through the design of the study, according to Stake (2006), who wrote that in a qualitative

multicase study "the individual cases should be studied to learn about their self-centering,

complexity, and situational uniqueness. Thus each is to be understood in depth, giving

little immediate attention to the quintain" (p. 6). I employed this approach to the analysis

of data from student participants as embedded units of analysis within the larger case. This attention to the particulars of each embedded unit of analysis was balanced by application of the research questions to the case as a whole, which allowed data from the embedded units of analysis to contribute to a greater understanding of the quintain without overgeneralizing.

Addressing Use of CRT

While this study did not employ CRT but rather utilized a framework that was developed from its principles, it is nonetheless important to mention here the potential tension in the use of CRT by White researchers. There are differing stances among Critical Race theorists whether it is appropriate for White scholars to employ CRT (Bergerson, 2003; Glover, 2007), with some arguing that CRT is not available for use by White researchers as it was "developed by people of color to understand and explain their experiences" (Bergerson, 2003, p. 59). Others have argued that it can be used by White scholars "to use their voices to challenge White privilege" (Grover, 2007, p. 200). In this, I followed the guidance given by Bergerson (2003) that the tenets of CRT, which gave rise to the development of the community cultural wealth framework used in the present study, can *inform* the work of White scholars who want to contribute to social justice. For the present study, CRT's "challenge to a dominant ideology" that limits educational opportunities and "the centrality of experiential knowledge" were logical foundational concepts for the research paradigm and conceptual framework of this study of the resources leveraged by US-ELLs to attend community college and the ways in which community college policies and practices influenced their educational experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations must be of primary importance in all research endeavors, above all those conducted with human subjects. Because all data are "filtered through [my] particular theoretical position and biases" (Merriam, 1998, p. 216) and because researcher's "interpretations are enriched by personal experience" (Stake, 2006, p. 87), I have been explicit about the research paradigm I identify with, my interest in and relationship to the topic, my positioning in relation to the participants and study site, and the measures I took to address these influences on the study's findings. These issues are the foundations of ethical research. The additional ethical considerations of informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality are discussed below.

Informed consent and voluntary participation. Mertens (2009) reminds researchers that "informed consent is a process, not just a form" (p. 221) and that potential participants must be given information about the study in a manner that is clear to them and that provides enough detail to allow the decision whether or not to participate to be based on a complete picture of what participation will entail, including the purpose of the interview, the number of interviews and the interview topics. Moreover, consent is constantly renegotiated (Mertens, 2009), and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. I provided all participants with a comprehensive informed consent form which included all of the elements suggested by Mertens (2009), the opportunity to ask questions about the research project before consenting and throughout the duration of the project, and the continued assurance that they could withdraw or modify their consent at any time.

Risks and benefits to participants. Researchers conducting studies that rely on interviews as a primary source of data must consider the potential effects that sharing personal information with the researcher may have on participants (Merriam, 1998). This study focused on resources utilized by students to matriculate and persist in a community college. Recounting personal success over challenges could be a positive experience for a participant; however, there was also the possibility that recalling difficult experiences might bring up painful and upsetting memories. As part of informed consent, potential participants were informed of this possible risk. In order to be prepared to refer participants to support services on campus, I had contact information for student advocacy services on each campus available at each interview.

Confidentiality. I protected the privacy of the participants in this study by masking identifying institutional and personal details in all reports and communications related to this study. Student participants were invited to choose a pseudonym which was used throughout the data, during data analysis, and in this dissertation manuscript. Institutional agent participants were referred to by general position titles rather than actual position titles to protect their privacy. All data was stored securely, and identifiers linking pseudonyms to participants and institutions were secured separately.

Research Design

This study employed an *embedded case study* design (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009) to examine resources for matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs in the context of one community college, Arbor Bridge Community College (ABCC), a pseudonym. Case studies, which "investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" are especially appropriate "when the boundaries between phenomenon and

context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The primary unit of analysis, or case, for this study was the ABCC's ELL-specific policies and practices encountered by students during matriculation and through persistence to a college-level composition course. The activities and experiences (Stake, 2006) of matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs -- as shaped in part by these policies and practices -- constituted the phenomenon of study. Embedded within this case were smaller units of analysis, US-ELL students themselves. The case and embedded units of analysis are further defined in the section that follows.

Definition of Case

The ELL-specific policies and practices at ABCC constituted the case in this study. Distinct from single case study where, for instance, the entire institution or one of its organizational units constitutes the case, or a multiple case study of two or more individuals, the case in this study was defined by drawing a boundary around the policies and practices at ABCC that were designed for ELLs specifically. The policies and practices towards a particular group can be seen as enactments of the institution's perspectives or beliefs about the particular group of students for which they are designed. Naturally, many practices and policies flow from particular programs. But here the case is not drawn around any program per se, including what might be identified as ABCC's ESL program, since programs of all sorts may contribute in various ways to practice and policies that affect US-ELLs. For example, some programmatic elements, such as ESL and developmental writing curricula and materials, can also be seen as enactments of institutional perspectives toward ELLs and shape US-ELLs' activities and experiences of

matriculation and persistence; however, the ESL or developmental writing programs are not considered in their entirety for the purposes of this study.

Defining the case as the policies and practices designed for ELLs necessarily excluded numerous other policies and practices that may impact US-ELLs' experiences. Certainly, in the course of matriculation and persistence, US-ELLs will encounter policies and practices *not* designed for ELLs in particular but for all students, such as registration deadlines, financial aid policies, and general advising practices, for example. However, the purposes of this study, these policies and practices are considered outside of the bounds of this case even though they surely shape US-ELLs students' matriculation and persistence. This is because the phenomenon of interest in this study is not matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs in general but the matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs as shaped by the policies and practices designed for ELLs in general – a group that US-ELLs may have little in common with yet are subject to the same policies and practices as.

Embedded units of analysis. Within this case, there are embedded units of analysis, or *mini-cases* (Stake, 2006): the US-ELLs themselves, whose experiences are shaped both by the resources they bring to bear toward matriculation and persistence and by the policies and practices designed for ELLs. College matriculation and persistence is a complex process, involving not only students but their families, peer groups, and other relationships including those with faculty and staff and other campus entities, enacted both within and outside the institutional context, which itself effects students' opportunities and experiences (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt & Moll, 2011). An embedded case study design allows for the exploration of the phenomenon under

investigation, or the quintain (Stake, 2006), at the level of case, here, the ELL-specific institutional policies and practices; at the level of the embedded units of analysis, the student participants who experiences these programs and processes; and as a phenomenon in its own right. In this study, each embedded unit of analysis each student participant, illuminated specific resources which risked being overlooked were a single holistic case study design employed.

Theoretical Framework

To conduct the study and frame the analysis, I relied on two theories to highlight the knowledge, support, and other resources available to students through their families, peers, and their wider communities and to situate student identity and community college persistence and matriculation within the institutional contexts: community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and intersectionality for higher education research (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). The broad, inter-related categories of resources identified within the community cultural wealth framework offered clear starting points for data collection and analysis while still providing space for concepts to expand the categories. I drew on the conceptual model of intersectionality for higher education research to sensitize my analysis to the ways in which intersecting identities such as immigration status, race, gender, and religion, among others, might have influenced the experiences of participants.

Selection of Site and Participants

This study was conducted at a comprehensive, public, associate's granting community college, Arbor Bridge Community College (ABCC), a pseudonym. ABCC is located in the state's largest city and is the largest community college with the largest ESL program within 100 miles of my location, offering the most ethnically and

linguistically diverse pool of potential participants from which to recruit. This site also afforded benefits to the study through my insider access to it and familiarity with it, as discussed in a previous section.

To ensure that student participants had had relatively recent experience with the quintain (Stake, 2006), matriculation and persistence of US-ELLs, the target population was defined as currently enrolled students who met the following inclusion criteria (Robinson, 2014): 1) currently enrolled in or successfully completed a first-level college composition course, 2) graduated from a U.S. high school within the last five years, and 3) completed at least one ESL or equivalent course upon enrolling at the community college.

The use of enrollment in or completion of a first-level college composition course as a criterion for participation stems from this course's status as a so-called gatekeeper or gateway course that is required of most students enrolled in community college degree and transfer programs. Gatekeeper courses tend to have low success rates, particularly for students who began in developmental education, preventing a significant number of students from progressing in their programs. The successful completion of a gatekeeper course such as first college-level English composition course has been found to be an indicator of subsequent postsecondary success (American Institutes for Research, 2013). These characteristics of gateway courses make them frequent milestones used to measure community college student progress (Leinbach & Jenkins, 2008). College-level composition courses can be especially challenging for nonnative English speakers in community colleges because it may be the first time in their community college courses

that they encounter instructors with no training or education in addressing issues specific to second language writing (Matsuda, Saenkhum, & Accardi, 2013).

After having obtained approval from the IRB at ABCC, I recruited student participants through instructors of first and second-level English composition courses, with an initial goal of at least ten student participants. When recruitment through English instructors resulted in only two participants, I then recruited through instructors of courses that students typically enrolled in concurrently with first-level composition or directly after. Participant recruitment resulted in seven students who met the participation criteria and consented to participate.

Institutional agents, defined for this study as members of the faculty and staff at ABCC, were recruited based on their role working with the student population of interest, US-ELLs. Because the ELL population was highly concentrated on one of ABCC's campuses, I limited recruitment of institutional agents to that campus. I used purposive sampling (Robinson, 2014) to identify and recruit institutional agents who, based on their role the institution, had experience working with US-ELLs. I strove for a sample of institutional agents that spanned both academic and student affairs and included both faculty and staff. Eleven institutional agents consented to participate.

Participant Information

Student participants. The student participants were all currently enrolled students at ABCC who had started at ABCC in ESL courses and had completed or were currently enrolled in College Composition 1. Table 1 reports demographic data for student participants as well as information about their educational experiences in high school and community college.

Institutional agents. Eleven faculty and professional staff members who work with US-ELLs at ABCC participated in the study. Table 2 gives the position of each and their role at the institution. Demographic information was not collected on these participants as the data from these participants were not analyzed individually but used to more fully describe the policies and practices that students experience and to gain an additional perspective on how those policies and practices influence students' experiences at ABCC. To maintain the confidentiality of the institutional agents who participated, Table 2 gives a general position title rather than the office title of each institutional agent participant along with a brief description of their role in working with US-ELLs at ABCC. When it was necessary in this text to retain the context of the institutional agent participant's role at ABCC, these participants are referred to by their general position titles.

Data Collection

The data collection methods are described in this section. Data was collected at the levels of the context (ABCC), the case (policies and practices designed for ELLs), and of the embedded units of analysis within the case (students).

Context and case. To provide context to the study of the case, the policies and practices designed for ELLs, institutional data was collected through document review and interviews of institutional agents.

Documents. To contribute to a thick description (Marriam, 1988; Stake, 2006; Tracy, 2010) of the context of the case, data about the institution was collected from documents requested from the institution or publicly available, such as on websites or in course catalogs, including, as available, institutional demographic information,

Table 1

Student Participant Information

Participant	Naw	Aung	13	Isabella	17	Marisol	Samjana
Age	22	21	19	21	19	23	20
Gender	F	M	F	F	F	F	F
Race or ethnicity *(specific ethnicity, if self-identified)*	Asian *(Karen)*	Asian *(Karen)*	Asian *(Chinese)*	Hispanic *(Mexican)*	Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian *(Nepali)*
Grade entered school in U.S.	9th	6th	5th	9th	6th	9th	9th
Level of ESL in 12th grade	Advanced	Advanced	None	Advanced	None	Advanced	Advanced
Level (of 5) of ESL at ABCC in first term (Written, Oral)	5, 3	3, 3	3, 5[a]	2, 5	5, none	2, 5	5, none
ESL, reading, writing developmental credit hours attempted	27	35	20[a]	36	16	16	10
After high school, more comfortable in English or another language; or equally comfortable in both							
Speaking and listening	Karen	Equally	English	Equally	English	Spanish	Nepali
Reading and writing	Equally	Equally	English	Equally	English	English	English
Pell Eligible	yes	yes	unknown	yes	yes	yes	yes
Applied to ABCC only or ABCC + other	ABCC + other	ABCC only	ABCC only	ABCC+ other	ABCC + other	ABCC only	ABCC + other

[a] Participant 13's course taking history is self-reported; she did not consent to review of transcript or testing record.

Table 2

Position and Role of Institutional Agent Participants

Position	Role at ABCC
Testing Center staff	Conducts placement testing on campus and in high schools, informs students of results, refers some students to noncredit ESL
Student Services Staff	
Advisor	Provides academic planning services and registration assistance
Director of college student support program	Administers college student support program
College student support program staff (2)	Provides student support services, some academic support services for participating students
Academic Support Staff and Faculty	
Learning Center staff	Provides academic support on a drop-in basis
English instructor (2)	Teaches developmental and/or college-level writing courses
ESL instructor (2)	Teaches ESL courses, evaluates writing samples for placement in ESL and English
Writing Center consultant	Provides one-on-one consultations to students at any stage of the writing process

procedures for assessment and placement of US-ELLs, along with descriptions of any

academic or student support services available for ELLs. Evidence about ESL and

developmental curriculum, prerequisites, and other intuitional policies and procedures

further enriched the case description.

Institutional agent interviews. As previously stated, the purpose of institutional

agent interviews was not to provide data for a specific student but to provide more data

about the case itself, the policies and practices designed for ELLs at ABCC. Therefore,

the institutional agent interviews focused on collecting data that would inform findings

for the second research question in particular, understanding how community college

policies and practices for ELLs shaped US-ELL students' educational experiences. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. (See Appendix B for institutional agent interview protocol.)

Embedded unit-level data. Data for each student participant were collected through demographic surveys, two rounds of interviews, and a review of each student participant's placement testing records and unofficial transcript.

Demographic information surveys. Participants were asked to complete an online demographic survey before the first interview. The survey gathered background information about each student and information that could be explored further during interviews. Survey items included questions about student identities, high school experiences, including ELL status and college choice. (See Appendix B for text of demographic information survey.)

Student participant interviews. Two 60- to 75-minute semi-structured interviews with each student participant comprised the primary source of data for this study. Designed to uncover instances of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and potentially additional or alternative sources of capital, both interviews focused on resources and facilitating factors that were drawn on during matriculation and course-taking as well as how the students leveraged those resources to matriculate and persist.

The first interview covered student experiences in and perceptions of preparing for college in high school, college choice, and matriculating at ABCC. The second interview focused on experiences in and perceptions of ESL, developmental and college-composition courses at ABCC. The second interview also included the influence of being an ELL on students' college experiences and the perceived impact of other aspects of

student identity on their experiences at ABCC, both aspects of the conceptual model of intersectionality for higher education research (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b), which was included in this study to sensitize the data collection protocol to the ways in which intersecting identities such as immigration status, race, gender, and religion, among others, might have influenced the experiences of participants. (See Appendix C for the student interview protocols.) Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Student placement testing records and unofficial transcript. Placement test and transcripts for each student participant, with the exception of Participant 13, her chosen pseudonym, who did not consent to the release of these records, were requested from the institution. Student placement testing records were reviewed to note which placement tests each student was given and the scores. To better understand each students' course-taking experiences, I also reviewed students' unofficial academic transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, aided by qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti (Version 6.1.0), proceeded in roughly the order data were collected: 1) institutional data collected via document and website review to provide context, 2) institutional agent interview transcripts, 3) student demographic surveys, 4) student interview transcripts, and 5) student placement test and unofficial transcripts. I drew on Saldaña's (2016) code-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry to structure the coding cycles, and applied recommended multiple case study procedures (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009) to the analysis of the embedded units within the case (student participants), first analyzing the embedded units before looking across the case itself. The data analysis process is described in more detail below.

Institutional data. I analyzed documents, including websites, catalogs, and other documents published or provided by the institution, in one cycle using attribute coding (Saldaña, 2016) to build the description of the institutional context. In addition to providing context for the case, the analysis of documents also informed the findings by providing evidence of the policies and practices of the community college toward US-ELLs.

Institutional agent interview analysis. First-cycle coding. The first round of analysis of the transcripts from interviews with institutional agents was conducted through a combination of attribute and hypothesis coding (Saldaña, 2016) using codes derived from the theoretical frameworks of the study, primarily intersectionality for higher education (Nuñez, 2014a, 2014b), with an openness to emergent themes throughout the process. Attribute coding allowed data on community college practices and policies for US-ELLs to be compiled in a standardized way for all interviews while hypothesis coding prepared the data for the second round of analysis. The hypothesis codes used for institutional agent interviews had the function of connecting institutional attributes to their potential influences, in other words, how these policies and practices (coded as attributes) shaped US-ELLs' educational experiences within the four domains of power, representational, intersubjective, experiential, and organizational (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). The hypothesis codes, their definitions from the literature, and an example of coded data from this study are presented in Appendix D.

Individual data. *Demographic information surveys.* Data from demographic surveys of student participants were compiled to provide context for the analysis of each student as a unit embedded within the case.

Student interview analysis. *First cycle coding.* Because the community cultural wealth framework offers such a clear structure for creating codes based on the framework, the analysis of student interview transcripts primarily utilized hypothesis coding (Saldaña, 2016) to identify the resources US-ELLs in the study drew on to matriculate and persist at ABCC, with space for additional themes that emerged in the process. To investigate how students leveraged these resources to expand their educational opportunities at ABCC and how their matriculation and course-taking experiences were shaped by the institutional context, an analysis technique that captures participants' potentially unique strategies and experiences and preserves their voices is preferable, so *in vivo* coding, which uses participants' words for the code (Saldaña, 2016) was employed.

Second cycle coding. Because of the structure provided by the hypothesis codes from the theoretical frameworks, the analysis of data to simply identify and name student resources, the first part of research question one, did not require a second cycle of coding. However, the *in vivo* codes generated in the first cycle required additional analysis to make sense of these *how* questions. To this end, I used pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016), which is a strategy for combining *in vivo* codes which use different words to refer to the same concept or activity. By grouping *in vivo* codes into a smaller number of categories, pattern coding allowed for the identification of emerging themes and of rival explanations within the case. An example of this are *in vivo* codes that were combined to create the category *facilitative factor.* This allowed *in vivo* codes that identified factors which, for example, eased students' transitions to community college, such as taking an ESL course

at ABCC during high school or a visit to campus with a friend, to be compiled into one

category.

      Analysis of embedded units (student participants). While this is the study of a

single case, I adopted a multiple-case study method (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin,

2009) to address the analysis of the units embedded within the case. The product of a

multiple case analysis is, in the terminology employed by Stake, (2006) *assertions* about

the quintain (or phenomenon under study, here, resources US-ELLs mobilized toward

matriculation and persistence within the case of a community college's policies and

practices toward ELLs). To that end, each embedded unit is examined for what it might

tell us about the quintain while maintaining the situationality of the unit within the case.

Adopting the guidelines of within-case analysis before cross-case analysis, I completed

within-*unit* analysis and findings before conducting analysis for the case as a whole.

      Analytical plan. Because of the large number of data collected from student and

institutional agent participants and document review, I opted to return to the methodical

guidelines of multiple case studies to handle the relationship of the embedded units to the

case as a whole, making the assumption that a data-rich study of a single case with

embedded units of analysis presents some similar challenges and opportunities as a

multiple-case study. Eisenhardt (1989), in a seminal paper on theory building in case

study research, noted evidence from prior research that the validity of cross-case findings

are threatened by researchers' "information-processing biases" (p. 540) such as making

premature conclusions based on limited evidence, being swayed by participants' use of

especially vivid language or by a participant's social status relative to other participants,

and unconsciously ignoring disconfirming evidence. To guard against these tendencies

and to increase the likelihood that unexpected findings will not be overlooked, an analytic plan is called for that "force(s) investigators to go beyond initial impressions, especially through the use of structured and diverse lenses on the data" (p. 541). I drew upon both Eisenhardt's (1989) recommendations and Stake's (2006) cross-case analysis method to create the following analytical plan.

Because the data for the first research question came primary from the embedded units in the case, the students themselves, the first step of the analysis was to compile the findings for the first research question for each embedded unit, or student. I then looked for "within-group similarities coupled with intergroup differences" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 540) to develop the findings at the level of the case.

To understand ABCC's policies and practices shaped students' matriculation and course-taking experiences (the second research question), I used a similar procedure except the analysis occurred at the level of the case. First, I compiled all references to policies and practices from the student participant and institutional participant data then connected evidence from both student and institutional agent participants of the ways in which these structures influenced student experiences to the compiled policies and practices. As tentative findings for the second research question emerged, they were recorded. I then returned to each of the embedded units to look for confirming and disconfirming evidence of these preliminarily findings and revised or discarded findings as necessary. These revised and confirmed findings, drawn from student and institutional agent data, could then be applied to the case as a whole.

Presentation of findings. The findings of this case study with embedded units of analysis are presented in two chapters, the first providing contextual institutional and

participant findings that were then used to develop the synthesized findings presented in the second. Chapter 4 describes aspects of the institutional context in which the case is situated and findings about the case itself: the institution's policies and practices that specifically impact ELLs. Chapter 4 also provides findings for the individual student participants whose experiences served as embedded units of analysis within the case. Chapter 5 presents the synthesized findings of the research questions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the research paradigm and theoretical framework that guided the study. I then engaged in critical reflection of my positionality relative to the population the study is concerned with and of how my past personal and professional experiences and current contexts have contributed to my interest in this area of study. Next, I specified some of the ways that positionality may influence the study and described the ways I contended with these issues, including methods for establishing trustworthiness and addressing important ethical issues. In the section on research design, I provided a rationale for conducting a case study with multiple embedded units of analysis and described site and participant selection strategies. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the methods employed for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: Contextual Findings

The purpose of this study was to provide evidence of the personal, institutional, and community resources leveraged by US-ELLs to matriculate and persist at community colleges and of how their educational experiences were shaped by community college policies and practices. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. a. What resources do US-ELLs describe drawing on to matriculate, navigate through ESL and basic writing courses, and successfully complete a first-level college composition course at a community college?

   b. How did students leverage these resources to expand their educational opportunities at a community college?

2. How did community college policies and practices for US-ELLs shape these students' matriculation and course-taking experiences?

This chapter provides a description of the institutional context within which the case is situated, case findings related to the policies and practices for ELLs in place at ABCC, and contextual individual findings for each of the student participants embedded within the case. The chapter begins with information about ABCC that provides the necessary context for the case findings that follow. Except where otherwise noted, the data the contributed to the findings in this section were drawn from a review of documents which were publicly available on the institution's website, including data compiled by ABCC's Institutional Research office and made publicly available on the web. Following the description of the context are findings about the case itself: the policies and practices at ABCC designed for ELLs. These include assessment testing, advising and placement practices and the ESL and developmental writing programs at

ABCC. The findings in this section also made use of publicly available documents but are derived primarily from the interview data with institutional agents. The third section of this chapter provides an introduction to the student participants in the study and presents contextual findings that serve as a background for the synthesized findings presented in the following chapter. The student experiences matriculating and persisting at ABCC provide units of analysis within the case that allow for a more complete understand of the case: the ELL-related policies and practices in effect at ABCC.

Context: Arbor Bluff Community College (ABCC)

Arbor Bluff Community College (ABCC) is large, two-year, public associate's college (Carnegie classification, n.d.) with a four-county urban and suburban service area, located in a metropolitan area with a population of over 500,000 in the Great Plains region of the U.S. Across its multiple campuses and centers, ABCC offers over 100 career and transfer programs, in addition to non-credit, continuing education, workforce development, and dual credit programs. The credit ESL program is offered at on one of the main campuses; noncredit ESL courses are part of the adult education program and are offered at multiple locations. The population this study focuses on, ELLs who have graduated from high school in the U.S., are not typically enrolled in noncredit ESL courses. Table 3 shows enrollment and demographic information for ABCC. The institution does not report enrollment information disaggregated by residency status, ELL status, or ESL enrollment; students enrolled in the credit ESL program are included in the enrollment totals and demographic information reported in Table 3. According to data provided by the ABCC testing center (name masked for confidentiality, personal

communication, February 28, 2018), nearly 12% of the nearly 9,000 students who had

taken a placement test in 2016 indicated that English was not their first language.

Table 3

ABCC Enrollment and Student Demographic Information

Annual enrollment	*Credit*	*Non-Credit*
(Unduplicated headcount, rounded to thousands)	25,000	20,000
% women	54.7	*
% non-white	33.8	*
% part-time	69.1	*
Average age	26.7	*
Enrollment by program type		
Academic transfer/general studies	13,000	n/a
Career-technical education	8000	n/a
Undecided	4000	n/a

*Unreported

The Case: Policies and Practices for ELLs at ABCC

This section describes the case the policies and practices that ELLs experience at

ABCC during matriculation and course-taking: assessment testing, advising and

placement practices and the ESL and developmental writing sequences at ABCC.

