

Chapter 2

English Learners and Their Transition to Postsecondary Education

Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

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2.1 Introduction

Students with limited English proficiency, English Learners (ELs), currently represent 10 % of total K-12 enrollment in the US (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013), and these students comprise one of the fastest growing populations in K-12 schools (Kanno & Harklau, 2012a, 2012b). The majority (three-quarters) of ELs speak Spanish as their first language (Rios-Aguilar & Gándara, 2012a), but, collectively, ELs speak at least 460 different languages (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2007; Kindler, 2002) in K-12 classrooms. ELs are often portrayed as a relatively new and homogenous student population, but ELs bring quite diverse skills, educational needs, backgrounds, languages, and educational goals to U.S. classrooms (Gil & Bardack, 2010; Valdés, 2001; Wright, 2010).

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Much research has addressed EL students' experiences and outcomes in K-12 education (e.g., Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010; Cheung & Slavin, 2012; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Hakuta, 1983; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Rueda & Goldenberg, 2007). Meanwhile, state policies have emerged that restrict EL students' access to core academic content in K-12 settings (Gándara & Orfield, 2012). Despite this attention to EL students in the research and policy arenas, far less research has examined EL students' transitions to college and their postsecondary outcomes (Callahan, 2005; Callahan & Gándara, 2004; Kanno & Cromley, 2013; Kanno & Harklau, 2012a, 2012b; Kanno & Varghese, 2010).

What we do know is that ELs complete high school, enroll in college, and graduate from college at far lower rates than their non-EL peers. For example, in their analysis of the national data source NELS: 88, Kanno and Cromley (2013) found that within 2 years of high school graduation, almost half of ELs (47 %) had not enrolled in college, and only 18 % had advanced to 4-year colleges, compared with more than twice the proportion of monolingual English-speaking students (43 %) and English-proficient LM students (38 %). Similarly, within 8 years of high school graduation, just one in eight of ELs in the sample (12 %) had attained a bachelor's degree, compared with one-third of monolingual English speakers (32 %) and one-fourth of English-proficient LM students (25 %).

As the proportion of ELs rises, increasing these students' college completion rates can advance the popular policy goal of raising overall college attainment in the U.S. Furthermore, although multilingualism is not always framed as an asset in the U.S., it is seen as an asset in many areas of the world. The ability to communicate in multiple languages is taught and even required in some nations (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2011). In the U.S., ELs make significant contributions in the workplace and have equivalent or even better labor market outcomes than monolinguals, particularly in a world that is increasingly global-oriented and interconnected (Rumbaut, 2014). Multilingually proficient ELs have been found to think in more cognitively complex and sophisticated ways than monolingual individuals (Bamford & Mizokawa, 1991; Hakuta, 1983). Collectively, this evidence suggests that realizing the potential of EL students can increase the quantity and quality of human capital in the U.S. and prepare these students to become more active participants and contributors to a healthy democracy and government.

In this review, we synthesize existing literature to examine the status of research on ELs in higher education. In addition, we aim to bridge the disconnect between the rich body of scholarship on ELs in K-12 with the comparatively limited research in current higher education literature to explore how ELs transition from K-12 to postsecondary education. First, we discuss reasons for the limited scholarship on ELs in higher education by examining the ways these students have been framed in broader educational and legal policy developments, which, importantly, have heretofore only formally defined ELs as a category of students in the K-12 sector. In this section, we also review the limitations of existing data to study ELs, focusing on the challenges of identifying and tracking these students over time, particularly between K-12 and post high school graduation. Here, we demonstrate that in order to understand how being EL affects college experiences and outcomes, it is essential to

understand how EL students have been framed at the K-12 level with respect to classifications, labels, and political interventions. Second, we address what is known about ELs' postsecondary enrollment outcomes, illustrating that EL status has an independent effect on these outcomes, and is therefore worth examining more closely as a variable that affects college attainment.

Third, we discuss two theoretical lenses that constitute our methodological approach to understand the classification, labeling, policies, and practices oriented at EL students in the K-12 system that influence these students' transitions to higher education. Specifically, we employ two theoretical lenses – intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) and the funds of knowledge and funds of capital approach (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011) to foreground our emphasis on the multiple social identities of EL students and on the resources that they bring with them to education that typically go unrecognized by the dominant culture.