Assessment Testing

As an open-enrollment institution, ABCC does not have admissions criteria;

rather, students who intend to register for classes at ABCC are asked to first complete

assessment, or placement, testing to determine their placement in the math, English, and

reading sequences; some students also take assessments in science and information

technology. Most students are referred to assessment testing by an advisor or other staff member in student services; some students come directly to a Testing Center because they have heard about the required assessments from friends or others. High school students who are participants in a college readiness program affiliated with ABCC or who are applying for scholarships specific to ABCC often complete the assessment testing before graduation at their high school in a session proctored by a staff member of ABCC's Testing Center.

Testing process. To begin the assessments, whether in ABCC's Testing Center or off-site, the web-based college placement testing program routes test-takers through a series of questions designed by ABCC to determine whether the testing session begins with the ESL or the "regular" (non-ESL) reading assessment. Figure 1, *Placement Test Routing Questions,* depicts this flow of questions. Test-takers who indicate that English is not their first language are asked whether they graduated, or will graduate, from high school in the U.S. If no, the ESL listening and reading tests are administered. If they indicate they graduated or will graduate from high school in the U.S., they are asked when they began school in the U.S. If they began school in the U.S. in 8th grade or earlier, they are routed to the non-ESL reading test.

Figure 1

Placement Test Routing Questions
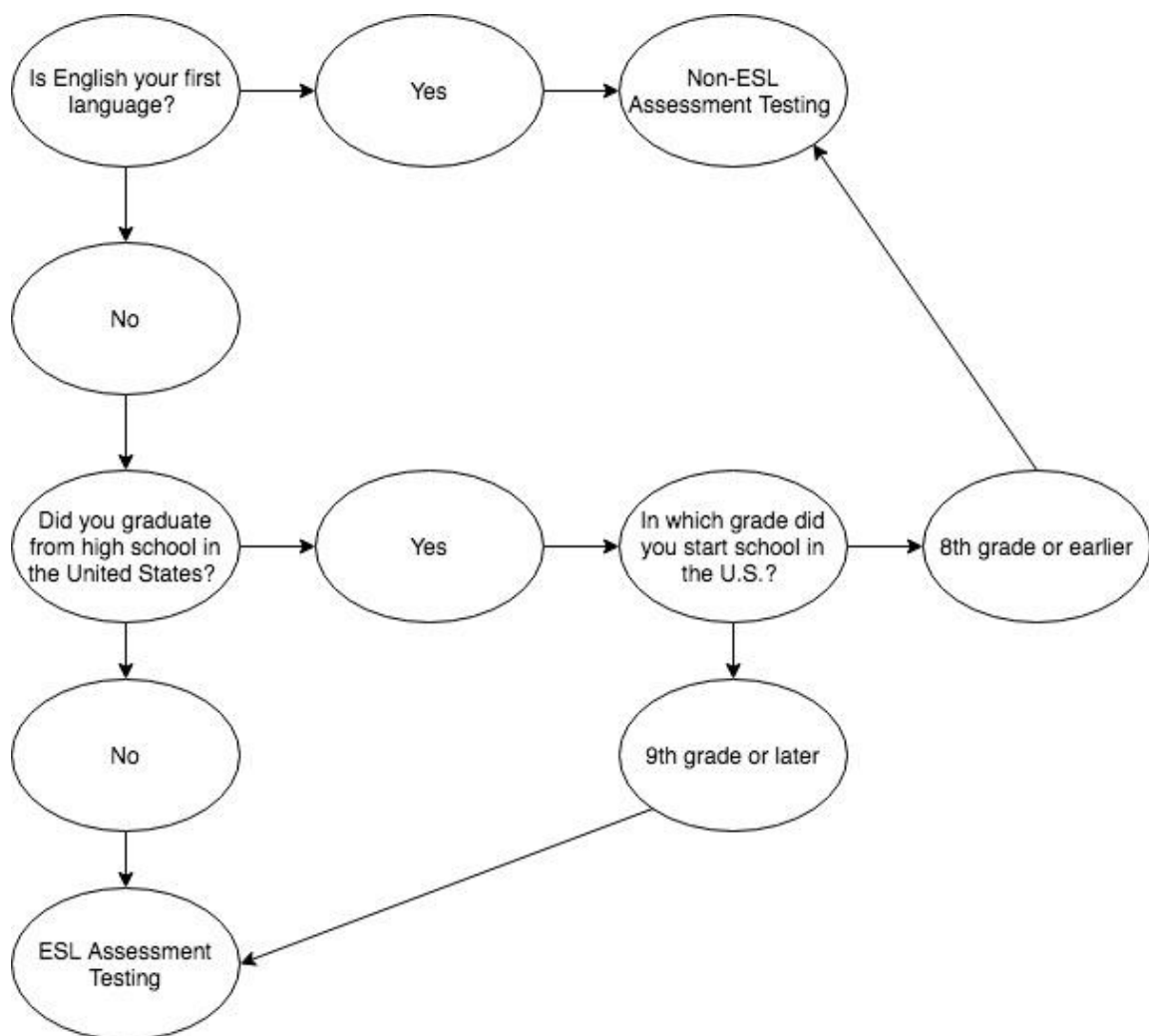
If students indicate they began school in the U.S. in 9th grade or later, they are routed to the ESL reading and listening tests. Until recently, 6th and 7th grades were used as the cutoff for determining ESL or non-ESL initial testing; the change to using 8th and 9th grades came after ESL faculty reported that many US-ELLs were being placed into ESL courses who already had strong English language skills, particularly in speaking.

While the ESL and developmental reading and writing sequences at ABCC are envisioned by faculty as representing a progression of courses leading to college-level composition, the score ranges of the ESL and non-ESL placements tests are not to be

understood as a continuum. Most students who begin with ESL testing are placed into ESL coursework, and most students who begin with non-ESL testing are not placed into ESL coursework but into developmental writing and reading or, infrequently, college-level writing. There is, however, a mechanism for test-takers to move into the other set of tests. If the score on the ESL reading test is in the top range of scores, the test-taker is routed into the non-ESL reading test and then asked produce a sample of writing in response to one of several prompts. Based on the reading test score and the evaluation of the writing sample by ESL faculty in consultation with English faculty, this test-taker could be placed into ESL or developmental or college-level English coursework. In the other direction, test-takers who indicated English was not their first language and whose score on the non-ESL reading test was below the cutoff for Developmental Writing 1 are subsequently routed into the ESL tests.

For comparison, test-takers who indicate that English *is* their first language are placed into developmental or college-level English coursework based on the reading test score only, no writing sample required. Test-takers who indicate that English is their first language and whose score on the (non-ESL) reading test is below the cutoff for Developmental Writing 1 are referred to the noncredit Adult Education program. Figure 2, *Placement Testing and Course Sequences for ELLs*, depicts these routes through the tests and the resulting course placements. Recall that the process to determine which test is administered initially is determined by the routing questions depicted in Figure 1.

Placement into ESL, Reading, and English Course Sequences

The ESL course sequence at ABCC, as shown in Figure 2, includes five levels each of ESL reading and writing (Written Communication 1-5) and ESL speaking and

listening (Oral Communication 1-5), two levels of ESL Grammar, and one course in

pronunciation. The developmental reading and writing sequence consists of two levels of

developmental writing and one developmental reading course.

Figure 2

Placement Testing and Course Sequences for ELLs

See Figure 1 for routing questions that determine initial starting point, ESL or non-ESL assessment
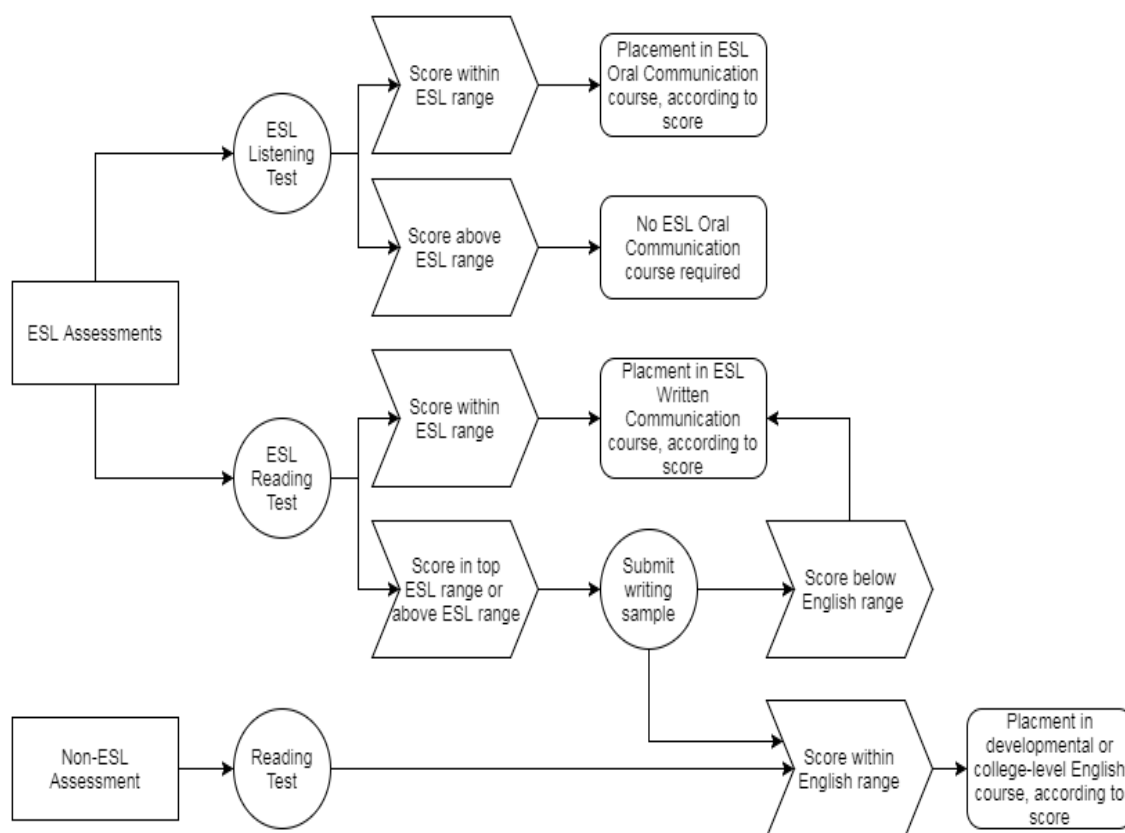
Students who place into the first level of the ESL sequence may take a total of

seventeen ESL and developmental writing and reading courses before they are able to

enroll in a college-level composition course. The courses in the ESL and developmental

sequences vary in credit hours, but the complete sequence consists of 84 quarter credits,

the equivalent of 56 semester credits. Since many of those seventeen course serve as prerequisites for the subsequent course in the sequence, the entire sequence requires a minimum of seven terms to complete. ESL faculty had recently received institutional data showing that the completion rates of former ESL students were lower than completion rates of students who did not take ESL.

Embedded Units within the Case: Student Participants

This section presents brief individual findings for each of the student participants in this study. The data sources for these finding were the two interviews conducted with each student participant and the reviews of students' assessment testing records and transcripts. To aid the reader, Table 4 provides a description of the institutional resources mentioned by participants and appearing in this section.

Table 4

Student Support Programs and Services Utilized by Student Participants*

Writing Center	Offers one-on-one writing consultations on any written work at any stage of the writing process
Learning Center	Offers tutoring services, walk-in assistance for a wide variety of academic and non-academic needs, workshops, and a computer lab
Reading Center	Offers one-on-one consultations aimed at improving students' comprehension of written texts and assignments
Heartland College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)	Federally funded program for students from migrant farm-work backgrounds providing financial resources, academic support, and social events; focused on the transition to college and the first year.
Federal TRIO Programs/ Student Support Services (TRIO/SSS)	Federally funded on-campus program providing tutoring, advising, assistance with financial aid and scholarships, and transfer information and assistance.

College Possible	An AmeriCorps organization. Provides low-income high school students with a programming to prepare for college, a mentor, and a peer network. Services continue until college graduation.
EducationQuest	Nonprofit organization providing free college planning services, including assistance applying for financial aid and scholarships.
Avenue Scholars	A private foundation that helps low-income students train for and secure employment that offers financial stability. Provides academic and financial support starting in high school through college to career.
THRIVE Club	Leadership club for immigrant and refugee students, held at the five local public high schools.
Bilingual liaison	Staff position within the public school district; coordinates parents, school, and community communications.

*Program descriptions include information from participant data and from review of program websites.

Naw

Naw, who is from the Karen ethnic group of Burma, spent much of her childhood in a refugee camp in Thailand. She came to the U.S. with her family when she was 15, and started school in the U.S. in 9th grade. Naw was considered an ELL in her last year of high school and, when she graduated, felt more comfortable communicating orally in her first language, Karen, and more comfortable reading and writing in English. She was enrolled at ABCC as a general education transfer student and planned to major in education after transferring to the university.

Naw chose to enroll at ABCC because she wanted to take ESL courses: "If I had come here in middle school maybe I don't want ESL class. But because I don't think my English is good enough so I take ESL class … I needed everything. Grammar,

vocabulary, everything… speaking, listening." She found that the ESL courses were "a little hard" but, because they went "step by step," they got easier.

The summer after she graduated from high school, Naw participated in an ungraded college orientation and took a college student success course, earning a B in both of these (non ESL) courses. These courses were part of her participation in the TRiO program. Then, in the fall of her first year, she took the two ESL courses she had been placed into, ESL Written Communication Level 5 and ESL Oral Communication Level 3, along with a human relations skills course required of all students at ABCC, passing both of the former and earning an A in the latter. Naw found the focus on grammar in her ESL courses to be helpful because in high school, "we did not study grammar, we just wrote the essay and then the teacher changed the grammar. We didn't have grammar classes."

In subsequent quarters, Naw completed two additional ESL Oral Communications courses while taking developmental reading and writing courses and college-level algebra. In every quarter that Naw spent in the ESL program, she also passed a college-level course in addition to her ESL courses. At the time of our interviews, she had passed college composition, psychology, history, information technology, and public speaking courses but was not yet taking courses in her major, education.

Aung

Aung, like Naw, is from the Karen ethnic group of Burma and spent most of his childhood in a refugee camp in Thailand. When he was 12, Aung moved with his family from Thailand to Florida, where he began school in the U.S. in 7th grade; his family moved to his current city when he was in 11th grade. Aung was considered an ELL in his last year of high school and, when he graduated, felt equally comfortable communicating

orally and reading and writing in English as he did in Karen, the language he spoke at home.

At ABCC, Aung placed into the third level of the ESL program in both Written Communication and Oral Communication. Despite having attended school in the US since 7th grade, Aung felt that his writing was weak and that he needed to study more grammar. Because of this, he chose to accept his ESL placement even though he "didn't pay attention" to the assessment test and likely had not done as well as he could have on the ESL assessment. In fact, his excitement about being in college outweighed his doubts about his placement: "When I started college, I started ESL, I was really proud, I was happy where I started." But his enthusiasm waned as he progressed through his ESL courses:

> After two quarters, I felt like I needed to move to the advanced classes. I felt like I wasted time in the ESL classes. But at first, I thought I should go step by step but then I realized I need to go and keep going. I felt I was wasting time in those classes.

He took only ESL courses for the first two quarters of college and then in his third quarter took his final ESL requirement and earned As in two college-level courses, a student success course and the course in human relations. In the following quarters, he completed the developmental sequences in math, reading, and English, earning a B in College Composition 1. He started but did not complete a quarter in the automotive technology program and, at the time of our interview, had recently changed his major to criminal justice and was enrolled in two introductory courses in that discipline.

Participant 13

Participant 13, who chose to be referred to by a participant number instead of a pseudonym, was adopted from China at 10 years old and started school in the U.S. in 5th grade. She was the youngest of five siblings in an exclusively English-speaking household. In fact, when she was adopted, her family did not know anyone who spoke Chinese, so Participant 13 was unable to communicate with anyone in her new home until she was able to do so in English. She did not have ESL services in high school and when she graduated she felt comfortable using English for all communicative and academic purposes. She intended to take general education courses at ABCC before transferring to the local university to major in special education.

Because Participant 13 did not consent to a review of her transcript or placement test record, information about her course-taking experiences was assembled from the two interviews. According to the routing questions to determine which test, ESL or non-ESL, new students begin the assessment testing process with, Participant 13 would have started with the non-ESL tests. However, likely because she expressed interest in ESL courses to the advisor she met with initially, she took the ESL tests and placed into and completed ESL Grammar 2 at ABCC while still in high school. She then enrolled in the final ESL Oral Communications course and Developmental Writing 1 during her first term at ABCC after graduating from high school. Participant 13 expressed concern that her skills in English were not accurately captured by the test and that she was placed too low in the ESL sequence of courses.

> I kind of felt [these classes were] easy for me, I don't know why, but I just felt
>
> like I understand way more than the [placement] test thought I would have. I feel

like every test [in the class] was easy for me. The teacher asked me all those

things, like do you understand, and I was like, yeah, I do. But I took it any way

just to pass the class to be done with it, but I felt like it was easy… I didn't do my

homework until the last minute because I didn't feel like I needed to like I would

do it on the way there, my parents dropped me off.

Despite having enrolled in ESL courses at ABCC due to her perception of needing

additional language development before attempting college courses, what Participant 13

found in ESL at ABCC did not address her language learning needs.

I feel like I needed reading and writing extra because the writing just takes me

forever to do. I just need to work on like how to make it make sense kind of. Not

fill in the blank but grammar that you actually write the paper with. I would read

stuff but just have a hard time understanding what it was about.

At the time of our interview, she had completed the developmental reading and

English sequence and was enrolled in College Composition 1.

Samjana

Samjana moved to the U.S. as refugee from Nepal when she was 15 years old; she

started school in the U.S. in 9th grade. When she graduated from high school, she felt

more comfortable speaking Nepali than English but more comfortable writing in English

than Nepali. At the time of our interview, she was enrolled in the pre-nursing program at

ABCC, but she intended to complete the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program

at ABCC.

Samjana took just one ESL course at ABCC, the final Written Communications

course. She struggled at the start.

At that time, I think I don't want to go to college. It was more stress for me. English is my second language, and I feel sad to talk with people, and I feel sad to make friends, and I feel a little bit lonely also. [But] I have a lot of friends after that. I make a lot of friends from Thailand, from Burma. And the teacher is really nice. She speaks very slow. At first, if people speak very fast, I did not understand, and I am a little bit embarrassed also. But the teacher is really nice, she speaks slow and when I don't understand, I ask many questions to her and she gave me a lot of chances to do homework, she helps me, and I go to tutoring. And there also they really help me, and I passed that class.

At the time of our interview, Samjana had completed the developmental reading and English sequences and College Composition 1 at ABCC, was on her third course in the developmental math sequence, and had completed the student success course and the course in human relations. She was ready to start general education courses and had registered for a college-level psychology course along with College Composition 2 for the following quarter.

Isabella

When Isabella was 16 years old, she left her parents and two younger siblings in Mexico and moved to her aunt and uncle's home in the U.S. for better educational opportunity, including higher education. She wanted to start as a high school student in the U.S. so she would be prepared for college. By the time she graduated from high school she felt equally comfortable using Spanish and English. She had not yet decided on a major and was enrolled as a general studies transfer student.

Isabella placed into the second level of ESL Written Communications and the fifth and final level of ESL Oral Communications. She took ESL courses for four terms, adding math and the course in human relations during her final term in ESL. She subsequently completed the development reading, English, and math sequences. At the time of our interview she had completed several general education courses including public speaking and was enrolled in College Composition 2 and College Algebra.

Despite having felt unprepared for college and wanting to take ESL at ABCC, Isabella found herself impatient as she moved through three levels of ESL. "I wanted to go out and start my regular classes. Because I thought that I was wasting my time, you know? It was really easy, so just move on."

Participant 17

Participant 17, who chose to be referred to by a participant number instead of a pseudonym, moved to U.S. from Mexico when she was 12 years old and in the 6th grade. By the time she graduated from high school, she was more comfortable using English than Spanish for all communication and academic purposes. Participant 17's major is criminal justice, and her career goal is to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation or elsewhere in a crime lab or in forensic investigations.

Even though she was required to take just one ESL course at ABCC, the final Written Communications course, Participant 17 was "surprised and disappointed" by her placement test results. She took this ESL course in her first quarter along with the course in human relations. She did not pass Written Communications the first quarter but retook it successfully her second quarter. She also repeated a developmental reading course. At

the time of our interview, she had completed the developmental English and reading sequence and was taking courses in criminal justice and finance.

For Participant 17, the development of English language skills was the primary difficulty she faced in community college, but because she was already speaking very fluently with few markers of a learner of English, she was not always identified as needing language support. However, as she had been in high school, she was keenly aware of the limits of her vocabulary. In high school, she worked individually with an English teacher to develop her vocabulary for college, but at ABCC she did not find the resources she needed. She suggested implementing small support groups for English learners to support their course-taking. "I think they could like have a group… and the ESL students can go through the words that they don't know, like vocabulary or stuff like that that they don't know that they need to know."

Marisol

Marisol moved to the U.S. from El Salvador and began school in the U.S. when she was in 9th grade. When she finished high school, she was more comfortable writing in English than in her native Spanish but more comfortable speaking and listening in Spanish than English. Her educational goal was to earn a bachelor of science in nursing and at the time of our interview was preparing to apply to the nursing program at ABCC.

Marisol placed into the second level of ESL Written Communications and the fifth and final level of ESL Oral Communications. Marisol accepted the validity of the placement tests and was not surprised to place into ESL courses at ABCC. She was, however, dismayed to find that the courses covered some of the same materials she had studied in high school:

I know I don't speak my English… very well, I don't write very well, I don't read very well. But I did everything in these [college] classes already in high school, and I say why I'm going to take these classes, and I'm going to pay for these classes, when I already saw this in high school. But at the same time, I say because you scored this and this on the test.

Marisol perceived limitations in her use of English and sought opportunity to develop her skills, but did not find that the courses offered by ABCC were useful.

Right in my first class I was like this is really boring… I think it was about knowing grammar, nouns, and everything like that, and I said I kind of know what these are. I felt that it was more easy than high school classes. Like I went back…. I kind of know what is noun, pronouns, like this. I don't know when I'm going to use this, yes, you use it but it's basic. These classes I'm in now, I don't need anything that I learned, those pronouns, how to identify a noun, how to identify a verb, those things like that. No one's asking me what is a noun.

What the classes did not cover but Marisol wanted was "how to express themselves, how to talk, how to have a fluent speaking with the other people." In addition, because the ESL courses Marisol was enrolled in were credit courses, the time she spent in them counted toward her years of scholarship eligibility. This was frustrating to her as she "was worried about losing time in these classes."

She took two quarters of ESL courses before being re-tested by her ESL teacher, which allowed her to skip the remaining ESL and developmental writing courses and go directly into College Composition 1. At the time of our interview, she had completed the developmental math sequence, College Composition 2, biology, chemistry, and human

growth and development, and had earned her Certified Nursing Assistant

(CNA)certificate. She was registered for anatomy and physiology and college algebra,

the final pre-requisites for application to the nursing program.

Despite the many courses she has successfully completed at ABCC, Marisol

attributed her continued academic challenges to a still-developing proficiency in

academic English.

Sometimes I feel lost. I don't know what to study because they just give this book

and say, well, we are going to see chapter 6 and you have to read it by yourself

and you know, maybe you are focusing on something but maybe you forget about

the other part and the exam is going to be on that one, so you are kind of

confused, because you don't really have an idea what is going on, what to expect

from the class.

Chapter Summary

Drawing on data from document review and interviews with institutional agent

and student participants, this chapter presented a description of the institutional context

within which the case is situated, case findings related to the policies and practices for

ELLs in place at ABCC, and contextual individual findings for each of the student

participants embedded within the case.

ABCC, like most community colleges, is considered an open-enrollment

institution, with no admissions requirements beyond a high school diploma, GED, or, for

some career pathways, demonstration of ability to benefit, typically through assessment

testing. Open enrollment institutions such as community colleges are understood to play

an important role in providing access to higher education, whether to career and technical

training or to the transfer path, for populations that do not meet the criteria for entrance to selective colleges and universities. However, the findings presented in this chapter raise concerns that the term *open enrollment* should not be taken to mean that the institution provides open access to these career and transfer pathways. For the US-ELLs participating in this study and other ELLs who are unable to demonstrate readiness for college-level coursework via the institution's assessment testing process, the only courses readily available are ESL and developmental coursework, which provide credit hours toward a degree but do not meet any graduation requirements. Further, there are concerns, reported in this chapter from student participant data and expanded on in the next, that the ESL courses offered to US-ELLs do not address their language learning needs. The following chapter presents findings that were synthesized from student and institutional agent data on the impact of the practices and policies described in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: Case Findings

Overview

These contextual findings presented in the previous chapter naturally lead to the question of how the student participants' experiences were shaped by these potentially problematic assessment and placement policies and practices, which is the issue at the heart of this study. To answer this question, I looked to the intersection of student and institution, or, more specifically, where students experience institutional policy. Because institutional policy is operationalized as institutional practice, which is itself enacted by institutional agents, I also considered the perspectives of institutional agents and how these perspectives shaped the ways in which they enacted the institution's policies. But because I had observed, in both my professional experience and in the higher education literature reviewed in Chapter 2, that US-ELLs were frequently depicted as embodying the weakest aspects of both native speakers at the developmental level (e.g. poor academic preparedness, lack of initiative) and non-native English speakers (e.g. poor academic English language skills), I believed it was important to ground the study in an understanding of these students' experiences and the strengths and resources they bring to bear in college matriculation and persistence before considering how their experiences were shaped by the policies and practices they encountered at community college.

The first section of this chapter presents findings for the first research question: what resources do US-ELLs describe drawing on to matriculate, navigate through ESL and basic writing courses, and successfully complete a first-level college composition course at a community college? The US-ELLs in this study drew on a variety of personal, institutional, and community resources to motivate, inform, and support their college

attendance and persistence. They drew motivation to attend and persist in college from their families and communities. They drew on English and non-English-dominant resources to learn about and navigate college – evidence of a benefit of their bilingualism and biculturalism. And, contrary to how they were depicted by several faculty participants in this study, US-ELLs drew on self-awareness of their language and academic skills to make a decision about where to attend college and made extensive use of institutional resources to support their language and academic development once they were there, though not always in ways that institutional agents expected.

How the US-ELLs leveraged the resources to support their community college matriculation and persistence was influenced by the institutional policies and practices they experienced in the course of matriculation and persistence. In response to the second research question (How did community college policies and practices for US-ELLs shape these students' matriculation and course-taking experiences?), the second section of this chapter provides evidence that community college policies and practices towards ELLs, specifically those surrounding assessment and placement and ESL course content, materials, and instructional methods, may limit the educational opportunities of US-ELLs.

This study provides evidence that supports the concern that the standardized assessment testing in place at ABCC and at the majority of community colleges (Scott-Clayton, 2012) may not be valid for US-ELLs due to issues with the routing questions which determine whether US-ELLs begin with the ESL or non-ESL assessments (a determination which may have a greater impact on where students are ultimately placed than language or academic proficiency), the features of US-ELLs' bilingualism, which

may be emerging or developing rather than balanced, the conditions of the testing environment, and the lack of information students have about the assessments and their use. These concerns about the validity of the assessment tests are significant because of the restrictive placement practices that rely on results from these standardized assessments, which have the effect of limiting access to college-level courses and career-training programs for those students who do not meet the set score cut offs. Frequently limited then to ESL and developmental reading and writing courses for several terms, US-ELLs may begin their college experiences in courses whose content and instructional methods were viewed as inappropriate for US-ELLs by the majority of student and institutional agent participants alike.

These policies and practices are designed and enacted by institutional agents – though not always by the same institutional agents – whose perceptions of US-ELLs' influence both the design of policies and their enactment through practice. Because individual institutional agents hold different perspectives on US-ELLs, how students experience the policies and practices can vary widely according to the perceptions of US-ELLs held by the individual institutional agents the student encounters. While there were exceptions noted in the findings below, in interviews, faculty and academic-support staff tended to focus on US-ELLs' academic and linguistic deficits whereas student-support staff tended to focus on US-ELLs' non-academic strengths and barriers, leading the latter group to appear to be more willing to provide holistic, rather than narrowly academic, support. In addition, sympathetic institutional agents were willing to circumvent established practices for US-ELLs when they perceived that the practices for ELLs were detrimental to US-ELLs in particular.

US-ELLs Drew an a Variety of Personal, Institutional, and Community Resources

to Motivate, Inform, and Support College Attendance and Persistence

Despite the challenges presented by being an English learner and (except in the case of Participant 13) the first in their families to attend college, the US-ELLs in this study reported drawing on a variety of personal, institution, and community resources to motivate, inform, and support their college attendance and persistence. Their attendance and persistence in college was motivated by their families and a sense of responsibility to their communities. To learn about and navigate college, students benefited from their bilingualism and biculturalism, drawing on both English and non-English-dominant resources. Finally, contrary to perceptions common in the higher education literature and on the part of some of the institutional agents who participated in this study, students drew on an awareness of their language and academic skills to inform their college choice, once enrolled at ABCC, leveraged institutional resources to support their language and academic development, though not always in ways that institutional agents expected.

US-ELLs were Motivated to Attend and Persist in College by Family and Community

The student participants in this study received encouragement from their families and communities to attend college. Some of the student participants were also motivated in part by sense of responsibility towards their families and communities. Sometimes this sense of responsibility toward their families caused tension in students' intent to persist.

Naw. Naw, unlike the other student participants in this study, did not talk about her family when considering what motivated her attendance and persistence in college.

Naw's intent to become a teacher and work with refugee students came from her experiences as a student in a school for Karen refugees in Thailand and a desire to serve her community.

> When I was a child in Thailand, I went to school, and I saw the teacher, and I wanted to be a teacher, so that's why I wanted to go to college and then get a degree.

Aung. Aung began thinking about going to college when his family moved to Florida when he was in 7th grade. "I thought going to college would make my life better, that's all I thought. I thought I would be helpful to my family." Aung saw college as a way of expanding his opportunities to find work that would help support his parents and siblings.

As the oldest child, Aung feels responsible for his parents and for his three younger siblings. While this sense of responsibility often served as a motivation for Aung to persist in college, it also complicated his college attendance. He was not sure what he wanted to study and did not feel he had time to complete a bachelor's degree before he needed to contribute more to the family. He described feeling anxious about deciding between going to work and continuing in college; the weight of this dilemma was clear as he spoke.

> I don't think I'm going to go for the bachelor's. I don't know if my parents can wait that long. I mean they want me to have a good job, but for me as an older son, I think I have more responsibility. An associate's degree would be fine for me.My parents wouldn't stop me if I quit school. But I still want to go to school, you know. I want to get a degree. Because a high school diploma doesn't help that

much, you know. But hopefully they will try to work a little bit longer for me to

be able to pay their bills and stuff. If I don't work, who's going to help my parents

with paying the bills and stuff? [My sister also feels responsible for helping,] but

I don't want her to, I want her to focus more on school because I'm her big

brother. I don't want her to end up like me or something. It's just that I don't want

her to drop her class like me. And there's two more brothers, and I feel like,

should I help my parents? Because some of my friends say oh you should drop the

school, you should stop the school and work and help your parents because you

still have two little brothers. At least I want them to go to university and graduate.

That is my dream for my brothers.

Because Aung felt such responsibility to his family, he worked to become

independent. As a result, he was able to become a resource for others. We asked to what

he attributed his success thus far, he replied:

My hard work. As the older brother, I try to get things done by myself. If I don't

know, I go ask, but I do everything by myself. I drive in my car and just go by

myself. Not like some of my friends. If I know something, I help my friends.

[Some of them] are kind of shy and stuff. I'm not trying to say shy, but they are

scared to do this and nervous.

Participant 13. Participant 13 provided an interesting counter example for this

finding. Participant 13's family background was unique among student participants in

this study in that she did not migrate to the U.S. with her family but was adopted by an

English-speaking U.S. family with parents and older siblings who had attended, or were

attending, college. Participant 13 did not report feeling a sense of responsibility to her

family or to a community as the other participants did but rather felt that she had to work harder just to keep up with her family and relied on them for information about and assistance with college going.

> I just get jealous because my siblings, it takes me like an extra two hours to do something, that's the biggest part of it: the effort. But since I came here later it was hard for me… I feel like I need more time to study.

> **Samjana.** Because of the conditions facing her family in the refugee camp in Nepal where she grew up, Samjana had not thought about attending college before coming to the U.S.

> When I was in Nepal I didn't think about that because it's hard to go to college [there]. There is not nice education, so I had to pay for education and my mom only worked, so it was really hard to provide food, so how would I go to college? I never think like that.

Now, both Samjana and her sister, who is also studying in a health-related field, are motivated by a desire to help their family and community, both here and in Nepal.

> I'm thinking about my community, they are not educated people. So that makes me do hard work. Because in my country, there is not nice health. They don't care about refugee people. A lot of refugee people die of diseases. Because we are refugees, and they don't much care for us. That really pushes us to work at health. I want to work here but I want to support them [in Nepal]. Send money. I don't want to live there because there is a lot of violence. I am second, lower caste and they really discriminate, so I don't want to live there.

Samjana's parents have also encouraged her to be persistent in continuing in college, both
so that she can be of service to their community and so that she can avoid the hard,
manual labor that they both do because of their lack of formal education and proficiency
in English. Samjana sees how hard they work and wants to be able to help them in the
future.

> They really pushed me. They told me that they are not educated and don't know
> anything, so you have to help [us] and your community. There's a lot of
> uneducated people, so don't be like us. Because my parents they work [as laborers
> at a meat processing plant], and they told me, don't work [there], just get a nice
> job. So they really push me and encourage me. When they come at night, when I
> see their clothes are all meat and blood, and [how] the first time my mom got
> fever when she work, and my father hand is swelling the first time. It's really hard
> there. And that really encouraged me to do something better than there, and I have
> to help my mom and my dad. I think like that.

When asked who or what had been most instrumental to her success so far, Samjana
pointed out that she would have not been able to attend college had her family remained
in Nepal, so her parents' work to get the family resettled in the U.S. was the essential
starting point of her educational journey.

> If they don't come here in the US, I wouldn't be here and have this nice education.
> In my country, there is not nice education. There is a lot of violence. And here,
> they don't discriminate by caste, by last name. In my country, they really
> discriminate [against] the caste and girls. So I didn't have the chance to go to
> college because [I was a] refugee. And a refugee didn't have lot of money or

enough food. If [my] parents didn't think about future, if they don't think about moving here, I wouldn't be here.

When asked about what personal strengths Samjana draws on to be success, she described developing a motivation to succeed in education to prove wrong her father, who held the belief that "girls cannot do nothing. That makes me do hard work and I have to achieve education. So he will say girl can do everything. Like [that] makes me push." To prove their father wrong, Samjana and her sisters felt a responsibility to push themselves to succeed, and Samjana received encouragement and support from her older sister who was at that time a student at the local university. For Samjana, getting an education was an act of resistance to her father's beliefs about women and the poor treatment of refugees in Nepal.

Isabella. To pursue her desire to learn English and go to college in the U.S., Isabella drew on family support both in Mexico and in the U.S. Her parents allowed her to move to the U.S. to attend high school and live with her aunt and uncle and cousins so that she could learn English to prepare for college. She cites their support as key in what was for her a difficult period.

I was so scared of it, to be honest. Because I thought that my English.... that was hard, honestly, to move here and start another language [in high school]. And yeah, it was really scary to start a new chapter in my life. Like you know with new people and more classes, more harder, you know? Yeah, it was really scary.

Participant 17. Participant 17 was motivated to be the first person in her family to finish high school and go to college.

I really wanted to go because nobody in my family went to college. They all

dropped out of high school, so I'm the first one who made it to college and kept

studying. I'm pretty excited about that.

Participant 17's mother, who lives in Mexico, and her father were also excited for her

and encouraged her to attend college, and this motivated her to enroll.

[My family] really wanted me to do something with my life since they didn't have

the chance to do it. They really wanted me to go and get my degree and have a

better job and a better life. I think it was just to make my family proud, especially

my mom.

Marisol. When Marisol's determination to attend college waivered in the face of

a number of obstacles, Marisol's mother provided support and encouragement. "I was

talking to mom… I'm not going to college, and she said just go maybe for a year, try it,

and look at how to survive, and now I am here." Marisol is a single mother of a young

daughter; providing for and being an example for her daughter is her biggest source of

motivation.

If I go to college and graduate, my daughter will have more opportunities than

me. And will see this model, this role-model, you know, my mom went to college

so I have to go to college too.

US-ELLs Drew on English and Non-English-Dominant Resources to Learn about and Navigate College

The student participants in this study reported actively engaging with individuals

and programs in high school to learn about college-going and to navigate college once

enrolled. They drew on English and non-English dominant individuals and resources in

their social networks, high schools, and at ABCC, often using one contact to confirm or explain information obtained from another. That students had access to both English and non-English-dominant resources provides evidence of a benefit of bilingual and biculturalism.

Naw. College was not on Naw's mind when she started as a new high school student in a new country, but she began thinking about going to college after connecting with College Possible in 10th grade. "I went to high school in 9th grade. In 9th grade, I didn't know about college. In 10th grade College Possible called us to come [meet] with them, and then I was interested in it there." She also gathered information about college from her high school guidance counselor, ESL teacher, and friends.

She focused her preparations on the tasks necessary for college attendance--"Get a high school diploma (and) a resume to apply for financial aid"-- and did not consider whether what she was learning was preparing her academically for college. Naw participated in College Possible programs and services until she graduated. She reported getting most of her information about college from this organization. Naw also turned to College Possible for assistance applying for financial aid and scholarships: "I couldn't have done it on my own … The questions they ask are confusing."

Once at ABCC, Naw wove together a network of support that included institutional services and programs and informal support from classmates, friends and family. Resources such as College Possible, her academic advisor, and TRIO often overlapped in the services they provided, and Naw used one to confirm her understanding of the other, such as when she went to College Possible advisor for an explanation of what the ABCC advisor had said. She operated within the institution (her program

advisor, TRIO advisor), but then turned to outside support (College Possible advisor, friends, an aunt that had recently finished university) to check her understanding. "If I was alone, I don't think I could do it because I wouldn't understand."

Naw continued to work with her advisor at College Possible as she registered for courses. "The first time when I came to college, I registered with my [TRIO] advisor on … campus. And then if I didn't like the class, College Possible can help us every time." Naw also relied on the College Possible advisor to provide information about ABCC: "Take this class, or this class, this class is better, some things like that. Sometimes I'm confused with what my advisor said, [College Possible] help me understand." While College Possible advisors do not work from ABCC's campus, Naw reported that she emailed her College Possible advisor when she wanted to meet on campus: "If we email her, she will come." Even as she finished ESL and developmental reading and writing courses, Naw continued to go to her advisor at College Possible for registration assistance, despite the organization not having an office on campus.

Aung. In high school, Aung got information about college from his teachers, counselors, and friends but was confused by the sometimes conflicting perceptions of college he gathered from these sources.

> Some people said it was easy, some said it was hard, some said it was fun, some said it was boring. Some friends had just started college, and then they felt too much pressure on them, and they said it was too hard, they couldn't do it. But some who were trying hard said it was fun.

Aung believed that being in his current city, where there is a larger population of Karen than there had been where he lived in Florida, made a significant contribution to

getting him through high school and into college. This larger population meant more connections to draw on.

> [In Florida] there aren't people or organizations that will help you, that will encourage you to go to college. Back in Florida, not one Karen student graduated from high school. They either dropped out or didn't receive a high school diploma. But here there is a lot [of Karen people]. That's the reason my parents moved us here. If I was back in Florida, I would never have had a high school diploma or get into college. I think there is not enough connection with Karen people and how to ask help or advice… It's not just one person, it's many people. There is a church that will try to tell parents, go to this and go to that and get involved in this stuff…They will try to tell you to go to this program, go to that college, it is very nice and cheap, and their kid goes there too."

Another benefit of having a relatively larger population of Karen speakers was that the public school district in the city employs a Karen speaker as a bilingual liaison to serve Karen students and their families.

> There was a Karen teacher, an interpreter, and if we did something wrong or something great, she would call our parents and tell them that. She told us to take this class and this and that's how I graduated from high school. I also worked hard, myself. … She told us to stay on the right path. I mean she doesn't really worry about [me] that much, I'm a good student myself, but for other people. She told us to come to school every day, don't skip, not to mess around. Some parents had to show up because of their kids; some parents did not have to. Most of the students did pretty well. We would stay after school sometimes in high school and

[she] would help us apply for this and this, but back in there [in Florida] there is

no community that would help us like that.

Even after he had graduated from high school, during his first term at ABCC, Aung

learned of financial and student services resources from the bilingual liaison, who called

him to tell him about TRIO and Heartland Camp, "After a few months… I got involved

in those programs and they started helping me, guiding me, choosing my classes for me."

Aung believed that the bilingual liaison was the most important resource in getting him to

college.

Aung did not arrive at ABCC with a supportive network like Naw. His first

contact at ABCC was with the financial aid office, which sent him a letter requesting

additional documents.

Before college started, the school sent me a financial aid letter saying that I still

needed to complete this part and this part. I kind of went on my own because

there is nobody to help me, not even a friend. I didn't think about there being an

advisor who could help me return the documents that I needed… I just drove back

and forth, back and forth. If they needed anything, I just came back, and if they

needed any other documents, I just came back by myself.

Aung was proud of his independence, and his self-reliance served him well in

getting his financial aid sorted out; however, remembering what he felt were missed

opportunities in high school because he had not made a connection with his high school

counselor, he saw that having a relationship with an institutional agent meant he could

receive support that was not available to students who stayed unconnected in college

I still have a lot of friends who are not very connected to their advisors and they still keep taking classes that aren't needed. Me, at first, I took a class that was not needed, too, but my [TRIO] advisor called me and said try to stay on the right path.

Participant 13. Participant 13 began thinking about college in high school and got most of her information about college from her parents, who were both college graduates, and her older siblings. They told her to go on as many college visits as possible and talked about the importance of preparing to take the ACT. She took practice ACT tests in high school several times. Participant 13 also talked about going to college with high school classmates, but she reported that these conversations were limited to where they were thinking about attending and their excitement about living away from home, on campus.

Participant 13 drew on her family's college-going knowledge and her mother's experiences working with clients who were learners of English. She cited her parents as most helpful in getting to college. At her mother's suggestion, Participant 13 came to ABCC while still in high school to take ESL courses to prepare for college coursework.

My mom used to be a social worker… She has a lot of families who English is a second language, and she knows a lot of people around there who take a lot of ESL classes to prepare for regular classes, so that helps her to prepare me to go take ESL first, because she knows all the families who took that class and she worked with those people.

Samjana. When she started high school, Samjana focused on learning English and completing her coursework for the first two years. In addition, she participated in

THRIVE. "They taught me a lot. I have to talk in front of people. It improve my English and my confidence." In 11th grade, she learned about college in the U.S. by attending college tours and participating in other college preparation activities at her high school.

> When I passed 9th grade and 10th grade, I didn't think about college. I just wanted to finish high school. I don't know. I never thought I could speak English. At that time, I didn't think about any college, and I didn't know the names of any colleges. Before I was thinking about college, I go to visit college like [local private college and public university] with my school counselor also. And [then] I'm thinking about college. I want to come to this college… Without see, a little bit not interest, but when I see, interest. When I got to 11th grade, at that time, I see College Possible and THRIVE and they were talking about college, so that time I decision to come.

Samjana also worked with College Possible to fill out college and scholarship applications.

> When I was in high school, my College Possible coach he helped me to fill out the FAFSA, make ID and password. My parents never went to college, and they never go to school, and my College Possible teacher he helped me to make my FAFSA and my parents FAFSA ID.

> Samjana prepared for ("College Possible get me to practice two times") and took the ACT while in high school.

> To get started at ABCC, Samjana worked with an ABCC advisor and an advisor from College Possible. The ABCC advisor told Samjana which steps needed completing and the College Possible advisor then helped her complete them.

First day I came here I meet with my advisor…and they told me to take English

freshman test, and I asked my College Possible [advisor] also, and she help me to

take freshman test here.

Samjana used both an on-campus advisor and her College Possible advisor to help her

navigate ABCC.

[College Possible] comes to campus if I need help. I text her, and she will come to

college to visit me and meet me when I need help…. They help really. I can make

an appointment with them, and they can talk with me and help me.

An additional resource that supported Samjana's college-going was her church.

Samjana's family converted from Hinduism to Christianity before coming to the U.S. and

Samjana credited her church community here with providing opportunities to practice

English and a helpful personal relationship.

In here, Christians really give more priority for Christians, and I go to Bible

school at my church. They give the Bible school, English preachers, and that also

helped me to improve my English because they preach in English. The Sunday

school teacher helped me to make my resume in high school, so that helped me to

apply for scholarships.

Isabella. Rather than working with the college and career counselors in her high

school, Isabella got most of her information about college going from the Spanish-

speaking bilingual liaisons employed at her high school, who also took students on

college tours.

They helped me a lot, a lot, a lot. When I had questions, I always went to their

office and talked to them because they speak Spanish, and it's really easy for me

to talk with people because of my first language. And they told me, you should apply for scholarships when you get to be junior year, you need to apply for scholarships, and this and that. And they helped me a lot about college… And every time when she got a new paper for a scholarship or things like that she always sent me a pass to my classes so that way I can go with her and talk about those things. She really pushed me to apply for scholarships and she give me information, she printed papers from her email, and I really appreciate her. She's really awesome.

There was also an ESL teacher at her high school who helped students learn about college and complete applications. "She actually made a club, an ESL club, where seniors can go over there and apply for a scholarship and she helps us to write essays and things like that. She was really nice." When Isabella was a senior in high school, a representative of EducationQuest visited her high school to help students complete applications for financial aid. "He explained everything. And that was really easy because he speaks Spanish and I did some questions about things that I didn't get." IAFter enrolling at ABCC, Isabella continued to go to EducationQuest to visit the same staff member who came to her high school.

Participant 17. Participant 17 did not think about going to college until she was in the 11th grade.

I was nervous and scared. I'm an immigrant. At that moment, I really didn't think about like the opportunities that I will have. So, one of my counselors, he started talking to me, and he started helping me. [He] started talking to me about different

types of scholarships that they have and that they offer to immigrants. That really, really helped me a lot.

Participant 17 more about going to college through her participation in the THRIVE club.

We would meet after school every Thursday and it will help us with college applications, essays, stuff like that. And there were some couple students from UNO who came and talked to us about their story about college and how hard it was and that really made me push forward to going to college, too.

To prepare for college, Participant 17 worked with a teacher outside of class.

Actually, my English teacher she would like help me with vocabulary and grammar, the ones that I needed the most. And it did improve a lot my vocabulary and my language because there were some words that I didn't know so she helped me a lot with that.

Participant 17's primary source of support for attending college was her high school teachers. "They really encouraged me to get involved in college and get my degree."

Marisol. Marisol did not think about college until she had been in school in the U.S. for a year.

When I [started] in high school, I didn't even think to finish high school… but when I was in, I think, 10th grade I was thinking that I should go to college, that it is possible for me, that I have opportunities here, maybe.

During high school, Marisol had baby girl, and the difficulties of raising her daughter and going to high school, coupled with other challenges, caused Marisol to doubt whether it was, indeed, possible for her to attend college.

I don't have my English perfect, I don't have money, and I have my daughter, so

should I start working or [go to]college? So I was undecided what to do. I felt

that it would be so hard. I didn't know. I felt like this would be impossible for me

to be here. Because of the language, the money, and my daughter.

Marisol was encouraged by her high school counselor who told her, "You should try it,

you know, to apply for scholarships and everything like that. And I said, you think so that

I can get it? And he said, just try." Marisol believed that this support from her high

school counselor had the biggest impact on her college attendance as she would not have

applied for scholarships or to colleges had he not encouraged her to. "[He] said you have

the potential to go. You can qualify for scholarships, you can get scholarships. And I

said, Ok, if you apply you can get it right now."

Marisol applied for scholarships but experienced setbacks that nearly derailed her

interest in college again.

I submitted my application for my scholarship [but] I had a little trouble with that

because I didn't have my residency yet, I only had my paperwork, and then they

said they need my residency. I had already submitted my application, so my

counselor was trying to talk to them and everything like that and then two weeks

after they was dealing with that, my residency came and I just showed them that.

And I was saying, Ok I don't want any more scholarships, I don't want to go

college… It was so frustrating! And I was like OK, if I don't get it, I don't get it.

And I decided to work and not come to college.

Further discouraging her were visits from current college students to Marisol's

high school that had the unattended effect of making college sound "more complex, more

difficult" than she had even imagined it to be. These well-intentioned visits caused additional confusion and frustration for Marisol, who had few other sources of information about college.