Fourth, we outline our methods for conducting our review of the literature in higher education on EL students' transitions to college. Fifth, we review key themes from this literature to identify factors shaping these students' transitions to higher education. Sixth, based on these themes, we advance the most promising theoretical frameworks to guide future research on ELs. These theoretical frameworks are distinctive from the theoretical lenses in our methodology discussed earlier because they are more explanatory in nature than the other lenses to address the factors affecting ELs' postsecondary outcomes. Furthermore, these frameworks align with the themes we identify in current empirical research about EL students' transitions to higher education and also align with the potential to identify supportive factors for these students.

Finally, we conclude with implications for future research, policy, and practice about EL students in higher education. In sum, we aim to: (1) advance terminology for describing these students in higher education, (2) provide an understanding of political and legal developments shaping their academic preparation in the K-12 system that have consequences for their success in higher education, (3) identify key themes in the literature on these students once they arrive in higher education, (4) highlight promising theoretical perspectives to guide future research, and (5) advance higher education research implications. Our intention is that researchers interested in EL students' postsecondary transitions can use the conceptual approaches and analyses presented to inform research design about EL students in areas such as labeling these students, collecting data, and choosing or constructing variables for analyses.

2.2 Reasons for the Limited Scholarship on ELs in Higher Education

Before reviewing findings on EL students in the transition to higher education, it is important to understand how diverse factors have contributed to limit research on this group of students. Notably, research on EL students in higher education has

emerged primarily from the field of applied linguistics (e.g., Leki, 2007; Harklau, 2000, 2013; Kanno, 2015; Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Kanno & Varghese, 2010), rather than from the field of higher education itself. There are at least four reasons for the lack of scholarship on these students in higher education. The first and fundamental reason is that the classification of EL students is, at least in name, associated with particular legal rights and the reception of academic support services in the elementary and secondary education levels, but not at the higher education levels. ELs' emergence as a distinctive category of students in the K-12 system is rooted in federal history, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that shaped the opportunity to pass the 1968 Bilingual Education Act (BEA) to articulate the right to a sufficient K-12 education for EL students. These acts set the stage for key subsequent legal rulings in bilingual education to accord protection from discrimination by national origin and to provide access to education as a right for participation in the American citizenry, following the precedent of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982; San Miguel, 2004).

Importantly, these policy developments never specified that the right to an education for ELs extended beyond K-12 education to the higher education level. In fact, there may have been an assumption underlying these policy movements that providing an adequate K-12 education would automatically prepare EL students to pursue higher education. In any case, this position is consistent with the notion that postsecondary education is not a guaranteed right for the entire U.S. population, let alone ELs. Furthermore, in addition to federal policy, state policy also significantly shapes ELs' educational trajectories, since states have considerable autonomy to decide about utilizing or prohibiting various instructional methods to serve ELs. Therefore, though mandated by the federal government, services for ELs to facilitate K-12 academic skill development (which would in turn affect preparation for college) can vary significantly at the state level. Regardless, upon leaving secondary education, all ELs lose their classification as a separate category of students. Concurrently, once they graduate from high school, they also lose access to specialized academic support services that are required by law at the K-12 level (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982; San Miguel, 2004). One critical consequence is that, if they do pursue postsecondary education, EL students are no longer identified on the basis of their language proficiency status and therefore might not receive the support they need to succeed in postsecondary education.

Second, EL status can change over time as language skill development increases or decreases, so it is a relatively fluid category. For example, in K-12 education, once ELs meet certain academic and English-proficiency thresholds, they are reclassified as English-fluent and exit the English as a Second Language (ESL) program (Linquanti & Cook, 2013; Regan & Lesaux, 2006). Similar developments could, of course, take place among EL college students.