> They had these meetings for 12th graders at school and bring those people to say the college they are studying at and what they did to prepare or get there, and explain like what to do when you get the first quarter of the college, and what is next, and all that kind of stuff. But I didn't have any idea. They talk and talk and talk but I didn't understand what they were saying. They said, when you finish the first quarter, you have to do this and you have to talk to those people, but I wasn't that social of a person that had a lot of friends and get involved in groups or anything like that, so I didn't have any source or any idea about how that system in college worked. They say it is very difficult, you have to have a lot of time, you have to study, you have to pay, and I say I don't have time for that. I just felt that I couldn't do it. I had my daughter, I have to worry about her now.

Despite this, with the encouragement of her mother, then-boyfriend, and high school counselor, Marisol pushed through the scholarship application process and was awarded a full-tuition scholarship that could be applied to ABCC or the local public university. While in high school, Marisol also completed an application for federal student aid with the help of a bilingual EducationQuest staff member who visited her high school. Marisol had never been to ABCC's financial aid office and instead continued to visit the same staff member at EducationQuest.

Marisol did not report having a sustained relationship with an institutional agent on campus that supported her college going and navigation. In contrast to the other

participants who reported drawing on sometimes multiple institutional resources to matriculate and navigate the institution, Marisol came to ABCC to enroll on her own and had a difficult experience.

> The first day that I came to college to register for classes, I [went] to Student Services and said, I want to sign to up for college, and they gave me all these papers that I had to submit, and they wrote my name wrong, and then I was put in the wrong [major]. Everything was mixed because I was so scared, and I didn't have any idea.

After this frustrating experience enrolling at ABCC, Marisol, even after having been at ABCC for three years, has yet to visit an advisor for the nursing program and instead gets advice about which courses to take to prepare to apply to the nursing program from a friend who is farther along in the process than she is. When asked to describe the process of becoming a student at ABCC, Marisol said it was

> Frustrating. It was difficult for me. Frustrating because a lot of papers you have to submit, you have to know where to go, learn where your classes are and everything like that.

US-ELLs Drew on Self-Awareness of Language and Academic Skills to Inform College Choice

The US-ELL participants in this study spoke frankly about how the challenges of attending high school and college while simultaneously developing basic communication skills and English impacted their high school experiences. The students also demonstrated an awareness of how their previous experiences impacted their English language development and readiness to take college courses in English. Students

indicated that learning English was the most significant challenge they had to overcome in reaching their educational goals. Despite most having been accepted at a four-year college or university, two with scholarships, all but one of the student participants in the study chose to attend ABCC at least in part due to the belief that they needed the additional academic and student support that they perceived ABCC offered. Students also found themselves becoming resources for other students from similar backgrounds.

Naw. Because she was still developing academic English skills when she enrolled at ABCC, Naw perceived that she had to work harder than other students. "I have to spend time, I have to make the time, this quarter is a little hard for me. I have to manage my time. I just study and do my work and then, I don't know, I just work to finish my homework on time. I don't like to be late."

Naw applied to four large, public research universities, two in her state and two in neighboring states, and only included ABCC because a teacher told her she had to apply to five different institutions. She was accepted at the local university but ultimately enrolled in ABCC because of its lower tuition and also because she had heard that ABCC offered more ESL courses than the university. Naw perceived that the short amount of time she had lived in the U.S. and studied English limited her college choice.

> Naw: If I had come here early, when I was young, I would have gone to [state
> university]. If I grew up here, I would understand more, and I would have gone to
> [state university].
>
> Naomi: So you came to [ABCC] because of language?
>
> Naw: Yeah, I had to come to [ABCC] first, just go step by step… Sometimes I
> feel disappointed, but I just go step by step.

As Naw developed her language and academic skills, she began to serve as a resource for other Karen students taking courses she had already completed. And she perceived that her background allowed her to "communicate with more people" and that her experiences could contribute to her classmate's learning. For example, in a classroom discussion about genocide in Rwanda, students "talked about other cultures. From this class a lot of people talked about how their countries were different…I talked about Karen people, about war."

Aung. Aung communicated an acute awareness of how his age and grade when he and his family came to the U.S. as refugees influenced his language skills, both in English and Karen, his first language. He perceived his ability to speak Karen more fluently than his brothers and friends who arrived in the U.S. at a younger age than he did as a strength.

> I speak Karen, write Karen, and understand it, and also understand and read and speak Burmese, but not write it. I have the better opportunity: [my brothers] can't do translation. I tell them all the time, you are not better than me!

Yet he also saw their ease speaking in English and compared it to his own speaking which he felt was more accented. Additionally, Aung compared himself with students who immigrated when they were older than he had been, who finished high school in Thailand before coming to the U.S., perceiving that they were able to write more fluently in English than he felt he was.

> I don't think I finished 4th grade [in Thailand before] I came to the US. If I had finished high school there, I think I could have done pretty well. There they teach really good vocabulary and writing. The people who came from there, grew up

there, finished high school there, you can tell the difference how they write

English. I think they did way better there. Not with speaking English though, but

they did pretty well with writing English.

Aung applied to the local public university and to ABCC, but chose ABCC

because he "believed that the class at [the university] might be harder than here, and more

expensive, too."

Participant 13. Participant 13 believed that she needed to further develop English

language skills to prepare for college level coursework.

I'm not that good at reading, at listening that well in class, so I felt I needed to

work on it, and my parents and the [ABCC] advisor, they said that it's best for me

to take those classes, finish it in order to start the actual class, the general

education stuff here. So when I graduated I could start those here.

Like Naw, Participant 13 also enrolled in ABCC specifically for ESL but did not

consider attending other colleges or universities because she believed that ABCC offered

her more opportunities to prepare for college coursework than a university would.

Participant 13 perceived that she struggled with reading because she learned English at

age 10, and that community college was a more appropriate college choice for her.

I already knew I wanted to be here because I knew I needed to catch up kind of. I

just wanted to catch up. I knew I had to finish, to take ESL class in order to go to

my actual English Comp 1 and Comp 2. I feel like I needed reading and writing

extra because the writing just takes me forever to do. I just need to work on like

how to make it make sense kind of.

Participant 13 also anticipated that her college experience would be different than her parents' and siblings' because of her English language learning background.

> I knew that I would probably go to community college since I was behind everybody else. In my family, a lot of people take ACT tests, I knew my reading score would probably be lower because English was my second language. I already knew that my placement test would be like that. But I knew that I wanted to go to [ABCC] already because it has ESL class and it helps you prepare for actual college, so that's why I decided to go.

Participant 13 was the only one among her friends from high school and her family who did not enroll in a university directly after high school graduation. Because of this, even though she believes she made the right decision, she feels left out and isolated from her friends.

> All my friends are going somewhere else. They are all going to one school, and I'm going somewhere totally different. I think that was... I mean it's fine… I'm living with some of my friends there [in university student housing] which is fine. Like one of my close friends is there, and it's fine, but I'm missing out on university and stuff like that. Because they all talk about this, they always meet up to go do this stuff for school.

Samjana. Samjana was the only student participant in this study who did not report choosing ABCC because of the perception that it offered more opportunities to academic and language development and support. Samjana received scholarships to several local colleges, but ultimately chose ABCC because it was the only one which offered the EMT program she was interested in.

Actually, I wanted to go to [the local public university] but there is no major like my major. My major is not there, so I came to [ABCC]. I got scholarship [to a small private college] and they accept me, but I think I have to do something like Bible things there and other stuff. [But] I have to do things that help my family and my community. In my community there is not educated people. I just think about EMT, so when I was in high school I took EMT class. I was really interested to work as EMT so I took EMT class at [ABCC].

Isabella. Isabella applied to the local public university but chose to attend ABCC because she believed that it would be a more manageable place to begin college.

I always had it in my mind that I'm going to college. Well, actually, that was the reason that I came here, just for school, so yeah that's my goal. I like to risk. I don't like to be like others. I don't like to be a follower. I like to make a difference, so that's why I came here to learn a new language. I chose to come here because I felt that my English wasn't perfect to go to [the university], something more bigger. That's why I came here. And because I got a scholarship from here. And I was like, OK, it's a small place and I think I will be fine there.

Still, she was nervous about the transition from high school to college and Isabella found that her English skills impacted her ability to navigate college. She cited language skills as the most significant challenge in living and going to school in the U.S.

ESL students they have to learn [English] and well, I think it is easier, like if you go into a store or if you apply for work and now you can speak and in an interview and things like that. [ESL students] have to work harder.

But Isabella also connected having to learn English and being bilingual with her skill in writing.

> Because of that I'm really good at writing things. Because I see the difference between, for example, me and between friends that I have here who grew up here, who learned here. I have a friend who grew up here, and he was taking Comp 1 and 2, but he didn't write that well in English, you know. He needs to explain his ideas more. He's like "Why you write so good if English is your second language?" I was like, I don't know. I'm bilingual. I always think in Spanish and write everything in English.

Isabella also felt that her identity as a bilingual student made her and other bilingual students unique, and that this diversity within ABCC's student population contributed positively to her experience at ABCC.

> The people around here are really nice, and sometimes they see that you have an accent, and they ask you, oh where are you from? And I think that's really cool, you know, to be different from other students, that we have an accent. And sometimes when I speak with other people I ask, oh you speak French, oh you speak this, oh you speak that. And I think that makes us different from others, our accents.

> **Participant 17.** Participant 17 applied to three campuses of the state university, but she considered both cost and college environment in choosing to attend ABCC for a transfer degree.

> I actually had a friend who was part of Avenue Scholars who was telling me about it. So I contacted one of the navigators and they told me about [ABCC] and

the programs that they have and that it would be cheaper if I come here first rather than go to I guess like a bigger college. So I was looking into to it, and my idea was to come here for the first few years and then transfer to [the local public university] so it won't be too much for me. It will be a little bit expensive, but not as much as it would be to go there in the first place. I got a scholarship, a full-ride scholarship here, and that will help me a lot too, and I think it would be better to just get my basics here. And do a little bit of my major and then when I transfer to [the local public university], I'll have a little bit more experience and it won't be too much, I won't be paying for too much classes to take.

Marisol. Marisol chose ABCC because she believed that ABCC offered students more support, and it felt more manageable to her than the larger university.

…it feels more, you know, easy. I feel that this college is a lot of help. They have writing and math help, and this building feels like it's not going to get me lost. [The university] feels like it's more big, more people, more students. I thought that for me [ABCC is] easier than other college.

When asked about the impact of being a English learner on her college experience, Marisol said that it has made it harder to be successful.

Sometimes I think that if I was in my country in college studying in my language that I know how to speak perfectly and fluently... it would be more easier! I think that the only thing here is the language. Sometimes I feel lost. I don't know what to study because they just give this book and say, well, we are going to see chapter 6 and you have to read it by yourself and you know, maybe you are focusing on something but maybe you forget about the other part and the exam is

going to be on that one, so you are kind of confused, because you don't really

have an idea what is going on, what to expect from the class.

Even several terms into her studies at ABCC, Marisol still found herself hesitant

about participating in class. I asked Marisol whether she was a shy or quiet person in

general or whether she thought the issue was English language. Indicating the latter, she

replied, "I feel that I know how to talk to people, but when I talk I think that I don't flow

perfectly. I don't have all the words that I want to use."

Marisol describes ABCC as a well-intentioned but not always effective institution for

students who are learning English.

> People here are pretty nice, like teachers and student services people are very
>
> nice, they try to help in everything they can, what to do, where to go. But I worry
>
> about, am I going to sound OK, am I going to mean what I want to mean to the
>
> people? So I think like in high school if they could say, OK, when you get to
>
> college, go to this office, this number, they are going to help you. Those people in
>
> student services don't have any idea that this person doesn't know how to speak
>
> English well. I don't know, I feel that it would be OK if they had a specific place
>
> for ESL. When you can't understand you get worried, and when you get worried,
>
> you can't talk, you can't ask.

US-ELLs Drew on Institutional Resources to Support their Language and Academic Development

The student participants in this study reported making extensive use of

institutional resources to support their language and academic development once at

ABCC, though not always in ways that institutional agents expected. Rather than visiting

the Writing Center for help with a writing assignment (though they did do that) and an advisor for information about course requirements, and the Learning Center for help creating a PowerPoint presentation, a student might get all of this assistance from one staff member in a program like TRIO or Avenue Scholars. That students often preferred to visit one staff person for personalized, holistic support may have led to the perception on the part of faculty and some academic support staff that US-ELLs were not motivated to access institutional resources, a finding described in a later section of this chapter.

Naw. When Naw progressed out of ESL into Developmental Writing 1, she found the transition difficult and wondered if "maybe I should have done [ESL Written Communications] 4 or something." She did not pass Developmental Writing 1 the first time, and so she re-took it in the following term with the same teacher who she also began working with in the Writing Center. Naw began taking all her writing and other assignments to the Writing Center and to the Learning Center where "the [staff] there explain about the essay or grammar. They check for me a little bit." Naw went to the Learning Center nearly every day, including sometimes Saturday and Sunday, to complete her homework so that she could have help nearby. "I sit there and then I ask the [staff] if I have questions." She also visited the TRIO offices for support. "If we need something we go there; if we don't understand something like for the homework sometimes they can help us." Naw did not visit her instructors in their offices unless she was assigned an individual conference time, which occurred once in the ESL program and in both Developmental Writing 1 and 2.

By the time Naw was enrolled in Developmental Writing 2, she was becoming a resource for other students. "Some of my friends took it but they said they didn't

understand… [When] they said, I don't understand, I said, do like that, do like that… I just learned. I did better than some of them. I just helped my friends."

Aung. Despite having attended school in the U.S. since 7th grade, Aung felt that his writing was weak and that he needed to study more grammar. Because of this, he chose to accept his ESL placement even though he "didn't pay attention" to the test and likely had not done as well as he could have on the ESL assessment.

> I think it was my choice, I wanted to be in ESL. I talked to my mom about it, that I wanted to be placed in ESL instead of regular classes. I thought… if I go step by step, it would be better… So when I started college, I started ESL, I was really proud, I was happy where I started. I talked to my mom about it. I said I wanted to start in this and this. Because some of my friends who started in [Developmental Writing 2] then they failed and financial aid didn't help them anymore, so they had to drop out due that reason. Because they didn't start at the beginning, you know?

Aung found Developmental Writing 1, the writing class after the ESL sequence, was easier than he had expected it to be. "Nothing was difficult. It was basically the same thing as ESL. All we had to do was write and read and do some research." Developmental Writing 2, on the other hand, was a much bigger challenge for him. In order to pass, he found he had to work much harder than he had in previous courses, and he began to seek out assistance completing his writing assignments. "Because my weakness is writing. When I write, I couldn't come up with an idea. How do I do this? Almost every time, when we had to write an essay I went to my TRIO advisor." Aung worked with several formal programs which had some overlap in their purposes and

services, but Aung did not visit his writing instructor, or other instructors, for help with

the assignments because

> I would say there is not much time like back in high school… for the teacher to
>
> assist. Back in high school we can stay after school, but in college the teacher will
>
> just try to email the student or say go to this website. But some students are
>
> [better] with talking face to face and showing them.

When asked why he chose to see his TRIO advisor over the Writing Center for help

passing a writing class, he explained that he went to the Writing Center

> once but the teacher was new or something, she messed it all up… I don't think
>
> she understood what I was trying to talk about and when I turned in my paper, it
>
> was all messed up. I think I did better than she did! I told my TRIO [advisor] and
>
> he was like don't go there again.

After that, he went to the Writing Center for a "grammar check" when referred by his

instructor, but primarily went to the Learning Center, which does not officially provide

writing consultation services, and his TRIO advisor to prepare writing assignments.

> The Learning Center employed a reading consultant that Aung visited for help
>
> when he struggled with reading assignments. The reading consultant was
>
> an Asian woman that helped students with reading and grammar. She's really
>
> good. She explained so well to me, I could understand. She said she understands,
>
> she migrated too and in school when she was a little kid. She understands how
>
> we've been through. She is more understanding because she understands how we
>
> have to go through this. Most of the Karen and Karenni students go to her, I think.
>
> At first I didn't know about her, and my friends started to introduce me to her and

I started to go to her. She did come to my class once and asked us if we needed help, and just to go to her, but I thought it was only for students who didn't know anything but when I got into Developmental Writing 2, I started to go to her real quick!

Aung and several other students who had come to the U.S. as refugees had been enrolled in the automotive technology program, but as soon as they started the program, Aung realized how far behind they were compared to students who had grown up in the U.S. Aung became frustrated by this and by a perceived unwillingness of the part of instructors to help students. He said he did not expect faculty to change how they were teaching, but he that he and the other students like him needed additional support to be successful.

How do we know… the specific tools? In two or three days, we will not know enough. Even in a quarter, a year, even a year after this. We want to know, right? These [US-born] students, the ones taking automotive right now, they have experience because they've worked with their dad in the garage. They know the tools, but we don't know. [The instructors] are supposed to understand our struggle, but they don't. Why don't they hire an interpreter to work? Because there's a lot of Karen people who know how to work with the cars. Why don't they hire them? … So if we work with [Karen interpreters], they will try to tell us, to have more time with us.

Aung perceived that the institutional resources and practices at ABCC were not developed with US-ELLs in mind. While Aung resisted assistance that took away his agency, such as when an advisor tried to give him too many ideas for a paper he was

writing ("I didn't want his ideas, I want my own ideas."), he advocated for support informed by an understanding of the needs of students from refugee backgrounds and others unfamiliar with college such as what the reading consultant offered. "The reading teacher… understood our struggle. She knew we didn't have any experience."

Participant 13. While Participant 13 was enrolled in developmental-level writing courses, she went the Learning Center "to look over papers" and to the Reading Center where the consultant "just helped me when I read it… just went over it paragraph by paragraph to see if I understand." When Participant 13 struggled with reading comprehension, her mother bought audio versions of her textbooks so that Participant 13 could listen to as she read and her mother helped her with her coursework. She did not visit her instructors or go to the Writing Center.

Samjana. In her first days at ABCC, Samjana felt overwhelmed. She was taking the final ESL Written Communications course along with information technology, developmental mathematics, and a student success seminar.

> At that time, I think I don't want to go to college. It was more stress for me. English is my second language, and I feel sad to talk with people, and I feel sad to make friends, and I feel a little bit lonely also.

But she began to feel more comfortable, particularly in her ESL course.

> I have a lot of friends after that. I make a lot of friends from Thailand, from Burma. And the teacher is really nice. She speaks very slow. At first, if people speak very fast, I did not understand, and I am a little bit embarrassed also. But the teacher is really nice, she speaks slow, and when I don't understand, I ask

many questions to her. She gave me a lot of chances to do homework, she helps

me, and I go to [the Learning Center].

Samjana struggled to keep up with the reading and writing assignments when she moved into the developmental level from ESL, but she continued to work with her instructors go to the Learning Center for assistance with her writing assignments in Developmental Writing 1 and 2.

And there also they really help me, and I passed that class. I had to read a lot of

books, and I had to do question and answer, and I go to [Developmental Writing

2] and I have to do a lot of essay. Before, I didn't write any essays. But at college

I had to write five paragraph essay, and like three, two pages. It's very hard for

me, but also I try my best. It takes me long to write an essay, I have to think a lot

because English is my second language. Before I never speak English, so it's

really hard for me. And at the end, I passed that class with a B I think. The teacher

was also really nice, she really encouraged me. Sometimes I give up to write an

essay and I say, I don't know, I don't have any ideas, and she really helped me.

She encouraged me to go to the [Learning Center] and Writing Center. [I] feel

free with her, and I passed that class.

Samjana reported that the most difficult part of the transition from high school to college was learning time management skills. On the advice of an instructor, she taught herself how to use an agenda to organize her assignments and study time.

In high school, some teachers have deadlines, others don't. It's easy to turn in late,

but in college it is really hard because when the deadline is over they do not take

the homework. It's really difficult at first to remember when is quiz, when is test. so

I have to look every day my schedule. it's really hard to remember my quiz,

homework. The first time, I missed like two or three assignments. It was really

hard to remember… [So] I made an agenda. It helped me to remember. I put quiz

and homework and exam in agenda and on my phone calendar. So when I go home

after school I look at my agenda and that makes me remember. The first time it was

really hard for me, I never used an agenda before. I just talked to my teacher and

told her that I forgot to do the assignment and she told me to write an agenda and

keep on trying and I made one.

    Isabella. When Isabella moved out of ESL and into developmental-level writing

courses at ABCC, she found the jump in difficulty to be significant.

It was hard! Like the essays were two or three pages, oh my God! And…the MLA

form that the teachers wanted us to use. I think that was hard. I was like, what's

going on? I didn't know these things. I think that was difficult for me, like, to

learn the forms.

At this point, Isabella began to go to the Writing Center for assistance for the first time,

not having needed to go during her ESL course of study. As she progressed through

Composition 1 and 2, Isabella continued to go to the Writing Center and sought help from

friends and instructors.

    Isabella also received guidance and support from a bilingual member of the

campus staff. This support was not tied to the job responsibilities of the staff member but

was the result of a friendship that had developed between the two.

I have a friend who works at the office and she speaks Spanish, so I always go

with her and ask questions. I met her here. We see each other all the time around

school, so we are friends now.

Participant 17. Participant 17 was the only student participant who did not report

using institutional resources for academic and a language support. Like the other

participants, she identified the development of English language skills for college study

as the primary difficulty she faced in community college, but because she was already

speaking very fluently with little that identified her as a learner of English, she was not

always identified as needing language support and did not seek it out herself. However,

as she had been in high school, she perceived limitations in her vocabulary. In high

school, she sought out help from and worked individually with an English teacher to

develop her vocabulary for college, but at ABCC she did not find the resources she

needed. She thought that ABCC should organize small groups for English learners.

I think they could like have a group… and the ESL students can go through the

words that they don't know, like vocabulary or stuff like that that they don't know

that they need to know.

Marisol. Marisol did not visit the Writing Center or any of her instructors for help

while she was in ESL, but starting in Composition 1, she took assignments to the Writing

Center for assistance with the "ideas, the spelling, grammar, and… how to organize the

paper." She has also talked to her instructors outside of class time.

US-ELLs' Educational Opportunities May be Limited by Community College

Assessment and Placement Practices and ESL Courses

As described in the previous sections, the US-ELLs in this study drew on a variety of personal, institutional, and community resources to matriculate and persist at ABCC. Their college experiences were significantly influenced by their developing language and academic skills proficiency, which presented challenges they worked hard to overcome. But in addition to the challenges of college coursework, the "structural constraints" (Kanno & Varghese, 2010, p. 319) that were the result of being labeled ELL delayed their access to credit-bearing coursework. At ABCC the most prominent structural constraints were the assessment tests, placement practices, and extended ESL and developmental course sequences.

Assessment Testing

The data collected for this study show that the placement tests and testing process in use at ABCC are perceived as problematic by students and institutional agents alike, particularly in their ability to validly assess US-ELLs' ability to use English or academic readiness for college courses. As quotes from student participants in the previous section show,five of the seven student participants believed that they placed too low. Additionally concerns about assessment and placement for US-ELLs dominated institutional agents' responses concerning how policies and practices at ABCC shape US-ELLs' experiences.

The evidence from this study point to three influences on the performance of US-ELLs that cast doubt on the validity of the standardized tests to assess language proficiency of US-ELLs: the influence of the routing questions that determine whether

students are initially assessed with the ESL or non-ESL version of the test; the influence of emerging bilingualism; and the influence of the testing environment, which for most US-ELLs, unlike other ELLs is their high school.

Influence of routing questions. A staff member in a college success program who had worked with US-ELLs in high school who then later enrolled in ABCC or the local public university found that the routing questions in use at ABCC (see Figure 1) to determine ESL or non-ESL assessment testing resulted in students being placed into ESL courses at ABCC who would not have had to take ESL at the local public university.

> Many of them actually test out of ESL classes when they are in high school and then to have to come to [ABCC] and take the [ESL test], and restarting that [ESL course] sequence can be a barrier. A few students I'm thinking of specifically that have left our program after high school and went to [the university] because they didn't have to take any ESL classes there. They were told at ABCC if they had been in the country only a certain number of years, they had to take the ESL [test], but then at [the university], they could just take a placement exam in English, math, … and then enroll in classes there.

Another aspect of the routing questions that may impact US-ELLs differently than other ELLs and non-ELLs is the dichotomous question *Is English your first language?* This is likely a straightforward for many of the students who come to ABCC's testing center to take the placement tests. However, for bilingual or multilingual students, it presents what may be a false dilemma. Testing Center staff reported that

> We have had quite a few students actually [tell us], "I don't know what to put."
> One student was like "I grew up in Puerto Rico, I've been speaking both English

and Spanish since I can remember [and] have done both in school." So we tell them that is a decision you have to make. If you feel a proficiency of English like it's your first language you can answer that. So we do give students that option, that freedom to do that, because more and more that's a real thing, students are growing up in dual language households, so they should be given that opportunity to start in the reading comprehension test so we just tell them that, you can decide, whatever you are comfortable with.

While students who express confusion to Testing Center staff about whether to indicate that English is their primary language or not may be offered a choice of tests to begin with, making the choice based on perceptions of primary or dominant language does not provide students the opportunity to take into account the consequences of either choice. Participant 13, who would have been routed into the non-ESL version, based on responses to the routing questions, was able to choose ESL testing because she knew she wanted to enroll in ESL courses. But many students are likely unaware of the fact that beginning with ESL testing increases the likelihood of being placed into ESL coursework, all else being equal, and that they would need to score very high on the ESL tests to be routed automatically into the non-ESL versions, an important consideration if taking ESL courses was not their intention.

Influence of language features of emerging bilingualism on placement exam results. There was concern among student and institutional agent participants that the standardized placement test in use at ABCC was not valid for US-ELLs because of how these students had acquired English, in other words, because of characteristics of their emerging bilingualism.

Participant 13 explained, "I just felt like I understand way more than the test thought I would have." Of the two participants who felt their initial placements were appropriate, Naw and Participant 17, only Naw remained satisfied with the level ESL courses she enrolled in once classes began.

An ESL faculty member also perceived that the standardized ESL test was not valid for US-ELLs, although contrary to the perceptions of the student participants, believed that the ESL test placed students too high because the test relies on knowledge of discrete structures rather than assessing language use in writing or speaking. The instructor also pointed to the ease with which many US-ELLs communicate, particularly orally, as helping students convince student services staff members that ESL placement was not appropriate.

US-educated ELLs can walk into the advising office and be super convincing. They don't really need ESL. Because they can walk the walk. They probably have learned communication. But without looking at their writing sample, without talking with them, without getting them to talk in past, present, future, real, unreal [conditional forms], you can't really know their grammar skills or their writing skills fully. A different way of assessing their ability is needed than just the [standardized] ESL [test]. [I would] probably sit down, interview them, and I would have each of them doing a writing [sample] no matter what level [they tested at].

While it is beyond the scope of this study to speculate which language features of emerging bilinguals might account for scores that do not reflect US-ELLs' ability to use English, the concern about the validity of the wide-spread standardized language testing

in assessing the language skills of US-ELLs is supported by previous research; namely, that there is no evidence that the standardized placement tests in use today have been normed with on US-ELLs (Bunch et al., 2011; Llosa & Bunch, 2011).

Influence of the testing environment. Many high school seniors, both ELL and non-ELL, take ABCC's assessments at their high school before graduation. This presents a different testing environment than the controlled environment of the Testing Centers on ABCC's campuses. The high school testing environment may have a particularly significant impact on US-ELLs because they may take the ESL reading and listening tests and, for some, the non-ESL reading tests plus math and, therefore, may need more time to complete the tests than the guidance counselor who set up the testing session with ABCC had allotted for. The Testing Center staff explained that

> I tell the [high school] guidance counselors who contact me to set up the testing
> that there is no time limit, so if we agree to go test [students], then we agree to let
> them take as long as they need… But I do let them know if a student is not done
> we are not going to force them to click through to be done… We've had plenty of
> students miss a class because they are still testing, so there's not necessarily
> pressure from the guidance counselor to hurry, but they see all their classmates
> and their friends getting up and leaving and … they are looking around, the bell
> rings, and… I think they rush because they see everyone else leaving… I've had
> students tell me "I have a test in this class next period," so I say OK you can save
> it, but you need to come to one of our Testing Centers now… Sometimes they
> choose that or sometimes they choose to stay.

Thus, while both the high schools and ABCC have followed the practice of allowing unlimited testing time and allowing students to save tests to finish them later, the circumstances may contribute to students feeling compelled to finish quickly or require them to go to an ABCC on-campus Testing Center to finish outside of school hours, both of which could affect negatively scores and be a barrier to finishing the test at all.

Lack of information about the tests. The US-ELLs in the study reported being unaware of the significance of the tests.

Like many students, Aung completed ABCC's placement testing in high school, in a session set up by his counselor. However, Aung did not understand the significance of the placements tests.

I never thought about taking a placement test. I thought it was just like a side note--I did not focus, I did not pay attention. I just saw the time was almost running out, so just click, click, click… I was placed in ESL Level 3. I felt embarrassed! Because I didn't take my time. I thought it wasn't really necessary or something. So I regret it. [Students] need to be aware that the placement test is important for them.

Because Participant 13 had attended school in the U.S. since 5th grade, the routing questions in use at ABCC would not have sent her to the ESL tests, Participant 13 requested the ESL placement tests at ABCC's testing center. She received the scores that day but did not understand what they meant for her placement at ABCC.

Actually, I was really confused with the result because there were a bunch of numbers, those ranges, I didn't know what it means. They gave me a print out, I went home, I showed my mom, my mom's like, "Do you know what that means?"

No clue, so we went back the next day and talked to the same advisor I talked to

about the test and she explained the whole thing.

Participant 17 also reported not knowing anything about the placement tests other

than that they would tell "where I am at" in English and math. When she placed into the

final ESL, she was upset that she had not understood how the test would be used. "I

thought I was going to get a higher level, but I didn't. [I] was really surprised and

disappointed.

When Marisol completed the placement process to enroll at ABCC, but knew

little about the purpose of the tests and was unaware of the possibility that she could be

placed into ESL classes at ABCC.

I just didn't know that I was going to take other like pre-tests to enter into the

classes. I also didn't know that I would have to take ESL classes anymore because

I took them in high school. I was surprised that I had to take it. Really, I didn't

have any idea about college…. I just thought, do I have to take this test? Why

they make me take this test? Even [topics] I don't know, I don't remember, I mean

maybe I saw it in high school, but I didn't know. I felt stressed.

The impact of the routing questions, US-ELLs' emerging bilingualism, and the

testing environment on US-ELLs' scores on the initial placement tests call into question

the validity of these widely-used tests to assess language proficiency of this population.

It is concerning, then, that the placement practices in use at ABCC, described in the

following section, make use of these scores to limit program entry.

Placement Practices

Restrictive placement practice that rely on results from standardized assessments have the effect of limiting access to college-level courses and career-training programs for students who do not meet the set score cut offs. At ABCC, the departments of ESL, English, reading, math, science, information technology, and foreign languages utilize testing to place students into sequences of courses. Other programs, such as nursing and other health programs, may require assessment test scores in one or more of those areas for program entry. A staff member who works in a college student success program characterized the placement testing process as a barrier to entrance into programs for which she believed US-ELLs could be successful in even though they struggled to meet the required testing thresholds.

> A lot of the [US-ELLs] maybe want to be CNA certified, but you have to be able to test into [college-level English] to be able to take that class. That barrier of having to test into [college-level English] before they can take [the CNA class], sometimes messes with the [US-]ELLs. And I get that you have to be able to read and write to pass the state licensing exam, but I always think there is a way you can make it work for someone with a language barrier.

According to this staff member, US-ELLs have been turned away by the more restrictive placement policies at ABCC only to attend other institutions in the city. The program she works in sends US-ELLs who want to take the CNA class but cannot test into college-level composition to two other local programs that offer CNA certification without requiring the same assessments: a private, not-for-profit college offering nursing and allied health programs and a private, not-for-profit rehabilitative care organization.

Here, another staff member from the college student success program describes how assessment testing overlooks student strengths that may support their success.

One of the young ladies… really wanted to be a nurse. There's a lot of academics that you need to be a nurse, of course… you need to have that skill, you need to have that knowledge. But this young lady was so sharp, always had her work done, always on time. She had a baby - I didn't even know for two years because she did not miss a step. Those skills are what could get her a lot farther than what some of these students who are going through [the nursing program], [but I knew] she would be too low… Those situations break my heart. So what are we basing [entry to the program] off of? Like I said, this young lady, I just knew she would be a fantastic nurse. The care, the bedside manner, the stick-to-it-iveness, how can we help a student like that navigate through the academics when they get here?

ESL Courses

According to ESL faculty, nearly 25% of students enrolled in ABCC's ESL program are US-ELLs; however, the ESL program may be limiting US-ELLs' educational opportunities at ABCC rather than expanding them as intended through the development of academic and language skills. The two primary concerns with the ESL courses cited by participants centered around the course content and instructional methods, which were viewed as inappropriate for US-ELLs, and the number of courses in the ESL program, which was perceived as discouraging persistence.

Course content and instructional methods. The content and instructional methods employed in ABCC's ESL courses were perceived by most of the student and institutional agent participants as not useful or appropriate for US-ELLs, but the reasons

for this varied. Some student participants found a focus on grammatical forms was unhelpful while others found that it allowed them to identify errors they had been making in their language use.

Aung noted that the courses were perceived differently by students who had migrated to the U.S. after high school.

> Some of my friends, they graduated [from high school] in Thailand and they take ESL classes here. Even though they were placed in level 3, they were satisfied, they were happy, because they wanted to improve their English-speaking skills. But when I started to realize that these classes were just the basic stuff, I already know this stuff, I felt that I needed to get out of ESL and try to get into regular classes.

Participant 13, who had decided to enroll at ABCC to take ESL before she graduated from high school, wanted to develop her language skills in the context of her reading and writing development:

> Not fill in the blank but grammar that you actually write the paper with. I don't need to know these grammar terms. I already speak well enough. Why are we moving backwards? I feel like I needed reading and writing extra because the writing just takes me forever to do. I just need to work on like how to make it make sense kind of. I would read stuff but just have a hard time understanding what it was about.

In addition to not finding the content of the ESL course useful, Participant 13 was uncomfortable with the diversity in ages and backgrounds of the other students in ABCC's ESL program.

I just remember the first time I took ESL class here, a lot of the people were way

older than me… like, I didn't feel comfortable around those older people. And

they were staring, and I don't think I fit in with those people, I should be fit in

with… it kind of scared me.

Despite her surprise at having to take placement tests, Marisol accepted their

validity and was not surprised that they placed her in ESL courses at ABCC; she began in

level 2 of ESL Written Communications and level 5, the final level, of ESL Oral

Communications. She was, however, dismayed to find that the courses covered some of

the same material she had studied in high school:

I know I don't speak my English very well, I don't write very well, I don't read

very well. But I did everything in these [college] classes already in high school,

and I say why I'm going to take these classes, and I'm going to pay for these

classes, when I already saw this in high school. But at the same time, I say

because you scored this and this on the test.

While Marisol perceived limitations in her use of English, she did not find that the

courses offered by ABCC addressed those limitations.

Right in my first class I was like this is really boring… I think it was about

knowing grammar, nouns, and everything like that, and I said I kind of know what

these are. I felt that it was more easy than high school classes. Like I went back. I

kind of know what is noun, pronouns, like this. I don't know when I'm going to

use this. Yes, you use it, but it's basic. These classes I'm in now, I don't need

anything that I learned [in the ESL courses], those pronouns, how to identify a

noun, how to identify a verb, those things like that. No one's asking me what is a

noun.

Marisol did not find that ABCC's ESL courses taught students "how to express

themselves, how to talk, how to have a fluent speaking with the other people."

In Composition 1 and 2, Marisol found courses that satisfied her desire to learn more

about how to use English.

It was a huge difference! For me personally, I notice that I learn more there than I

did in ESL. I learned more how to interact, how to use, how to read, what to do,

and I feel that those classes prepared me more for these college classes, this level

I am at now [nursing prerequisites], than ESL did.

Institutional agents were also divided on the reasons they believed the ESL program in its

current form was not beneficial for US-ELLs in particular. The director of a college

student success program wondered if the focus on language structures and forms was

appropriate for US-ELLs.

I walked by one of the ELL classes and the instructor was talking about present

participles and that sort of thing…is that the way to teach [these students] how to

speak the language? By going over the grammatical structures, how the language

works, and so on?

Two student participants found aspects of the ESL program useful. Naw, who had

come to ABCC for ESL courses, felt that her placement in the ESL sequence was

appropriate. "If I had come here in middle school maybe I don't want ESL class. But

because I don't think my English is good enough so I take ESL class … I needed

everything. Grammar, vocabulary, everything… speaking, listening." Naw appreciated

the focus on grammatical forms that she had not learned in high school, where "we did not study grammar, we just wrote the essay and then the teacher changed the grammar." She found that the ESL courses were "a little hard" but, because they went "step by step," they got easier. Naw reported gaining confidence using English while in ABCC's ESL program.

While Isabella found that the oral and written communications courses she took were not useful to her, "…the one that helped me a lot was Grammar 1 and 2. It helped to write the words in past, present, future. Like things I thought I was right but I was wrong. Grammar is really hard to be honest."

Length of sequence. The length of the ESL sequence, which consisted of up to 12 courses required for students placing in the first level, was perceived as discouraging student persistence and made some US-ELLs ineligible for a scholarship offered to students from local high schools which limited the number of developmental courses it covered. An advisor expressed sympathy for US-ELLs who were discouraged by the content of the courses and length of the sequence:

> They'll say, 'Oh I did this in high school'… So I feel bad for those students who maybe see ESL and developmental and then their major and just don't want to go because it's too many classes of stuff they've already done but didn't really learn through high school. It's really sad because they are frustrated.

The director of the support program for low-income high school and college students asserted that the number of courses in the ESL sequence at ABCC, in addition to the developmental-level courses that follow it, led to low persistence among US-ELLs.

Part of the frustration was the number of different levels of [ESL] classes that kids had to take before they could ever get to a credit bearing classes. So that's always been a huge barrier to kids that have language difficulties… When you add all these layers of reading and writing classes at the ELL level, I think it just discourages students and then they drop.

An advisor in the college success program reported that students placed into the ESL program were excluded from applying for a scholarship that a local organization offers because of the number of ESL and developmental courses they are required to take.

If you need more than two or three developmental classes you can't even apply for the scholarship. So I just had a student who has not taken any ESL classes since she's been in high school, but when she got her she had to take the ESL test and placed into ESL courses, and so she now cannot apply for the scholarship.

For Marisol, the length of the ESL sequence threatened to impact her scholarship eligibility. Because the ESL courses at ABCC are offered for college credit, the time she spent in them counted toward her years of scholarship eligibility. This was frustrating to her as she "was worried about losing time in these classes." The scholarship Marisol received would pay for four years of coursework and could be transferred to the university. Marisol had, at the time of our interview, been at ABCC for three years completing ESL, developmental and general education courses, and nursing prerequisites, and she had not yet gained admittance to the approximately 38 (semester equivalent) credit-hour nursing program.

Although there was no evidence of this being a formal policy at ABCC, the practice reported by participants was that ELLs who placed into the first two to three

levels of ESL courses were typically not allowed to take courses other than ESL. Starting in the third or fourth level of ESL, students were often advised to add a math course to their ESL coursework. In the fourth and especially the fifth level, students begin taking other college requirements such as a human relations course or a success strategies course and, for some, general education courses.

When US-ELLs transition from high school as part of a cohort program that has required courses, they may complete college-level courses in their first term with their cohort and then subsequently drop back down to ESL according to their placement testing results. For example, study participant Naw completed a college orientation and received a grade of B in a credit, college-level student success course the summer after she graduated from high school as part of her participation in TRIO and then began her ESL courses the following fall term.

For the advisors and the other participants who work with students in student support roles, course-taking sequences like Naw's provided support for their assertions that US-ELLs were often inappropriately placed in the ESL sequence at ABCC and should be taking college-level or at least developmental-level course work sooner after matriculation.

US-ELLs' Experiences with the Institution's Policies and Practices Varied According to the Perceptions of US-ELLs Held by Individual Institutional Agents

US-ELLs were understood by all institutional agents in this study as having language learning and academic backgrounds that were distinct from other groups of ELLs and to which the institutional agents' attributed some of US-ELLs' distinct academic strengths and challenges. Overall, institutional agents in faculty and academic

support staff roles tended to focus on perceived academic and linguistic limitations of

US-ELLs and held less positive views of these students than agents working in student

support roles, who tended to view students more holistically. These perceptions

influenced US-ELLs' experiences of the institution. Some institutional agents, primarily

those student support roles, reported circumventing the ELL policies and practices and

others provided holistic support to US-ELLs in capacities beyond the agents' official

roles in order to mitigate what they perceived as the negative effects for US-ELLs of

ABCC's one-size-fits-all policies and practices for ELLs. An individual institutional

agent, then, may have significant influence on which courses a US-ELLs is required to

take and on how they experience the institution. While these actions had positive effects

on some of the student participants in this study, they also contributed to inconsistency

among student experiences.

Faculty and Academic-Support Staff Focused on US-ELLs' Academic and

Linguistic Deficits

Matsuda and Matsuda (2009) have pointed to the publication of the text

Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999) as

prompting the differentiation of US-ELLs, who up to that point had not been separately

identified within the fields of TESOL and composition studies from other groups of ELLs

in higher education. As a result, Matsuda and Matsuda argued, there was a wide-spread

impression that US-educated, immigrant, linguistic minorities were a new presence in

U.S. higher education. While there is no indication from the data collected for this study

that this text influenced faculty perceptions at ABCC, there was evidence that faculty at

ABCC perceived that US-ELLs were a new population at their institution. One faculty

member reported, "We never used to get these students. We never used to get students that graduated from high school. We'd get a few, very few." Another faculty member recalled not being aware of US-ELLs when she first began teaching. "I would say it's only the past nine years… have they been in my classroom. Before that, they were usually educated in their country and would come here as part of an intensive English language program." Another faculty member related this perception of the relatively recent appearance of US-ELLs in ABCC's ESL program to changing immigration patterns in the city and region where the institution is located. Given the prominence of the assessment testing process and the changes over time to the testing practices, including how ELLs are identified, an additional explanation for these faculty members' more recent awareness of US-ELLs in their community college classrooms may rest with community college practitioners' increased acceptance of and reliance on standardized placement exams. None of the institutional agents who participated in this study could recall ABCC not using a standardized placement exam of some kind, but a long-time faculty member recalled that in the early years of the ESL program at ABCC, around 25 years ago, only new students who were identified by advisors as needing ESL were given the ESL placement test, and that the use of the routing questions to one test or the other was a more recent development. This would roughly correspond to the period identified by Hughes and Scott-Clayton (2011) as when community college practitioners had embraced mandatory assessment and placement of students.

Regardless of faculty and academic support staff's perceptions of when and how the population US-ELLs appeared at their institution, these institutional agents tended in interviews to focus on describing the population's linguistic and academic shortcomings

in terms of their readiness for college and in comparison with other groups of ELLs at ABCC.

Perceptions of US-ELLs' readiness for college. When asked to describe characteristics of the population of US-ELLs they encountered in their work at ABCC, faculty and those in academic support roles generally perceived that US-ELLs come to community college unprepared academically for college courses and were complacent in seeking out the resources the institution offers which could help them be successful in light of their perceived unpreparedness for college.

One faculty member stated that US-ELLs in general were "…not academically ready for college. They have not been prepared at all." An academic support staff member expressed surprise at the ESL level US-ELLs tested into at ABCC, an indication that she perceived ESL placement as equivalent to academic readiness.

> How are these students getting high school diplomas? How are they passing?
> High school seniors are testing into … level 2 [ESL] reading and writing and even
> listening and speaking. You would think that they would hear it enough just being
> in an English-speaking high school.

Another faculty member stated that:

> [US-ELLs] just can't wait to get out of ESL as soon as they can. Sometimes I'm
> very surprised they've been here so long and aren't at a higher level because their
> skills aren't high. When they can't string a sentence or paragraph together, I think
> you can't graduate from an American high school, but they do.

A participant who holds an academic support role at ABCC reported that "The [US-]ELL students that I encounter … aren't eager to learn English. They sit with and

only talk to other students who speak the same language." Another institutional agent participant who holds an academic support role at ABCC perceived that US-ELLs were not as apt to self-assess as needing ESL courses as an adult immigrants were.

…when they take our assessment, their foundation is really weak and so there is a lot of frustration … to have to go back to ESL classes. And there's big difference between that a new immigrant to the United States or an adult who would say "I know I need help. I know my foundation, I need to learn English on paper before I can take other classes."

Another faculty member perceived that

There's an element of independence that some [US-ELLs] lack. Or maybe they are just complacent. A complacency… sometimes they are angry. Sometimes they are angry they are in ESL classes. Sometimes they are angry that they didn't learn grammar and now they are struggling. Some of them have that awareness. It's like they got the high school diploma, got what they needed out of high school, but I feel like when they came during high school, they concentrated on getting them on track to graduate but didn't consider whether they needed another semester or another year.

These perceptions differ from the self-appraisals reported by this study's student participants who all indicated that they were all aware that their English language skills presented the primary challenge to their success in college and who actively sought opportunities, including ESL courses, to further develop their language skills.

Faculty participants' view of students' high school experiences did align with those of student participants who reported that they had been concerned primarily with

passing their courses to accumulate the necessary credits for graduation. However, faculty connected this with low expectations for students on the part of their high school teachers rather than to the challenges of learning content in English for students new to the language, which was the cause reported by students. One faculty member said, "You get the sense that all the teachers really wanted in high school was for them to pass." Another faculty member compared expectations of high school with those in community college.

…a lot of what they are used to is just producing, not editing, not worrying about accuracy. Just produce. Just produce something and the teacher will be happy. And then you get your grade based on whether you tried or not, in high school. And then you get to community college and there's actually standards and rubrics and requirements… and they are like "What?" I just graded someone's paper and he failed the assignment because he didn't follow the directions, so he's not used to it. He's just used to writing something and then give it to the teacher and then check the box. So ill-equipped.

These perceptions of deficit on the part of some faculty did not go unnoticed by students. An ESL faculty recalled several US-ELLs in her ESL oral communications course who struggled in their ESL written communications course and were disheartened by the response of their writing instructor.

They were failing their reading and writing class, they needed grammar help. "What do we do?" and they looked really worried. And they were so bright and shiny in the first two weeks of school, and I saw the light go out of their eyes. By the end of the quarter, they were so frustrated and demoralized. They looked

demoralized because their reading/writing teacher had been kind of brutal in his

comments about their readiness.

An advisor reported hearing from US-ELLs that they felt uncomfortable

approaching their instructors or that instructors had questioned students' placement in

their courses, which negatively influenced the students' confidence and motivation to

persist.

I've heard that over and over from students, "Well, I asked her a question and she

was not nice to me." Or "I'm scared of her." I've had issues before where I've

gotten really upset with things that instructors have said to them. Like "How did

you get into this class" or "How did you pass the class you were taking before

this?" I feel like with these students especially, their confidence is shaky, just to

get up and come to class and go and try to speak English can be really hard for a

lot of them. So then if they come and someone says something like that to them,

they are just like, "Oh I don't want to take classes anymore!"

US-ELLs in comparison with other groups of ELLs at ABCC. Faculty and

academic support staff also pointed out differences in perceived academic preparation

between US-ELLs and the adult immigrant population that comprised the majority of

students enrolled in ABCC's ESL courses. A representative quote included references to

particular countries, but also noted that direct comparisons were problematic because of

differences in the average age of new high school graduates and adult immigrants.

I would say [US-ELLs] might not be as well prepared as most from, for example,

African countries, they seem very well-prepared, Asian countries also, China and

Japan, especially. Those students are very well prepared. And I would say the

ones that come out of the high schools in the U.S. they don't seem as well prepared to me. They're younger though. That's another problem. They are 18, 19 years old sometimes, and their frame of reference is quite limited, much more limited than a student, say, from Africa who could be 26 or 28. Some of them have limited experience. They have school and home and church and maybe that's it. They lived in refugee camps, which is very limiting, I think. Many of them are from refugee camps, and so that frame of reference is really limited.

In addition to noting perceived age differences among different groups of ELLs, the previous quote includes other aspects of faculty and academic support staff's perceptions of US-ELLs in comparison to other groups of ELLs. One is that institutional agents tended to equate US-ELLs status at ABCC with students from Myanmar (Burma), of the Karen or Karenni ethnic groups, who came to the U.S. from refugee camps in Thailand. While demographic data that included country of birth of ABCC students was not available, students who came to the U.S. from Burma or Thailand made up slightly more than 60% of student receiving ELLs services in the local public school district, according to the most current data available from the website of the public school district of the site location.