Third, multiple terms have been used to describe EL students in higher education. While different labels have also been used to describe these students in K-12, there has also been more K-12 research to contextualize the use of these labels. In higher education, terms used to describe these students have included Language/Linguistic Minority (Kanno & Harklau, 2012a, 2012b), Limited English Proficient

(LEP) (Tichenor, 1994); English as a Second Language (ESL) (Ignash, 1995), English Language Learners (ELL) (Curry, 2004), and English Learner (EL) (e.g., Callahan, 2005; Gándara & Rumberger, 2007; Kanno & Harklau, 2012a). The use of the various labels over time can make it difficult to define and distinguish EL students from other students, especially for those who are new to studying this topic. Therefore, it is important to clarify terminology and reasons for using particular labels to describe these students. In this review, we will address this issue in more depth and explain why we have chosen to employ the term English Learner (EL) among all of the options. Until then, we will employ labels that reflect the referenced studies, historical time periods, or topics they are representing.

Fourth, data limitations have also made it difficult to conduct research on EL students. The level of detail necessary to adequately assess language skills over time can be limited in longitudinal federal data sets like the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS), and Beginning Postsecondary Students Study (BPS). Other federal data sets that may have more detail on linguistic skills, such as National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), are limited in that they are cross-sectional. Certain state level data sets include more detail on linguistic skills and track students for a length of time such that they provide opportunities for longitudinal analysis from a K-20 perspective, but their generalizability may be more localized (Flores & Drake, 2014).

In some cases, richer data may be available at the district and school, rather than, state level. Thus, the capacity to analyze ELs' experiences and outcomes along the K-20 continuum varies by the type of data set used (e.g., federal or state, cross-sectional or longitudinal), state, and institution. Needless to say, EL status is often measured in different ways according to these various levels, depending on the type of placement test used. Typically, entering students at higher education institutions must choose or are advised to take an English or ESL placement exam. This is a high stakes decision that will determine the type of services and instruction that the student will receive (Hodara, 2015). While this process may seem efficient, allowing colleges to assign students to specific courses (depending on their "needs"), the reality is that misplacement prevails (Hodara, 2015). Some students who need ESL services will not receive them, and some students who do not need them will remain in "remedial" coursework for a long period of time. Unfortunately, we do not know the extent of misplacement decisions because it has not been carefully and systematically studied (Hodara, 2015). In addition, there is little research that examines the validity of placement tests (see Belfield and Crosta (2012) for examples of studies that examine the use of placement tests in college outcomes). Collectively, the data available to conduct research on EL students are still evolving in significant ways. At the end of this review, we will make recommendations on developing better data systems for researchers in higher education interested in studying EL students.

This brief review of reasons for limitations of current research on ELs in higher education makes it clear that understanding the classification, labeling and history of policy legislation and legal developments concerning ELs in the K-12 system is essential to understanding who ELs in higher education are. It is also critical for understanding not only the reasons why these students face distinctive and signifi-

cant challenges in higher education, but also for understanding the potential assets they bring to higher education settings. Now, we turn to examining what we do know about ELs' postsecondary enrollment and completion outcomes using the most current and nationally representative data available.

2.3 Postsecondary Outcomes: Enrollment and Degree Attainment

Recent national studies indicate that ELs enroll in and complete college at lower rates than non-ELs, and that they tend to enroll in less selective colleges. Analyzing the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), Kanno & Cromley (2013) found that, after 2 years of expected high school graduation, almost half of ELs (47 %) had not enrolled in college, and only 18 % in total had advanced to 4-year colleges, compared with more than twice the proportion of monolingual English-speaking students (43 %) and English-proficient LM students (38 %). Similarly, within 8 years of high school graduation, just one in eight of ELs in the sample (12 %) had attained a bachelor's degree, compared with one-third of monolingual English speakers (32 %) and one-fourth of English-proficient LM students (25 %). Fifty-one percent of ELs never earned postsecondary education credits of any kind, meaning that half of EL high school graduates either did not enroll in postsecondary institutions at all, or, never stayed long enough to earn credits.

Kanno and Cromley's (2015) analysis based on the recent Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002) found similar trends in initial college enrollment: Only 19 % of ELs advanced to 4-year colleges within 2 years of high school graduation, compared with 45 % of English-native speakers and 35 % of English-proficient EL students, suggesting that even after a whole generation of student turnover, gaps between ELs and non-ELs in college access remain. In short, the disparity between ELs' and their English-proficient peers' access to 4-year postsecondary institutions remained the same when comparing the NELS: 88 and ELS: 2002 student cohorts, which were 14 years apart.