As exemplified in the quote above, institutional agents associated students of this group with being less prepared for college. In contrast, international students, at ABCC most frequently from China, Japan, or Vietnam, and adult immigrant students, often from French-speaking West African countries, were mentioned by two faculty members as being better prepared for college. Speculating whether these variations in perceptions on the part of the institutional agents are due to the influence of perceptions of students'

ages, ethnicities, language background or previous educational experience is not possible

with the data collected, but the point made here is that institutional agents perceived US-

ELLs to be 1) primarily Karen or Karenni (typically from Myanmar (Burma) via

Thailand) and 2) unprepared for college in comparison to other ELLs at ABCC.

The language background of US-ELLs was also perceived by institutional agents

as influencing how students learned English, with the similarities between Spanish and

English allowing Spanish-speakers to more easily transfer their literacy to English.

> I think sometimes [Spanish-speakers] can transfer the rules in English and think
>
> about that and something clicks - we've got that in Spanish too - it might work
>
> differently but they've seen - at least the ones that have a pretty good working
>
> knowledge of Spanish. But a lot of those students don't read and write in Spanish
>
> either, but if they do, it really helps. So one of the things I noticed is that how
>
> much you read and write in your first language is really going to help you a
>
> …student in community college.

Note that this instructor's assumption that many Spanish-speaking students are not

literate in Spanish recalls the characterization of emergent bilinguals as "dual nonnative

speakers" (Singhal, 2004, p. 2).

Perceptions of use of resources. The faculty and academic support staff who

participated in the study generally held the belief that US-ELLs would not take advantage

of the resources offered by ABCC unless they were "forced" to.

> I do think there are a lot of resources for the students who have time and energy to
>
> take advantage of them. I'm proud to be part of this college and this program. But

you can take a horse to water but you can't make him drink. You don't always take

advantage of it.

Another faculty member suggested that US-ELLs use institutional resources less

frequently than other groups of ELLs but also acknowledged that responsibilities outside

of school may influence how students' use resources.

I think they are less motivated than other students to go to Writing Center or to go

to Learning Center. In reports that I've had from contact with the Learning Center,

it's more the international students or students that got the lottery that will go and

use those services. Sometimes I get the feeling that US-educated students aren't

using the services as much. Complacency? Or maybe they are really busy,

because a lot of them are working as well.

The perception that students do not make use of institutional academic support

resources is not supported by the second finding of this study, which was drawn from

students' reports of their experiences. While Naw and Samjana did describe regular visits

to the Writing and Learning Center, other students like Aung and Isabella were receiving

assistance from institutional agents with whom they had formed a relationship. Aung, for

example, turned to a contact in a student support position for assistance with his writing

assignments after a frustrating and unhelpful visit to the Writing Center. It may be, than,

faculty overlook US-ELLs' use of institutional resources because US-ELLs do not make

use of them in ways that faculty expect, such as going to the Writing Center for writing

help rather than student support staff.

Perceptions of strengths. While characteristics of US-ELLs beyond language

skills and academic preparation were not frequently mentioned by faculty and academic

support staff, these institutional agents acknowledged the bilingual and bicultural strengths that US-ELLs had developed while in U.S. high schools. One faculty member noted, "They are savvy with culture. They are really savvy, they know a lot about American culture." Another referred to the language and cultural interpreting, or brokering, that many US-ELLS do for their parents and other relatives which has been linked to positive effects in college-age students' social development (Guan, Greenfield & Orellanam, 2014).

> When I think of the high schoolers, I think about how almost all of them have to take care of their parents, have to do all of the translating for their parents, take their parents to the car shop, to the doctor's office. And so they are getting a lot of experience that way.

An academic support staff member noted that a US-ELLs she had worked with benefited from their time together more than an adult immigrant student due to a familiarity with instructional strategies common in the U.S.

> It just seemed like she had more tools to be able to progress and to do something things than an adult student that hadn't gone to high school in the U.S. So for students who have gone to high school here, it seems like they are more adaptable to different teachers… it seems like it works better for them.

Student-Support Staff, Focused on US-ELLs' Non-Academic Strengths and Barriers, Provide Holistic Support

Institutional agents who worked in student support roles tended to view US-ELLs from a more holistic perspective, frequently citing these students' non-academic strengths and barriers to success at ABCC and the non-academic supports that they and their

colleagues worked to provide US-ELLs. Institutional agents spoke admiringly of US-ELLs overcoming challenges to enroll in college. One student support staff member who was involved in a program that worked with high school students recalled that

> When I started working with them in 2011, they had only been in the U.S. for three years. So to see them now in college… all the things they have been able to do, to get jobs, two of them have had babies.

Another staff member who helped place students in internship positions referred to the resilience of US-ELLs and gave the following example of a student who was still developing English proficiency but who had been successfully placed in an internship.

> One of the first jobs he got, he was working at an automotive place, one of our partners, and they told us, if you can send a million and one students just like this, we will hire them every time. One of the most hardworking students that we have. Always showing up, always on time. Just that grit there. Never had to be asked twice to do anything, always volunteering to help.

To counter what they perceived as insufficient support for US-ELLs on the part of some faculty, institutional agents in student support roles reported providing holistic support to US-ELLs, including academic support, which would be considered beyond the role of student services as traditionally understood.

> So for this student, he relied on me heavily to help with work, so I said I'm going to teach you what resources to use, how to get the information, but I wonder how students receive that, who's giving them that instruction. Because he would say all the time, I know I wouldn't get through this class if it wasn't for you. And it was simple - we are sitting down and we're re-reading the questions over and over

again. Or I'm saying this is what a glossary is and this is what it means. And if you look here, it will show you the page number. But you got to do that a few times, remind them.

Institutional agents in student services capacities tended to view non-academic issues as inextricably linked to academic success.

So once they get here, we go through classes, help supporting them in classes, monitoring any success, any struggles they are having. At the same time, how are things at home. Do you have your lights on? How can we assist with that? Transportation?

This attention to "wrap-around" or holistic support, including academic support, was frequently a mentioned by participants in student services roles. One participant explained that she did not think about whether the support she provided was academic or non-academic in nature; rather, "What's been helpful for a lot of students is if they connect with someone, and it helps if they are nice to them, if they feel like someone cares about them." This demonstration of caring may be one explanation of why US-ELLs seek out multiple types of assistance from a single institutional agent whom they perceive as sympathetic, as discussed previously in this chapter. Here, an institutional agent who works in a student services capacity explained the type of assistance a US-ELL student needed in understanding why he had lost a scholarship.

I had to help a student… who was dropped from his… scholarship[s], and he didn't understand why. He has a statement from his bank, and what he said was, "This month it was here, this month it wasn't, but I don't know why." And so, having gone through that, our [staff] were on it, it took them working on the back

end. They are always going through and looking and trying to dissect... helping

inform him as to why this happened -- I just think there needs to more support on

that end…He gave me a sheet the Financial Aid office gave him about how to

appeal, and he doesn't understand the appeal process, and I thought "We've got to

do better."

As this quote shows, the student had gone to the official institutional resource, the

Financial Aid office, and had received instructions on how to appeal but then turned to a

sympathetic institutional agent for explanation and assistance with additional interaction

with the Financial Aid office.

Drawing on an awareness of US-ELLs' non-academic barriers to enrollment and

persistence at ABCC, an institutional agent in a student services capacity worked to help

resolve the issues that could potentially interfere with US-ELLs' college persistence.

Some of our students who have gone through a high school program and are at

[ABCC] now are eligible to apply for citizenship, so we help with that. I've

connected some of them with other [ABCC] students to do a language partner,

language exchange to practice English with other students. We've helped them in

finding jobs, applying for Medicaid, other benefits through the state, figure out

child care, given rides to and from work and school, look at classes, communicate

with instructors that there have been issues with school, help them find part-time

employment.

In viewing US-ELLs' resources and challenges from a primarily non-academic

perspective, the institutional agent participants in students services roles sometimes found

themselves at odds with policies or established practices towards ELLs at ABCC. The

next section shows that institutional agents sometimes circumvented established practices

for ELLs in their efforts to mitigate what they perceived were the ill-effects of ELLs

policies on US-ELLs in particular. "We try to think outside of the box because these

students are amazing. They have so many talents and things to contribute, it's getting

them through the classes and classes..." Evidence of these efforts is provided in the

following section.

Sympathetic Institutional Agents Circumvented Established Practices for US-ELLs

Perceptions on the part of institutional agents that assessment and placement

process limited US-ELLs opportunities sometimes moved these advisors to work with

faculty to look for ways to circumvent the practices and processes established by others at

the institution, such as the ESL and English departments who set assessment test score

cutoffs and determined placement options.

Institutional agents in student service capacities were particularly sensitive to the

impact of the length of the ESL sequence, described in a previous section, on US-ELLs, a

population of students who had participated in the career and college planning programs

of high school and who had perhaps not anticipated "re-becoming ESL" instead once in

college (Marshal, 2009, p. 42).

> Because they've come through high school, they've been talking about career with
>
> the rest of their classmates, and when you go to college you plan for this, so they
>
> are starting that in 9th, 10th, 11th grade, they are getting ready for career, they get
>
> to college and then they are back to ESL. There are five levels and there you go.
>
> They have nothing tangible. Remediation is not tangible for any student but then
>
> you have a year and a quarter of ESL classes, plus developmental. So it's really

challenging. So we try to connect them with things they are interested in. Get them in math if they are good at math. Get them into whatever we can to help the student.

Advisors reported tension between the policies for ELL placement and their professional judgement about US-ELLs' readiness for particular coursework. One advisor reported that she would work with specific instructors to place US-ELLs in program coursework that aligned with the student's interests and abilities earlier than established practice allowed for but had to hide this from the main ESL advisor (who is no longer employed at ABCC and was not a participant in this study).

> It's frustrating for [US-ELLs] specifically because they want to get started in their program of study, [but] they don't always test well and you are not supposed to start other classes until you are at least in level four or five [of ESL]. But depending on the student, depending on the situation, depending on the program, I try to line them up with a program or get them into something that's of interest outside of just learning to speak English. One student in particular [was] really engineering focused. Really bright, working hard in the industry. He was actually in level three [ESL] but we connected with [an instructor] within [the] electrical [technology program], and [the student] did just fine because he could listen, he could speak, just his writing needed to improve, and he knew it. So that works out sometimes, but I went behind people's back to do that because the person at the time who was over ESL would monitor and make sure we were doing everything correctly was like 'No, they can't do that,' but I'm like, 'He's so smart!' So it's

frustrating because you want to help them. I don't try to break the rules to break

the rules, but I try to work in their best interest.

Advisors also sought out sympathetic faculty to provide a more supportive

environment for US-ELLs to mitigate the effect of the extended ESL and developmental

sequences and the perceptions of deficits experienced by students with less sympathetic

faculty.

So with the students who are increasingly frustrated, or I know that they have a lot

of potential and are motivated, I try to match them up with supportive faculty. Not

that you are supposed to pick and choose, but there are faculty who have more

experience in that area, who are super patient and understanding, and who will

kind of support the student as needed and adjust their teaching to the population

they are with. So I try to do that. And faculty I've worked with or I've heard from

other students who have had really good experiences. And stay away from others.

There's one faculty we hear about that doesn't do well with ELLs and so I never

put students in that class.

While individual students undoubtedly benefited from the efforts made by these

institutional agents to mitigate some of the negative effects on US-ELLs of ABCC's

policies and practices for ELLs, the data pointed to two potential consequences of some

individual agents acting outside of established practices. First, because institutional

agents in student service capacities tended to focus less on students' language skills and

more on students' motivation and other factors when circumventing established

placement practices, some US-ELLs were placed into courses with faculty who

questioned their readiness for the placements based primarily on language skills. As an English instructors stated:

> They are not ready for Comp 1. Are the advisors putting them in courses they
> should not be in? Are the advisors or people who support these kinds of students,
> are they revisiting them, if they put them in a class, to see if they dropped out, or
> to see where they are at, what kind of resources they might need?

The second potential consequence is that US-ELLs' experiences at ABCC could be highly dependent on the perceptions of the individual institutional agents they encounter. A comparison of four student participants' experiences in the ESL program makes for an illustrative example of how students with a number of similarities experienced different results of their interactions with institutional agents, faculty, in this example.

As reported previously, Aung, Marisol, Isabella, and Participant 13 found that the results of the initial assessment test placed them into courses in the ESL program that did not provide them with the language learning they sought. Aung, who wanted to develop his writing skills, felt like he was "wasting time in those classes. I think [students] should be presented classes that will be more challenging for them, so they can be ready for [college classes]." Marisol, who also hoped to further develop her language skills before taking college classes knew "right in my first class I was like this is really boring… and I said I kind of know what these are. I felt that it was more easy than high school classes." Isabella was also impatient: "I thought that I was wasting my time, you know? It was really easy, so just move on. Because my ESL classes, those were really, really easy." Likewise, Participant 13 found "pretty much nothing" useful in ESL courses at ABCC.

Although Aung and Participant 13 realized that they may not have been placed in the correct courses, they did not talk to their ESL instructors about it nor did their instructors suggest that they reassess. Aung then spent two terms as a full-time ESL student, and Participant 13, who was coming to ABCC for ESL as a high school student, "…took [the ESL course] anyway, just to pass the class and be done with it, but I felt like it was easy." Aung regretted not having approached his instructors about his placement but also suggested that ESL instructors needed to help students make sure they were properly placed.

> Teachers should ask their students if a class is too hard or too easy for them. If this class is too hard for them, they should talk to them one on one, or if this class is too easy for them, they should talk to them one on one. And make time for them and so they can do it - place lower or place higher.

Unlike Aung and Participant 13, Marisol and Isabella were helped by institutional agents, their ESL instructors, to move through the assessment process and ESL program in a nonstandard way. After Marisol completed two terms of ESL reading and writing coursework, the instructor recommended that Marisol submit a writing sample to be evaluated by the English department rather than re-take the standardized assessment test. Marisol then placed into Composition 1, which was a jump of four levels in the reading and writing sequence. While this helped Marisol reduce the number of ESL and developmental courses that that she was required to take, it also confused her.

> My first quarter, [one advisor] helped me to get my first classes, and then the third quarter I went with another advisor, and they said why have you been in those classes? I said I don't know, because they assigned me to those classes, and they

said well, you don't need all those classes, and I was oh my god, OK, and then

they changed everything and put me in another class and changed my [major].

Isabella was moved out of the ESL oral communication sequence at the start of

her first quarter at ABCC. "Actually I just went like two or three days and my teacher

was like your English is pretty good, you should go to other level, so they just skipped

me [out of ESL oral communication]."

It is impossible to speculate why none of the instructors in the multiple ESL

courses that Aung and Participant 13 took suggested they reassess or to know at this point

whether either student would have been able to skip any courses had they been

reassessed. However, the point made here is that Marisol and Isabella were, appropriately

according to their subsequent success, able to accelerate through the standard progression

of the ESL program because institutional agents, their ESL instructors, went outside the

established practices for ELLs while Aung and Participant 13 were not offered the

opportunity to reassess, so their experience were also shaped by those institutional agents

who did not go outside of the established practices on their behalf.

As reported earlier in this chapter, this study has found that students draw on

sustained relationships with institutional agents to navigate the institution. Thus, it is

clear that students are aware of the potential influence of an individual agent on their

experience, but because the influence of individual agent varies according to their

perceptions of US-ELLs, which varies in part in relationship to the agent's role in the

institution, student experiences are dependent on which institutional agents they come

into contact with and whether they establish a sustained relationship with an institutional

agent. This is seen in the experiences of four student participants in the ESL program

described in the previous paragraphs. It is also evidenced in student participants'

experiences navigating the curriculum. Marisol, who was not formally connected with a

college preparation program while in high school nor with an individual institutional

agent once she enrolled at ABCC, was frustrated and confused by the matriculation

process. Partly as a result of the matriculation experience, during which her name and

major were incorrectly recorded, causing further complication, Marisol had not yet

visited an advisor despite her intention to apply to the nursing program. This lack of

connection meant that Marisol relied on information about the nursing application

process from a friend who was in the program.

Chapter Summary

The US-ELL student participants in this study arrived at ABCC with developing

English language and academic skills, facing the challenges inherent in navigating

educational systems in a still, in some ways, new country. This was not lost on the

participants of this study, who spoke movingly about the impact of being an immigrant

and an English language learner (ELL) on their educational experiences. But the findings

of this study show that these US-ELLs did not arrive at community college without

resources that they could and did leverage to persist through, in some cases, extended

ESL and developmental reading and writing sequences to successfully enroll in or

complete a college composition course – a gatekeeper for college completion (American

Institutes for Research, 2013). The evidence of these resources serves not only as a

refutation of the deficit-oriented descriptions of the US-ELLs found in the higher

education literature but also as an important foundation for investigating how students'

experiences, especially their use of personal, institutional, and community resources, are shaped by the institutional policies and practices they encounter.

The findings of this study also included evidence that these policies and practices toward ELLs, specifically those surrounding assessment and placement and ESL course content, materials, and instructional methods, may limit the educational opportunities of US-ELLs at ABCC. First, this case study produced evidence that the standardized assessment testing in place at ABCC, as at the majority of community colleges (Scott-Clayton, 2012), may not be appropriate for assessing the language and academic skills of US-ELLs. While this study was not concerned with the validity and reliability of the standardized assessments in use for US-ELLs per se, the significance of the concerns about these assessments expressed by both students and institutional agents should not be discounted as they reflect the lived experiences of the practitioners who enact institutional policy and the students' experiences within those testing practices, providing evidence not available through other types of data, such as psychometric testing. Beyond concerns about the validity of the assessment itself for students who are emerging bilinguals and with the routing questions that guide students into the ESL or non-ESL test -- and the potentially significant consequences of beginning with ESL testing – these findings also suggest that the testing conditions under which most US-ELLs experience the assessments and the lack of information students have about the assessments and their use impact scores may negatively impact US-ELLs' scores and resulting placements. These concerns about the validity of the assessment tests are significant because of the restrictive placement practices that rely on results from these standardized assessments, which have the effect of limiting access to college-level courses and career-training

programs for those students who do not meet the set score cut offs. Frequently limited then to ESL and developmental reading and writing courses for several terms, US-ELLs may begin their college experiences in courses of which the content and instructional methods were viewed as inappropriate for US-ELLs by the majority of student and institutional agent participants alike.

These policies and practices are designed and enacted by institutional agents – though not always by the same institutional agents – whose perceptions of US-ELLs' influence both the design of policies and their enactment through practice. Because institutional agents do not always apply institutional policy consistently and because the way they apply policy may be influenced by their perceptions of students, whether as individuals or as part of a particular group, how students experience the policies enacted as practices can vary widely. While there were exceptions noted in the findings above, in interviews, faculty and academic-support staff tended to focus on US-ELLs' academic and linguistic deficits whereas student-support staff tended to focus on US-ELLs' non-academic strengths and barriers leading them to appear to be more willing to provide holistic, rather than narrowly academic, support. In addition, sympathetic institutional agents were willing to circumvent established practices for US-ELLs when they perceived that the practices for ELLs were detrimental to US-ELLs in particular.

CHAPTER 6: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

This study provided evidence of the personal, institutional, and community resources leveraged by US-ELLs to matriculate and persist at a community college and of some of the ways in which the educational experiences of US-ELLs are shaped by community college policies and practices for ELLs. This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings in light of the research questions that guided this study and, where applicable, connections are drawn to the existing body of higher education research on US-ELLs. The chapter concludes with implications for research and practice.

Leveraging Resources to Expand Educational Opportunity

The student participants in this study fit the primary characteristics of the common understanding of the term of *generation 1.5,* meaning that they migrated to the U.S. as children or adolescents (Benesch, 2008) and learned English and received at least part of their formal schooling as students in the U.S. K-12 school system (Benesch, 2008; Gawienowski & Holper; 2006; Blumenthal; 2002). With the exception of Participant 13, who had been adopted by a U.S. family nine years previously, when she was 10 years old, the student participants were all what Ferris (2009) termed *late arriving,* meaning they arrived in the U.S. after the age of 10 and less than eight years previously. Of the seven student participants, two, Participants 13 and 17, had been classified as English proficient by the time they graduated from high school and five were considered advanced ELLs, spending less than a quarter of the school day receiving English language services of any kind. However, upon matriculation at ABCC, all of the student participants were placed in at least one ESL course, and five (Participant 17 and Samjana were the exceptions) were "reactivated" (Salas et al., 2011, p. 127) as full-time ESL

students as a result of the assessment testing and placement process at ABCC. The student participants all identified themselves as English learners and cited difficulties with language as the most significant challenge to their college success.

That all of the student participants in the study were identified by the community college *and* self-identified as ELLs is an important feature of this study because both English proficiency and ELL status itself have been shown to impact postsecondary access and attainment (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Núñez et al., 2016) and because previous research has found that LM students who graduate high school as English proficient have patterns of access and attainment in higher education that more closely match that of monolingual English speakers than US-ELLs (Núñez et al., 2016).

The US-ELL students who participated in this study succeeded in graduating from high school within four to eight years of immigrating and learning English, enrolled in a community college and persisted through 10 to 36 credit hours of courses in ESL and developmental-level reading and writing to enroll in or complete at least a first-level English composition course. The findings of the study presented in the previous chapter provided evidence that the US-ELL participants drew on a variety of personal, institutional, and community resources to motivate, information, and support for their college attendance and persistence. Resources drawn from family and community motivated the US-ELLs in this study to attend college and persist even when faced with difficult circumstances, academic and otherwise. Student participants also drew on English and non-English-dominant resources to learn about and navigate college. These resources were frequently accessed through programs or organizations that students

connected with in high school or community college but were also available through communities, peers, and family.

Based on their awareness of their language and academic skills, the US-ELLs in this study made informed choices about where to attend college. While the cost of college did contribute considerably to these students' ultimate college choices, all but one of the seven US-ELL participants sought the academic and student supports that they perceived as more available at ABCC than at a four-year college or university because they believed that their language and academic skills needed further development and support. To develop their language and academic skills, participants drew on a variety of institutional resources, from both academic and student support orientated sources. In sum, the picture that emerged of the US-ELLs who participated in this study was one of students who were aware of the challenges they faced, were motivated to overcome them and to succeed in college, and actively sought out information and support when they needed it.

By looking for examples of academically successful students as suggested by Harklau and McClanahan (2012), this study was intended to contribute to what is known about the resources US-ELLs employ to matriculate and persist in higher education (Salas et al., 2011), in order to advance our understanding of these students' experiences in community college beyond those perspectives that cast US-ELLs as linguistically and academically deficient. Previous studies have employed capital frameworks to examine the influence of resources on college access and success, but some researchers have contended that use of capital frameworks for this purpose is not useful for LM populations, particularly ELLs (Kanno & Cromley, 2012; Kanno & Cromley, 2015;

Núñez & Sparks, 2012; Rios-Aguilar et al, 2011) and furthers deficit-perspectives of populations which have relatively limited access to economic, cultural, and social capital (Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2011). Because of these concerns, this study employed an resource-orientated framework, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), to allow forms of capital overlooked by conventional frameworks to be accounted for. This framing of the study allowed me to approach the analysis of student participants' lived experiences in a way that drew out the sources of support and information that aided students in their community college matriculation and persistence without dismissing the real challenges they faced. These sources of support and information, including non-English dominant networks, their own self-awareness of their language and academic development, and sustained relationships with institutional agents, would likely be overlooked were frameworks used which rely on conventional forms of capital or approach the language and academic development of US-ELLs through a lens of "nativist normativity" (Roberge, 2009, p. 5). The data show that three types of Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth were most salient for the student participants in this study: aspirational, linguistic and social capital. The following sections discuss each in turn and how participants' experiences related to prior research findings.

Aspirational Capital: Motivation for College Attendance and Persistence

The US-ELL participants in this study, with the exception of Participant 13, were the first in their immediate families to attend college and faced many of the same challenges common to other first-generation college students, particularly students from minoritized ethnic groups, such as lack of help from parents with college and expectations for family responsibilities that may conflict with college attendance (Dennis,

Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). Participant 13 was the only student participant who reported receiving information about or financial assistance for college-going from parents or who reported coming to campus with a parent. (Recall that Participant 13 was adopted into an English-dominant family, and both her parents had attended college.) Nonetheless, the other US-ELLs who participated in this study leveraged family relationships and community connections to motivate their college attendance and persistence even if family and community members did not have college experience and were unable to provide information or financial support in the way that Participant 13's family was able to. The motivation to attend and persist in college that the US-ELLs in this study drew from their families and communities may be related to parental and community expectations for these young people. In their study of the factors influencing postsecondary access and attainment of ELLs, Kanno and Cromley (2013) considered parental expectations for their children's educational attainment as an aspect of family capital and found that parental expectations was a more significant predictor of college access and attainment than family income, a factor in postsecondary access also noted by Hirschman (2016). The sacrifices that parents, and by extension the community, had made to succeed in moving their families to the U.S. was also a source of motivation for US-ELLs, a finding also noted in Rios-Aguilar and Deil-Amend (2012). This is an encouraging finding because it indicates that immigrant families and communities without significant financial or (privileged) cultural capital still contribute positively to their children's college attendance and persistence by providing a form of aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) through expectations for educational attainment and familial capital (Yosso, 2005) rooted in a sense of responsibility to the parents and community.

Linguistic and Social Capital: Sources of Information about College-Going

Bilingualism and biculturalism allowed the US-ELLs in this study to access both English-dominant and non-English-dominant resources to learn about and navigate college. Participation in programs like College Possible, Avenue Scholars, and THRIVE club in high school, club/organization networks, along with relationships with teachers and counselors, or academic networks, provided access to English-dominant resources of information about college-going and support throughout the process. In addition, some US-ELLs who participated in this study drew on non-English-dominant resources, a benefit of their bilingualism (Kanno & Cromley (2012) and an example of linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005). Examples of non-English resources are the academic networks created by bilingual liaisons employed at high schools (Isabella and Aung), the bilingual financial aid advisor from Education Quest (Marisol and Isabella) and the family and friendship networks of relatives currently enrolled in college (Naw), members of a non-English dominant church (Aung), and same-language peers (all participants). Access to English and non-English resources is a benefit of the multilingualism and multiculturalism of US-ELLs and an aspect of linguistic capital. The information and support garnered from these contacts is part of social capital (Yosso, 2005).

Students with a greater number of contacts, whether English or non-English-dominant, within the network that supported college going reported not only access to more sources of information and support, but the extended network provided more opportunities for students to confirm information and clarify areas of confusion, especially if the relationships were sustained from high school to college or for several terms at ABCC. This "double-checking" function seemed to be a key aspect of how some

US-ELLs leveraged their network. For example, when Naw did not understand an interaction with an ABCC advisor, she went to her College Possible advisor for an explanation; when her ABCC advisor created a schedule for her, she took it to her College Possible advisor to check it and make changes for her. Samjana reported leveraging her relationship with her College Possible advisor in much the same way. Similarly, Aung turned to his TRIO advisor for academic help and clarification. After confusing appointments with consultants in the Writing Center, he took his instructor's comments *and* the consultant's feedback to his TRIO advisor who helped him interpret and apply the feedback on his writing. When students had fewer contacts to draw from, they did not have as many opportunities to confirm and clarify information. Of the students who initially placed into exclusively ESL courses, Marisol had arguably the least well-developed network of support transitioning from high school to community college and also reported having experienced relatively more frustration and confusion about getting to college and about ABCC's policies and practices, presumably due in part to not having contacts who could clarify information about college. Even activities meant to provide information about college-going to high school students, such information sessions provided by current college students, caused consternation because she lacked the background knowledge necessary to put what she heard into context. Marisol was not involved with a program that supported her in the transition from high school to college and, without other sources of information to clarify what she had heard, she was not able to use the information she had. This lack of "back up" influenced her experiences at ABCC as well. She was so upset by her initial interactions with ABCC's student services when she was enrolling that she never visited an advisor again and was instead relying on

information from a friend to apply for the nursing program. Marisol did benefit from her

ESL instructor's recommendation that she re-test, but again she did not have a source for

the information she needed to make sense of her path from assessment to ESL to college-

level composition.

Linguistic Capital: (Self-)Awareness of Language and Academic Development

In *A Portrait of Generation 1.5 Students,* (Gawienowski & Holper, 2006), the

authors wrote that "one of the more irksome characteristics of Generation 1.5 students is

their inability or unwillingness to actively engage in or assess their own learning

process." The evidence from this study, however, does not support these perceptions. In

fact, far from being unaware of the educational challenges posed by immigration in the

middle and high school years, these US-ELLs were very cognizant of the extra effort they

needed to make in order to learn English and be successful in college. Every student

participant identified being an English learner as the aspect of their identity or experience

that presented the biggest challenge to their success in college, a finding in line with two

other studies conducted with US-ELLs in postsecondary education (Kanno & Varghese,

2010; Kanno & Grosik, 2012). Reflecting a common sentiment among participants, Naw

remarked, "If I only spoke English it would better." But US-ELLs in this study drew on

this acute awareness of the challenges they faced to make a deliberate choice about where

to attend college and to seek out opportunities to develop their language and academic

skills.

Previous research has found an association with secondary ESL placement and

college undermatching (Callahan & Humphries, 2016). One potential explanation for

this phenomenon is the negative impact that remedial and ESL placement were found to

have on high school on students' confidence in their academic abilities (Kanno &

Kangas, 2014). However, the present study provides evidence that participants, rather

than being compelled to attend a community college by academic insecurity or as a last

resort as previous research has suggested (Callahan & Humphries, 2016; Salas et al.,

2011), US-ELLs drew on an awareness of their language and academic skills and acted

deliberately to increase their access to academic and student support networks. This is not

to say that the students who participated in this study did not express concerns about their

language and academic abilities, concerns which contributed to their decision to attend

ABCC instead of a four-year college or university. And for Naw and Participant 13 at

least there was a measure of wistfulness about not being at the university as they

described their college choices, but there was little evidence in the data that the

participants doubted they could be successful in college. Additionally, while college cost

contributed considerably to these students' ultimate college choices, more affordable

tuition was not the most compelling reason for the US-ELLs who participated in this

study to enroll in ABCC. With the exception of Samjana, who had been accepted at

several four-year institutions and chose ABCC because it offered her intended career

program, these US-ELLs sought the academic and student supports that they perceived

were more available at ABCC than at a four-year college or university because they

believed that their language and/or academic skills needed further development.

These informed and deliberate choices on the part of US-ELLs to seek the most

supportive environment to develop their language and academic skills are examples of

the exercise of agency within the constraints imposed by their educational backgrounds,

including the circumstances under which they have acquired English. This findings add

to the existing literature around student agency and ELL transitions to and experiences in postsecondary education, such as those conducted by Fuentes (2012), Harklau and McClanahan (2012), and Varghese (2012), with the additional nuance that US-ELLs may draw on linguistic capital from their language and language learning backgrounds to expand their educational opportunities.

To varying degrees, the student participants in this study were in the process of developing the language and academic skills necessary for success in college-level courses. The students drew on an awareness of this to choose a college that they perceived offered more support, and when confronted with academic challenges in their courses, sought out opportunities to develop specific skills and made use of institutional academic support resources. The students in this study viewed the challenges related to language and academic skills development not as insurmountable but as requiring them to work harder than their peers who had more experience studying in English. For example, both Naw and Samjana discovered that they struggled to manage the study time for their courses and complete their assignments on time. To address this, Samjana took her instructor's advice to learn to use an agenda. Naw taught herself time-management skills, or as she put it, "I don't learn it, I just force myself!" These students addressed the development of a needed academic skill, time-management, differently, but both were aware of an academic skill area that required further development and both took steps to develop it.

The US-ELLs in the study made extensive use of institutional resources available at ABCC when they encountered challenging coursework. When Naw didn't pass her first developmental writing course, she purposefully reenrolled in the next term with the

same instructor and began visiting that instructor in the Writing Center. Isabella, who had

found her ESL courses too easy, was surprised by the increase in difficulty as she moved

into the developmental writing courses and also began using the Writing Center for each

assignment, a practice she continued all the way through the second level of college

composition; Marisol also took assignments to the Writing Center. Aung reported taking

almost every writing assignment to his TRIO advisor and visiting the Reading Center.

Participant 13 and Samjana went to the Learning Center for assistance completing writing

and other types of assignments.

Participant 17 was the only student in the study that did not report using an

institutional resource to assist in the development of a specific language or academic skill

at ABCC. In high school, Participant 17 had asked to work individually with her English

teacher to develop her vocabulary skills in preparation for college, but at ABCC she had

not found similar support, so she suggested to the researcher that English instructors be

asked to develop co-curricular study groups for ELLs who needed help with vocabulary.

In fact, most of the student participants advocated for student and academic support

programs and services aimed at the specific needs of ELLs.

These findings show that US-ELL student participants in this study, far from

being incognizant of the challenges presented by studying in a language they were, in

some respects, still learning, were quick to seek resources to assist them in the

development of the language and academic skills needed to persist in their college

courses and to put in the extra time required. Importantly, this contradicts the perceptions

of several of the faculty participants who believed that US-ELLs were *less* likely to seek

out assistance from institutional resources. This may be because no participant other than

Naw reported visiting their instructors outside of class time for assistance, and then only for scheduled conferences. However, faculty and academic support staff may not be aware of how US-ELLs access institutional resources is significant because their perspectives on these students may influence how they view the impact of the institution's policies and practices on this population in particular.

Community College Assessment and Placement Practices for ELLs Limit

Educational Opportunity for US-ELLs

In responding to Salas et al.'s (2011) call for inquiry into "the sources of information that guide [US-ELLs] through the high-school-to -postsecondary transition phase and within the community college setting" (p. 129) in light of the deficit-perspective in the higher education and TESOL literature toward this population described by Benesch (2008), Bunch et al. (2011), Flores et al. (2015), and others, this study was designed to counter the prevailing deficit orientation that may limit educational opportunity for US-ELLs at community college. The purpose of the study was not to find evidence of deficit thinking toward this population; however, in the course of the interviews with institutional agents, some participants, primarily faculty members, depicted US-ELLs in ways reminiscent of examples of deficit thinking found in the literature, for example, in Gawienowski and Holper (2006). Instructor descriptions of this population for this study included characterizations such as "complacent," "not academically prepared for college," and "ill-equipped." On US-ELLs' use of institutional resources, one instructor remarked, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." In addition, faculty tended to equate a student's level in the ESL program with the level of academic readiness for college. In other words, low placement in the

ESL program, understood as indicating a low level of English proficiency, demonstrated to faculty that US-ELLs were not academically prepared for college. This perspective is problematic for two reasons. First, given the concerns with the standardized assessments used to place students into the ESL sequence of courses, the assumption that low placement in the ESL sequence indicates low English proficiency is tenuous. Second, in light of research done primarily at the K-12 level and, to some extent, the evidence presented by this study, the presumption that ELLs with developing academic English skills would be unable to participate in coursework with their English-dominant or English-proficient peers and so must be kept out of these courses, which is the core belief behind the restrictive placement policies, is one that needs to be examined.

Evidence from the U.S. K-12 system, where there has been extensive research on what is commonly termed *sheltered instruction* suggests that ELLs can successfully learn grade-level academic content when content is made accessible through specialized instructional strategies (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). While there are significant variations in how sheltered instruction is applied, the foundation of the model is that "language and content are combined" (Johnson, Stephens, Nelson, & Johnson, 2018). Further, the course-taking records of student participants in this study suggest that some US-ELLs may be able to move into college-level coursework rather than ESL courses, despite low scores on ESL assessments. Naw and Participant 17, for example, each passed two college-level courses as part of a summer bridge program after high school *before* beginning their ESL coursework the following fall. In fact, each of the study participants was taking at least one college-level course along with their ESL coursework by their third term at ABCC. Were the two quarters of solely ESL coursework necessary

to prepare them for those college-level courses or could they have enrolled directly in those courses and, with appropriate support as needed, been successful in them? This implications of this are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

That the deficit perspectives described in the previous paragraph were most often held by faculty is significant. It is faculty who design curricula and who set assessment score cutoffs and determine placement policies. If faculty and academic support staff view this population as academically unprepared and unwilling to work hard to develop their language and academic skills, faculty may be less likely to attribute any negative effects of these policies and practices on students to the policies and practices themselves and more likely to attribute any negative effects to deficiencies on the part of the student, for example, attributing a low score on the ESL assessments to low language proficiency ("their foundation is really weak") rather than investigating a potential problem with the assessment, despite noticing assessment results that do not align with what might be reasonably expected of students: "High school seniors are testing into … level 2 [ESL] reading and writing and even listening and speaking. You would think that they would hear it enough just being in an English-speaking high school."

Further, the deficient-perspective of US-ELLs held by some faculty and academic support staff, which influences how they design the institution's placement policies, may be self-perpetuating. Evidence from this study suggests that ABCC's assessment and placement policies and practices limited US-ELLs' educational opportunities by, for example, restricting students to ESL coursework for several terms, restricting access to coursework that meets graduation requirements, and restricting access to certain career certificate programs, such as the Certified Nursing Assistant program, which students

could enroll in with no admissions requirements at other local institutions. Because of the institution's reliance on assessment measures that do not accurately assess students' language proficiency yet are used to exclude them from college-level coursework and certain career programs and to place them in ESL courses that did not offer effective opportunities for English language development, faculty and others in the institution see US-ELLs struggle, further reinforcing the belief that this population is not college-ready. This assertion aligns with examples from the literature of US-ELLs being perceived as academically or linguistically deficient or seen as "problematic" for the institution (Benesch, 2008). Examples can be found in Harklau's (2002) case study of US-ELLs transitioning from high school to community college in which the community college ESL instructors perceived the relative social and cultural ease of the U.S.-educated students in their classrooms as being "uncooperative and rude" in contrast to the common perception of typical ESL students as "compliant and grateful" (p. 54); in Blumenthal's (2002) assertion that "[Generation 1.5 students'] academic skills, including reading, writing, critical thinking, and general knowledge, are often weak" (p. 50); and in the characterizations of US-ELLs as "dual nonnative speakers" because they are not fully proficient in either their L1 or L2-English" from Singhal (2004, p. 2).

Overall, the perceptions of the faculty and academic support staff who participated in the study and the practices evidenced at ABCC aligned with Bunch et al.'s (2011) finding that

> [institutional agents] emphasized how these students' language deviated from
> monolingual norms or how they lacked the kinds of backgrounds and experiences
> common among students from more dominant groups. Given this latter

orientation, it is not surprising that some colleges respond by placing US-LM

students in multi-semester ESL or remedial English sequences, in an effort to

prepare them to enter the academic mainstream. (p. x)

The impact of assessment and course placement practices on US-ELLs evidenced

in this study aligns with previous research conducted on the impact of assessment testing

and placement practices for US-ELLs conducted by Bunch et al. (2011), whose work

characterized the complex and high-stakes process of community college assessment and

placement as a potential major obstacle to postsecondary matriculation for US-ELLs.

The findings also lend support to the argument made by Salas et al (2011) that

community colleges' "assessment and placement mechanisms…are used to track students

into remedial coursework and potentially work against nontraditional students' access to

and success in the opportunity structures of higher education" (p. 122).

Sympathetic Institutional Agents Play Key Role in Success of US-ELLs

At ABCC, the placement policies are determined by faculty and enacted primarily

by advisors and others in student service or support roles, who interpret assessment

scores through these policies to make placement decisions for students. In designing

placement policies -- and supporting mandatory assessment and ESL or developmental

placement policies to begin with (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011) -- faculty, who tended

to focus on language and academic development in developing their perspectives on US-

ELLs, are attempting to avoid the frustrations for students and instructors that come when

they have students in their courses who they perceive as being ill-prepared for the

demands of the course and the challenges of teaching a wide-range of student abilities

within one class (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). These placement policies are then

typically enacted by staff in student support roles. Institutional agents who work with US-ELLs in student support capacities tended to focus on this student population's strengths in the face of adverse educational and personal circumstances.

These institutional agents were more likely to view the negative effects of the institution's policies and practices on US-ELLs as stemming from problems with those structures rather than as problems with the students. While they did not speak explicitly about viewing students from an asset-based perspective, one student support participant illustrated a perspective evident throughout the data that drove these institutional agents to go beyond typical student support services to assist US-ELLs: "We try to think outside of the box because these students are amazing. They have so many talents and things to contribute, it's getting them through the classes and classes..." This perspective made these institutional agents more likely to circumvent the more restrictive placement policies and to provide holistic support to students, such as working with sympathetic faculty to move a student into a career program despite his not having completed the ESL sequence or allowing students to retake the standardized assessments more times than official policy allowed.

The efforts of the part of institutional agents in student support roles played an important role in the success of the US-ELLs who participated in this study. These student participants reported that they had maintained relationships with sympathetic institutional agents who provided broad rather than specific types of assistance and avoided institutional agents or services that they perceived as unsympathetic or not useful to them. This allowed students to access assistance that was tailored to their needs by an institutional agent who was willing to circumvent established practices when it was seen

as limiting opportunity for the US-ELL. An explanation for this finding might lie with Tovar's (2015) finding that it is not merely the number of contacts that Latina/o community college students have with institutional agents or participation in particular programs that matter, nor is *academic* support sufficient, but rather having established " a good relationship with a program leader or counselor who validates and offers them individual guidance and mentorship" (p. 63).

While individual student participants in this study benefited from these interventions by sympathetic institutional agents, the fact that there are differing perspectives on US-ELLs and that these perspectives may influence student experiences with institutional agents leads to inconsistent experiences for students with institutional agents and, by extension, with the institution's policies and practices.

The participants' experiences in this study point to at least two potential consequences of this: US-ELLs rely on sustained relationships with sympathetic institutional agents to mitigate this inconsistency and, beyond those relationships or absent them, their experiences depend very much on the perceptions of the institutional agents they come into contact with. Thus, US-ELLs' experiences within the case varied according to the perceptions of US-ELLs held by the individual institutional agents they encountered. Access to a sympathetic institutional agent appeared to be a key resource for US-ELLs' persistence, thus, this finding leads to the question of equal treatment for students who do not, for whatever reason, have this access.

These findings around the key role of institutional agents for US-ELLs add to the literature on the role of institutional agents in promoting the success of students from minoritized racial and cultural backgrounds such as that conducted by Museus and

Neville (2012) and Museus (2014), in particular, Museus's (2014) finding that institutional agents can have a positive influence on the experiences of community college students from racial minority backgrounds through the development of a trusting relationship and by providing "holistic support" (p. 443). The findings can also be considered in light of Rendón's (1994, 2002) theory of validation, in which "institutional agents, not students, are expected to take the first step to not only promote involvement but to affirm students as knowers and valuable members of the college learning community" (p. 645). However, these studies did not consider ELL status. In one study on this population in particular, Razfar and Simon (2011) found that it was ESL faculty who provided this critical support for community college ELLs, a finding not supported by the present study.

Limitations

In design of this research study, individual students served as units of analysis within the case, here, the policies and practices aimed at ELLs within the larger context of ABCC, described primarily through data from interviews with institutional agents and document review. The data collected on the institution were not connected to a specific student participant. Because of this approach, the case findings are not necessarily applicable to each of the individual student experiences nor can individual student experiences necessarily be generalized to the case.

In Chapter 3, I addressed some of the potential tensions and challenges that my insider status at ABCC presented. While I was not an insider in terms of my personal and social identity with the students participants in this study, I was, as an ESL faculty member, an insider with respect to the case, the institutional agents and the institution.

This increased my access to participants as many knew me from my role as an instructor and coordinator of the department. However, my insider status may also have introduced bias into the recruitment of participants and in the information they were willing to share with me. However, whether participants were more open with me or less because of our shared experiences is not known.

This study focused on US-ELLs exclusively, and the findings are not likely to hold true for other groups of ELLs served by community colleges such as international students and adult immigrants, both of whom likely access different resources and are impacted by the institution's policies and practices differently. Thus, the findings may be limited in their usefulness to those community college practitioners whose student bodies contain a higher percentage of the other two groups.

Attention to Race

This was a study of community college students who are emergent bilinguals from language minority populations in the U.S., not of students with specific racial or ethnic identifications. Yet the majority of emergent bilinguals in community colleges are not White, and so it is important to consider how their racial and ethnic identities affect their experiences. It is especially essential for a White researcher to be explicit about this because of the tendency White people have to ignore or downplay issues around race. As a White researcher conducting research with a population that includes people of color, I wanted to sensitize my analysis to race even though this was not the most salient aspect of the study's purpose. I expected that the theoretical frameworks used for this study would support this approach while allowing for the foregrounding of emerging bilingualism and English language learner (ELL) status.

I recognize now, at the conclusion of this project, that I did not succeed in attending to race in this study in the way I had intended. In reflecting on this limitation, I can identify a number of places where I could and should have acknowledged and looked more closely at the ways in which race and language are connected. In the interview protocols for student participants (see Appendix B), I included just one question around race, asking whether participants perceived that another aspect of their identity beyond that of English language learner had influenced their experiences at ABCC. No participant responded affirmatively, and I did not ask any follow up questions even when Naw replied rather defiantly, "I don't know what people think of me!" It may have been an ineffectively worded question or perhaps participants were not able or willing to articulate a critical perspective with me because of an aspect of my identity or role within the institution (both discussed in Chapter 3 under the heading Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity). Further, as I conducted the analysis, I may have misinterpreted or missed entirely instances of implicit or explicit racism in the data, a further limitation to the findings of the study.

Implications

For Practice

Despite the potential barriers erected by ABCC's assessment and placement policies and practices, the student participants in this study matriculated, persisted through ESL and developmental reading and writing courses to successfully pass a college-level composition course. This study has provided evidence of some of resources they drew on to achieve this success but very little evidence that institutional agents, faculty in particular, were aware of these resources and no evidence that there was any

systematic effort to establish connections between resources which might facilitate students' leveraging them to expand their educational opportunities. In addition, most institutional resources that students reported accessing were not designed with ELL-specific concerns in mind. Given this, a primary implication of this study's findings for community college practitioners is that US-ELLs may need more assistance establishing connections within the institution that draw on the resources they already have. Tovar (2015) suggests looking for ways that community colleges can "exploit" (p. 65) these positive influences. Since these networks of resources appear to be important to US-ELLs student success, community colleges also need to consider how to help students who leave high school without these networks develop them.

While community colleges are already known for providing the academic and student support that their student population may need to be successful, the findings of this study, particularly that sympathetic institutional agents play a key role in the success of US-ELLs, call for community college practitioners to consider additional ways in which they can move toward a paradigm of being a "student-ready college," (McNair et al., 2016). This represents a shift away from the concern, evidence for which this study has provided, that students are not college-ready, to whether or not the institution is ready for the students it admits. Coupled with Rendón's (1994, 2002) call for a proactive stance on the part of institutions in supporting students from minoritized ethnic backgrounds, the idea of being student ready puts the onus on the institution to provide effective support for US-ELLs.

The findings of this study point to several other key areas for community colleges to focus on. Community college practitioners should carefully consider the impact of the

institution's policies and practices for ELLs on ELLs from diverse backgrounds, particularly US-ELLs, given that the assessment and curricula in place were likely not developed with US-ELLs in mind. Specifically, the impact of assessment testing, ESL coursework, and student support services should be reexamined for potential unintended consequences for US-ELLs.

Assessment testing. Students who self-identify as multilingual may be more comfortable using English and should be tested using non-ESL versions of tests. Front-line community college staff cannot be expected to have the expertise to tease out the cumulative effect of a student's history on the usefulness of a particular assessment measure for every student they work with, but, given that assessment and placement is high-stakes at many community colleges, steering a student to an inappropriate assessment measure can have a long-term impact on his or her college experience (Bunch & Panayotova, 2008). The results determine where in the sequence of ESL and developmental courses a students will begin their coursework; the difference in the number of courses between the first level and college level can be as many as seven. When students are placed in courses that do not appropriately address their needs, whether too high or too low, their progress to completion is delayed and their motivation suffers, both of which can result in decreased persistence (Llosa & Bunch, 2011; Scott-Clayton, 2012).

Because of the increasing diversity of students whose first or primary language is not English, community colleges must also consider that the existing assessment tools might not be equally effective for all ELL student populations. Students' educational experience in the primary or first language and the context of where and how English was

studied affect their performance on ESL assessment tests. Llosa and Bunch (2011) concluded that it is not even clear for which ELL population the commercially-available assessments for nonnative speakers are intended. Multiple choice question formats tend to mask low production skills in students who have learned English "by ear," through living and working in an English-dominant context, sometimes resulting in higher placement than appropriate. Conversely, students with limited or interrupted formal education in their primary language approach assessment testing with fewer strategies to draw upon. Their assessment scores reflect not only their language skills but also lack of experience with schooling tasks such as testing. Standardized language assessments can be especially problematic for US-ELLs and therefore may be most at risk for inappropriate placement. Their academic language development can occur unevenly across skills, making it difficult to assess their functional abilities through reading and grammar tests (Llosa & Bunch, 2011).

In place of standardized assessments, community college practitioners might consider alternate language assessment methods such as incorporating directed self-placement (Ferris, Evans, & Kurzer, 2017). Directed self-placement provides students with information about course options and directs students to consider previous educational experiences among other factors when deciding on the most appropriate course placement. A placement method that exploits student self-assessment seems particularly appropriate for US-ELLs given the finding of the present study that these students draw on an awareness of their language and academic skills to inform their college choices.