Núñez and Sparks (2012) conducted a related study using the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study 2004 (BPS: 2004), but, in contrast to Kanno and Cromley's studies (2013, 2015), the only available measure on EL status in this data set (whether a student had spoken English as a first language) did not distinguish between lower proficiency EL students and English-proficient EL students. In examining EL students' college enrollments, they found that a slightly higher proportion of EL beginning college students (61 %) than non-EL students (56 %) were enrolled in community colleges. Notably, about equal proportions of LM and non-LM students (12 % and 10 %, respectively) were enrolled in selective 4-year institutions. Meanwhile, LM students (27 %) were less likely than non-LM students (34 %) to be enrolled in non-selective 4-year institutions. These results suggest a possible bifurcation among EL college students according to language

proficiency in the selectivity of their colleges, in which those who are less English-proficient attend community colleges and those who are more English-proficient attend the more selective 4-year institutions.

ELs tend to enroll in community colleges, due in part to these institutions' open admissions policies, their local accessibility, and relative affordability. Emerging research suggests that, as in K-12, ELs' access to mainstream academic coursework in community colleges is limited (Bunch & Endris, 2012; Razfar & Simon, 2011) and that their associate's degree completion rates and transfer rates are even lower than for community college students in general (Almon, 2010; Razfar & Simon, 2011). One recent study (Razfar & Simon) employed longitudinal data to analyze the course-taking patterns and outcomes of Latino ELs in one large California community college district. The majority (65 %) reported attending community colleges for career related reasons or to develop basic academic skills, and just 8 % of the EL students in the study intended to transfer to a 4-year institution. Despite some reported intentions to gain basic academic skills, over half (58 %) of the students in the study were not mainstreamed into regular community college classes when they began postsecondary education, and most (63 %) did not advance to a higher level than the one in which they began. After just two semesters, the majority (62 %) had dropped out of the community college, a proportion that, after five semesters, rose to 85 %, indicating just a 15 % persistence rate within this time period.

In a mixed-methods study of one large community college on the East Coast, Almon (2010, 2014) found that even though ELs on average earned a GPA of 2.72, which was higher than the mean GPA of 2.32 from a matched sample of non-ELs, only 43 % of ELs successfully exited the community college's ESL program and only 13 % graduated, a rate lower than that of the overall graduation rate of this community college (23 %). In the qualitative part of the analysis, Almon identified lack of finances, full-time employment, and family obligations as three major barriers to ELs' persistence in community colleges. Given the limited number of studies, far more research is needed to understand EL students' course-taking patterns, developmental education experiences, and community college outcomes.

Although ELs tend to face structural challenges in K-12 schooling that affect the transition to college, some ELs, especially those with more economic and academic resources, do reach selective 4-year institutions (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Kanno & Grosik, 2012). For those ELs who are fluent in multiple languages, bilingualism is positively associated with increased cognitive functioning for people of all ages (e.g., Bialystock, Craik, & Luk, 2012) and increased capacity to function in and contribute to a global economy (Callahan & Gándara, 2014). Furthermore, first-generation immigrant status, a characteristic of many ELs, is associated with increased K-12 academic performance, which some have attributed to "immigrant optimism" (Kao & Tienda, 1995) about the power of education to become socioeconomically mobile, or to relatively limited exposure to a racially discriminatory environment in the U.S. (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). These phenomena potentially account for why some postsecondary studies find that, among beginning college students in 4-year institutions, EL status is independently and *positively* associated with postsecondary persistence and completion (Arellano, 2011; DeAngelo, Franke,

Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011; Suárez Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). This indicates that EL students who make it out of the K-12 system and enroll in 4-year colleges are more likely to complete college than others with similar characteristics. More study is needed, however, to understand what makes them exceptionally resilient.

This overview of ELs' college enrollment and degree attainment patterns indicates that ELs' postsecondary outcomes are markedly lower than those of their English-proficient counterparts. EL college students more often enter higher education through community colleges, a pattern that is associated with lowering the chances of attaining a bachelor's degree for the general population (Bowen et al., 2009; Cabrera, Burkum & La Nasa, 2005). Given the importance of academic preparation in college persistence and graduation for all students (Adelman, 2006), focusing on ELs' precollege educational experiences is critical to understanding these disparities in postsecondary enrollment and outcomes. An emphasis on these precollege educational experiences requires an understanding of the broader historical policy developments influencing how EL students' rights have been addressed by legal rulings and legislation. It also requires an understanding of how these students have been labeled and classified to receive services in K-12 or higher education, and in turn, the quality of these students' preparation for college-level work. Before proceeding to discuss these themes, we will next describe the theoretical lenses shaping our interpretation of these contextual factors.