Community college ESL courses. Assessing US-ELLs with non-ESL versions of assessment tests may help some ELLs move directly into developmental and college-level programs upon matriculating at the a community college, but it may also leave US-ELLs without the language and academic support they need. US-ELLs may finish high school without some or many of the skills necessary for successful participation in college courses due, at least in part, to the great effort they expended at the start of their U.S. schooling on developing listening and speaking skills and on social integration. Depending on how many years they spent in U.S. schools, they, like Participant 17, may have few nonnative "markers" in their speech and writing, which may have more in common with that of native speakers placed into developmental-level courses. Some US-ELLs may benefit from these types of courses, which were designed to prepare students for the demands of college-level reading and writing. This is a very diverse group, however, and those students who spent fewer years in K-12 may still be developing functional abilities in English and could benefit from additional English language support not typically offered in developmental reading and writing courses. The courses and course materials typically found in community college ESL programs, however, are geared toward students with relatively less experience with US culture and relatively more experience studying English through its grammar, which limits their usefulness for US-ELLs (Blumenthal, 2002).

To provide US-ELLs with linguistic and academic support without limiting them to multiple terms of ESL-only schedules, community college ESL practitioners should consider alternative ways of supporting English language development within general education and career and technical education courses. There are several possibilities to

consider. The first is to provide US-ELLs with an language and academic support course in place of the standard ESL curriculum at the institution. This course, which should be available for repeated enrollment as students progress through their coursework, would not necessarily have language or content objectives of its own but would offer language and academic support to US-ELLs in their general education or major coursework. Another option, which requires more institutional buy-in, is to embed ESL instructors into programs, much like advisors are embedded in certain career and transfer programs. The embedded ESL instructor would provide program-specific language support to ELLs, both during and outside of class time and consult with program instructors on practices to make course content more accessible to ELLs.

For students who do need further English language development before attempting non-ESL courses, the results of this study suggest that community colleges should also reconsider course sequencing models which transition students who complete ESL courses directly into developmental English and reading courses. If standardized assessment are relied on, certainly US-ELLs should at least be offered the opportunity to reassess at some point in the ESL course sequence and again when transitioning out of ESL programs. More impactful would be the development of alternative, advanced-level ESL courses that integrate language instruction with exposure to academic content to prepare students for college-level coursework. This would allow students access to the linguistic and academic support they seek rather than the decontextualized and isolated-skills development often found in traditional ESL courses. There are a number of ways this can be accomplished such as employing English faculty with expertise in both basic writing instruction and TESOL methods for special sections of developmental and

college-level courses, collaborating with TESOL faculty to develop supplemental course objectives and language support, and taking advantage of TESOL expertise, if available, in writing and tutoring centers, to name a few.

Student support resources. Given that sustained relationships with sympathetic institutional agents who provided holistic support were key resources for the US-ELLs in this study, community college leaders might consider how to create positions that allow institutional agents to act as both academic *and* student support for US-ELLs and other students with similar needs. In this study, when institutional agents moved beyond traditional institutional divisions and provided the kind of holistic support that US-ELLs benefited from, they typically described themselves as doing something they were not supposed to do. Empowering institutional agents to transcend traditional institutional divisions to help students make connections with people, not offices, would make this type of holistic support available to more students. However, institutional agents in student support roles need a basic understanding of second language acquisition in order to help them help students choose appropriate courses. This is especially important because of the unique way in which US-ELLs' bilingualism has developed. For example, institutional agents in student support roles may assume that a high level of fluency in spoken English indicates that an ELL does not need language support, not realizing the significant difference in proficiency that may exist between oral and written fluency, particularly in academic English. Likewise, faculty and those in academic support roles need a more holistic understanding of US-ELLs including how they access resources, the responsibility they feel toward their families, and how their high school experiences contributed to their language skills. Equipping institutional agents in both academic and

student affairs divisions with an appreciation of how US-ELLs' language learning and academic and personal backgrounds have influenced their current language and academic skills and behaviors is key to providing effective holistic support from both academic and student services perspectives.

For Research

The primary participants of this study were seven US-ELLs attending one community college, and the findings are not meant to be generalized for all US-ELLs or for all community colleges, making future additional research in different contexts important to understanding how US-ELLs experience community college in light of these students' language learning histories. It is especially imperative that experts in educational measurement test the quality of the standardized assessments in use for US-ELLs. Bunch et al (2011) note that there is no evidence that the standardized assessments in use for community college placement were normed on US-ELL students, which is concerning given both the differences between US-ELLs' emerging bilingualism from the English language acquisition patterns of those who learn English as adults and the high stakes of these assessments. Looking at the issue more broadly, Nero (2005) asserted that placement processes and available course offerings in educational institutions are premised on a native speaker construct which reflects a monolingual bias through its privileging of standard forms of academic spoken and written English (Nero, 2005). Given evidence from the literature that these "placement procedures, program designs, [and] department divisions" may "perpetuate static divisions of ESL and NES [native English speaker] despite the multilingual pluralistic reality of higher education" (Maloy, 2016, p. 24), research should be conducted on the effectiveness for US-ELLs of

alternative forms of assessment beyond standardized tests, such as the research comparing directed self-placement with a standardized assessment conducted by Ferris, Evans, and Kurzer (2017). Especially given the self-awareness of their language and academic skills demonstrated by the US-ELLs in this study, additional research into self-directed placement, particularly for US-ELLs at community colleges, could provide additional support for institutions to look for placement policies and practices for ELLs that draw on the student strengths and do not have detrimental effects on US-ELLs in particular.

In addition, this study looked at policies and practices toward ELLs as they influence US-ELLs' experiences because US-ELLs are frequently subject to these policies and practices despite sharing few characteristics with other groups of ELLs on community college campuses. But this approach necessarily excluded a large number of non-ELL-related policies and practices that shape community college student experiences, whether ELL or not. Future research should investigate whether these other policies and practices impact US-ELLs differently than non-ELL students.

This study provided evidence of the personal, institutional, and community resources that US-ELLs drew up on to matriculate and persist in one community college. The study found evidence of three of Yosso's (2005) forms of community cultural wealth. Given the variety of these resources potentially available to US-ELLs, additional research is needed in diverse community college contexts and with additional student participants to more fully describe the wide range of the resources that US-ELLs leverage to matriculate and persist in community colleges, particularly into whether and how the institutional environment contributes to the mobilization or inactivation of these

resources. In addition, because community colleges serve ELLs from a variety of backgrounds, practitioners who are unable to provide differentiated policies and practices for students would benefit from research that includes and provides comparisons among other populations of ELLs such as international students and long-term residents so that practitioners might focus their improvement efforts where they would impact the most students.

Because this study was designed as a single case study with embedded units of analysis (students within the case), the data from the institutional agents that contributed to the findings of the second research question (How do community college policies and practices for ELLs shape US-ELLs' matriculation and course-taking experiences?) were not able to be linked directly to any of the study's student participants. Student participants described their individual experiences within the case while institutional agents described the case in general, so it was not possible analyze individual student experiences from both the student point of view and the institution's, via the institutional agent, point of view. A multiple case study design with students as the cases, especially were it longitudinal, would allow data to be collected for each case from the institutional agents that the students used as resources and who would then be in a position to provide data on the institutional perspective of the policy or practice. An example from the present study where this type of data would have been useful is in understanding why two of the student participants were flagged for re-assessment by their ESL instructors and two, who also believed they were placed too low, were not re-assessed and continued taking ESL courses. Having the instructors' perspective in addition to the students' perspectives on these incidents would have allowed for a more complete understanding of

the ways in which policies are understood and applied by individuals, including the students, and other factors that influence how policies are enacted, to better understand how those practices influence student experience

One finding of this study was that US-ELLs may prefer to draw on a relationship with one sympathetic institutional agent for holistic support rather than seeking specific types of support from various specialized institutional resources such as the Writing Center or a program advisor or will return to the sympathetic institutional agent for further explanation or confirmation of information received from another institutional resource. Additional research into how these various institutional entities work together or not could uncover unintended consequences of the more holistic support and reinforcement of critical information about college-going that this study suggests students benefit from. For example, what happens when these entities send conflicting messages? The findings of this study suggest that these relationships benefit the student, but what does this look like from a systemic perspective? Future research might consider whether Museus's (2014) model for culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) could be applied to the success of ELLs, and US-ELLs in particular, given that this student identity nearly always intersects with ethnic or racial minoritization.

Finally, that student experiences can be so significantly shaped by an individual institutional agent's perceptions of a student's language and academic ability as this study suggests brings to mind basic questions of equity. Benesch (2008) maintained that the role racism plays in the experiences of generation 1.5 students has been overlooked in the research literature on this population, an assertion that Flores, Kleyn and Menken (2015), built on through the conceptualization of *epistemic racism.* Flores (2017) argued that

epistemic racism is the reason deficit perspectives toward, in particular, Latino

bilingualism persist in spite of the reframing of bilingualism as a cognitive asset. One

avenue for future research in this area lies in adopting critical perspectives to what Flores

and Rosa (2015) have termed "discourses of appropriateness" (p. 150) in which certain

language production is perceived as nonstandard or even deficient because of the

speaker's racialization, a characterization unrelated to whether the utterance would be

considered standard or appropriate otherwise. Given the significant influence

institutional agents have on US-ELLs' experiences in community colleges, understanding

what the factors that influence faculty and other institutional agents' perceptions of US-

ELLs and, by extension, how those perceptions influence student experiences, would

provide guidance for community colleges as they consider whether the assessment

practices of US-ELLs' English language proficiency and the opportunities they provide

for additional language and academic skills development are not just effective but also

equitable.

Conclusion

This findings of this study suggest that the ways in which community colleges

provide language and academic support to US-ELLs, namely through ESL and

developmental writing programs, need to be designed with US-ELLs in mind. Contrary

to the perceptions of some of the institutional agent participants in this study, the US-

ELLs who participated in this study were aware that their academic English language

skills were still developing and each sought out opportunities to support that

development.

From my own experience as an ESL instructor who has worked with US-ELLs at a community college for ten years, I know well that students who have had just four short years to familiarize themselves with life in a new country and to acquire English along with a secondary education typically struggle to read college textbooks, to feel comfortable participating fully in their college classes, and to produce written assignments that conform to college instructors' expectations of standard academic English. Thus, to ignore the challenges inherent in migration, language acquisition, and secondary education and to deny US-ELLs English language support based on their U.S. high school diploma does not address the problems raised in this study which stem from typical community college assessment and placement practices and ESL programs either. Rather, assessment and placement practices and ESL programs must take into account US-ELLs' unique, and individual, language learning and educational histories and their own assessment of their language and academic skills in order to provide appropriate support that expands rather than limits US-ELLs' educational opportunities.

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APPENDIX A: Protocol for Institutional Agent Interview

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to identify the resources utilized by US-educated English language learners (US-ELLs) to matriculate and persist at a community college and to understand how they leverage these resources within the institutional environment. The research entails student interview data combined with information about the institutional environment. The interviews with institutional agents such as yourself will focus on the community college policies, practices, and programs that impact US-ELLs and how they shape students' educational experiences. As a reminder, while a student referred me to you, I will not name the student or ask you questions about individual students.

1. a. What is your job title or role at _____?
    b. What is typically your role when you work with US-ELLs?
    c. Please tell me about your experience working with US-ELLs.

2. In your experience, how do US-ELLs compare with other English language learners you have worked with, such as international students and new, adult immigrants? This could be in terms of language skills, academic readiness or other aspects of preparedness for college, engagement, etc.

3. a. What policies or practices are you aware of at ABCC that impact US-ELLs in particular?
    b. How do these policies / practices impact US-ELLs' experiences in community college?

4. Are you aware of whether and, if so, how policies or practices for ELLs in general, or toward US-ELLs in particular, have changed over time? What has driven these changes, in your opinion?

5. Is there anything else you can tell me about institutional policies and practices to help me understand US-ELLs' experiences in community college?

APPENDIX B: Demographic Survey for Student Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project about the resources that English language learners / bilingual students use to transition from high school to community college and to progress through ESL and other courses.

I am very grateful that you are willing to share your experiences with me. All of your responses are confidential. You can skip any question that you prefer not to answer.

Click here to review a copy of the Informed Consent Form.

If you have any questions or concerns at any point, please call or email.

Q1 Please choose a **first name** to be used in the study instead of your real name and type it on the line below.

   This name is your pseudonym, or "fake name." This is protect your identity in the study. If you do not give a pseudonym, you will be referred to by a participant number in all study documents.

   _____

Q2 Where did you live before you moved to the United States?

   Type the names of other countries you have lived in here:

   _____

Q3 What grade did you start school in when you moved to the U.S.?

○ 5th grade or earlier (elementary school)

○ 6th grade - 8th grade (middle school / junior high)

○ 9th - 12th grade (high school)

Q4 In your last year of high school (12th grade), did you receive English language support services of any kind? (Examples are ESL classes, tutoring, sheltered content area classes.)

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Q5 [If yes] What level of English language support services did you receive in your last year of high school (12th grade)?

○ Beginning level (ESL classes / services about 75% of the school day)

○ Intermediate level (ESL classes / services about 50% of the school day)

○ Advanced level (ESL classes / services about 25% of the school day)

○ Not sure / other

Q6 After you graduated from high school, did you apply only to this community college or to other colleges or universities?

○ I applied only to this community college.

○ I applied to other colleges and / or universities.

Q7 Have you taken college classes only at this community college or have you also taken classes at another college or university?

○ I have taken classes only at this community college.

○ I have also taken classes at another college or university.

Q8 In addition to English, what other languages do you speak?
Type your responses below.

_____

Q9 When you graduated from high school, did you feel more comfortable speaking and listening in English or in another language?

○ English

○ Another language

Q10 When you graduated from high school, did you feel more comfortable reading and writing in English or in another language?

○ English

○ Another language

Q11 What is your gender?

○ Female

○ Male

○ Non-binary / third gender

○ Prefer to self-describe:

_____

Q13 Are you eligible to receive federal student (financial) aid?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

If yes:

Q14 Are you currently receiving or are you currently eligible to receive financial assistance in the form of the of Federal Pell Grant?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Q15 Which categories describe you?

Select all that apply. You may select more than one group.

○ Hispanic, Latin, or Spanish origin
  For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Columbian, Dominican, etc.

○ Asian
  For example, Karen, Vietnamese, Nepali, Filipino, etc.

○ Black or African American
  For example, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc.

○ Middle Eastern or North African
  For example, Moroccan, Omani, Syrian, etc.

○ White
  For example, French, German, Russian, etc.

○ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  For example, Samoan, Tongan, Marshallese, etc.

○ American Indian or Alaska Native
  For example, Navajo Nation, Mayan, Aztec, etc.

○ Other origin: _____

APPENDIX C: Protocols for Student Interviews
Protocol for Student Interview #1

Introduction

      I'm interested in learning about what helps English language learners (ELLs) / bilingual students be successful in community college. For this study, I'm specifically interested in the resources used by ELLs / bilingual students who have graduated from high school here in the U.S. to transition from high school to community college and to progress through ESL, the developmental writing classes that many take, and then to and through a college-level composition course.

      When you hear the terms *resources* you might think of financial resources – money, student aid, etc. Resources can be financial, but there are potentially many other types of resources such as sources of information or of support and encouragement. Your personal qualities like your strengths, values or beliefs, and your skills can be resources, too. So sources might be yourself, your family, friends, people who work at schools or other organizations or groups, from connections you or your family or friends have, from the community, etc. – as I'm using the term here, it's very open and broad.

      This first interview focuses on the transition from high school to community college and the process of testing and registering for classes. In our next interview, I'll ask you about your experiences taking classes.

Part 1: High School

1. Do you remember what grade you were in when you first started thinking about going to college?
2. Can you tell me a little about what you thought about going to college?
3. Where (people or other sources) did you get information about college from?
4. What kind of information did you get / what kinds of things did you learn?
5. What kinds of things did you do, if anything, to get ready for college during high school?
6. [If student applied to multiple colleges,] how did you decide which college to apply to and what, in the end, brought you to [this CC]? [If student applied only to [this CC]: what made [this CC] your choice?

Part 2: Matriculation

1. Tell me about **getting started** here at [this CC].
   Follow up questions as necessary:
   a. Did you start with placement testing? With meeting with an advisor? Somewhere else?

      b. Did you complete everything on one day or did you come back one or more times?

      c. How did you know where to go / what to do?

2. Let's talk about **placement testing** specifically.
   Follow up questions as necessary:
       a. What did you know about placement testing before you came to take the tests?
       b. Do you remember any of your thoughts about the tests as you were taking them?
       c. How did you learn about the results of the placement tests?
       d. How did you feel about the results of the tests?

3. Did you apply for **financial aid** before you started taking classes here?
   If yes:
       a. What was that process like?
       b. Did you work with the student aid office directly? What was that experience like?

4. Thinking about the first time you enrolled in classes here, can you tell me about the process of **registering for classes**?
   Follow up questions as necessary:
       a. Who did you work with to register? An advisor or some other staff member?
       b. In addition to [answer to *a.*], where else did you get information about which classes to take? What kinds of information?

5. Did you visit **any other office** or department or staff / faculty member here at [this CC] before you began classes?

6. In general, how would you describe the process of becoming a student here at [this CC]?

Part 3: Overall Process

1. a. Thinking about moving from high school to college as a whole, what parts of the process stand out to you as being the most challenging?
   b. Why do you think that _____ was so difficult?

2. Still thinking about moving from high school to college as a whole, what are some of the resources, keeping the various meanings of that word in mind, that stand out as being most helpful to you?

3. Is there anything else about your transition from high school to community college that you'd like to tell me about?

4. Do you have any questions for me?

Protocol for Student Interview #2

Introduction

As a reminder about the overall purpose of the study: I'm interested in learning about what helps English language learners (ELLs) / bilingual students be successful in community college. I'm especially interested in the resources used by ELLs / bilingual students who have graduated from high school here in the U.S. to transition from high school to community college and to progress through ESL, the developmental writing classes that many take, and then to and through a college-level composition course.

In the last interview, I asked you about the process of transitioning from high school to college. In this interview, I'll be asking you questions about your experiences taking ESL and other courses here.

Part 1: ESL

1. a. Before you came to ABCC, what classes did you expect to take starting off?
b. Your first course at ABCC was _____. How did you feel about being placed into ESL courses?
Follow up as necessary:
c. How did being an ESL / ELL student fit with how you saw yourself as a college student?

2. Tell me about your experience in ESL courses.
Follow up as necessary:
   a. How did you feel about the level you were placed in initially. Did you think it was too easy, too difficult, or just about right? *Wait for response.* Can you explain why you felt that way?
   b. As you moved through the ESL program *[refer to unofficial student transcript]*, did the way you felt about your placement change at all? *Wait for response. If yes:* How did it change?

    c. What kinds of things did you cover in ESL courses that you felt were helpful in getting ready for college?

    d. What kinds of things did you cover in ESL courses that you felt were not necessary in getting ready for college?

    e. During your time in the ESL program, what kinds of resources at ABCC? did you use, if any? For example, did you visit an advisor, go to the Learning and Tutoring Center, visit the Writing Center, go to your instructor's office hours, etc.? *Wait for a response.* Would you tell me more about *[utilization of resource]*?

3. During your time in the ESL program, where else did you get information or help with your coursework or other needs?

4. What, if anything, was difficult for you about being an ESL student at ABCC.

Part 2: Developmental-level Courses

[Skip if student did not take developmental-level reading or writing courses at ABCC.

1. After you finished ESL, you moved into _____ [*refer to unofficial student transcript*]. What were some of the differences between your ESL courses and [*the developmental / remedial reading / writing courses the student took*]?

2. During your time in the developmental-level courses, what kinds of resources at [this CC] did you use, if any? For example, did you visit an advisor, go to the Learning and Tutoring Center, visit the Writing Center, go to your instructor's office hours, etc.? *Wait for a response.* Would you tell me more about *[utilization of resource]*?

3. When you were in [*the developmental / remedial reading / writing courses the student took*] did you need assistance with English-language-related concerns such as grammar or vocabulary? *[If yes]*, was that part of the class?

4. During your time in the developmental-level courses, where else did you get information or help with your coursework or other needs?

5. What, if anything was difficult for you about being a student in [*the developmental / remedial reading / writing courses the student took*]? *Wait for response.* Do you think other student had these same difficulties? Why?

Part 3: First-level College Composition

1. After you finished [*ESL and / or the developmental / remedial reading / writing courses the student took*], you enrolled in [*first-level college composition*]. What were some of the differences you noticed between developmental-level courses and composition courses?

2. When you were in [*the developmental / remedial reading / writing courses the student took*] did you need assistance with English-language-related concerns such as grammar or vocabulary? *[If yes]*, was that part of the class?

3. While you were taking composition, what kinds of resources at [this CC] did you use, if any? For example, did you visit an advisor, go to the Learning and Tutoring Center, visit the Writing Center, go to your instructor's office hours, etc.? *Wait for a response.* Would you tell me more about *[utilization of resource]*?

4. While you were taking composition, where else did you get information or help with your coursework or other needs?

5.   What, if anything was difficult for you about being a student in composition? *Wait for response.* Do you think other student had these same difficulties? Why?

Part 4: Overall Process

1. How has being an English language learner when you started college affected your experiences in college?

2. Do you think that other aspects of your identity such as your race or ethnicity or religion have affected your experiences? *If yes:* Can you tell me about how being _____ has influenced your experience?

3. What has been your biggest challenge in community college so far?

4. What do you think have been the biggest factors in your success up to this point?

5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your experiences here at ABCC?

6. Is there anything you'd like to ask me?

Appendix D: Hypothesis Codes with Description and Example

Source Code	Description	Example from data
Núñez, 2014a, p. 50		
Representational	"…emphasizes how social categories and related policies are represented in societal discourse or media."	Not applied to data
Intersubjective	"…the relationships between social actors and how this conditions life chances and outcomes, such as teachers' perceptions of students."	I have recognized Spanish speaking students are more likely to, even if English is not their first language, Spanish is, they generally can test in those English proficiency levels, they generally are more engaged in the English. And that's probably because Spanish is a much more common language in the US than Karen. (Institutional agent: faculty)
Experiential	"…embodies the internal interpretation and lived experience of the individual. For example, the experiential dimension might reflect the meaning-making filter."	If I had come here early, when I was young, I would have gone to UNO. If I grew up here, I would understand more, and I would have gone to UNO. (Student participant: Naw)
Organizational	"…highlights the channeling and sorting role that institutions can enact, such as organizational	If they cannot respond then we say ok we have to have you take this short little test first, and we give them, we go over this little piece of paper with them that has three questions that are very, very basic, foundational level,

	processes in community colleges that track some groups of students and not others toward successful outcomes such as transfer, associate's degree attainment."	and if they cannot answer two out of three of those correctly they are immediately referred to MCC express for the more foundational English classes, the noncredit English. (Institutional agent: assessment)
Yosso, 2005		
Aspirational capital	"…the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77).	When I [started] in high school, I didn't even think to finish high school… but when I was in I think 10th grade that I was thinking that I should go to college, it is possible for me, that I … have opportunities here, maybe. (Student participant: Marisol)
Linguistic capital	"…includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (p. 78).	I speak Karen, write Karen, and understand it, and also understand and read and speak Burmese, but not write it.. I have the better opportunity [than my brothers] - they can't do translation. I tell them all the time, you are not better than me!
Familial capital	"…those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (p. 79).	Not applied to data
Social capital	"…networks of people and community resources.	It's not just one person, it's many people. There is a church that will try to tell parents, go to this and go to that and get involved in this stuff…They will try to tell you to go to this

	These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (p. 79).	program, go to that college, it is very nice and cheap, and their kid goes there too. (Student participant: Aung)
Navigational capital	"…skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80)	I actually had a friend who was part of Avenue Scholars who was telling me about it. So I contacted one of the navigators and they told me about [ABCC] and the programs that they have and that it would be cheaper if I come here first rather than go to I guess like a bigger college. So I was looking into to it, and my idea was to come here for the first few years and then transfer to [the local public university] so it won't be too much for me. It will be a little bit expensive, but not as much as it would be to go there in the first place. (Student participant: Participant 17)
Resistant capital	"…those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80).	My family background is really hard, so that makes me do more hard work because in my family I have 5 people. Father mother and two sisters. but before when I was small in Nepal at that time we have only three daughters in my home and my father think about boy, like a son, and he said girls cannot do nothing, so he did like that and he married step mother and that makes me do hard work and I have to achieve education. So he will say girl can do everything. Like makes me push. (Student participant: Samjana)