2.4 Methodological Perspectives to Understand EL Students' Transitions from K-12 to College

An overarching paradigm and two theoretical lenses have shaped the methodology guiding our review. Many higher education researchers do not explicitly distinguish between paradigm and method in their research (Hurtado, 2015; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). However, we feel that this is an important distinction, in the sense that the method, or our data collection process (outlined later in this piece), was distinct from the lenses that guided the approach to this inquiry and subsequent interpretation of the findings. Specifically, we applied a methodological approach rooted in a "transformative paradigm" (Hurtado, 2015) that offers the following guidelines when studying marginalized groups:

Decisions on method involve an awareness of contextual and historical actors, considering forms of oppression. Multiple methods, techniques, and theories may be necessary. Relies on crystallization (multifaceted perspectives and data sources) rather than triangulation, assumptions of heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, and attention to structures of opportunity and inequality, conditional effects (specific groups are affected differently by the same practices), and cultural norms in their influence on individuals and groups. Avoids an acontextual focus on individuals. (Hurtado, 2015, p. 291; see also Mertens, 2009)

We followed these guidelines to conduct the review through bringing together scholars who had conducted different types of research on EL students, using differ-

ent disciplinary and methodological approaches. Based on our own empirical research and that of others, we shared an orientation toward emphasizing the importance of precollege experiences in EL students' college access, transition, and outcomes. But together, because of our varied disciplinary backgrounds and expertise, we also had the capacity to address a broader array of social contexts influencing educational opportunities for these students across the K-20 continuum (e.g., policy, history, legal and legislative developments, precollege, college, multiple demographic identities) than any one of us could individually. Thus, we drew on multiple disciplines, data sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives to portray the current status of research on ELs and advance guidelines for future inquiry on this population.

In terms of our methodological assumptions, we framed our inquiry according to two theoretical perspectives: *multi-level intersectionality* (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) and *forms of knowledge and forms of capital approach* (Rios-Aguilar et al. 2011). Multi-level intersectionality posits that historical conditions, different social contexts or “domains of power” (Núñez, 2014a), and multiple and intersecting social identities simultaneously work together to affect educational opportunities of marginalized groups. Accordingly, the following factors must be considered in examining ELs' transitions to higher education: (a) the historical construction of the EL category—how ELs came to be recognized as having educational rights, (b) associated policy developments shaping the organization of their K-12 education (and indirectly of their postsecondary education), (c) past and current ways of representing ELs through classification and labeling, and (d) the role of potentially related social identities (e.g., immigrant, citizenship status, race/ethnicity, nation of origin, socioeconomic status).

The funds of knowledge and forms of capital approach (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011) highlights the need to simultaneously examine the varied wealth of resources (including the language practices) embedded in underrepresented students' (and their families') daily experiences with the forms of capitals (i.e., social and cultural capital), as well as these students' needs to access, convert, and/or to activate these resources in order to advance academically. Notably, it also posits that how these resources are evaluated (e.g., in deficit or asset terms) will also shape their opportunities to succeed in school. It integrates a sociological perspective (i.e., the forms of capital) with an anthropology-based funds of knowledge perspective (i.e., varied resources already existing in underrepresented students' family and school daily experiences) to provide a more complete picture of the full range of resources and capabilities that students from marginalized groups have to succeed in postsecondary education. Together, these two theoretical lenses informed our methodological approach to this analysis, by guiding us to:

1. illustrate the necessity of considering other social identities in relation to EL status (e.g., immigration, citizenship, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, nation of origin),
2. recognize that a fundamental tension exists between framing ELs' resources, skills, and knowledge as deficits or assets, and

3. indicate our own perspective on that tension – that we fundamentally take an assets-based view that recognizes the potential of ELs, even though some research labels these students in static and dichotomous ways (e.g., not recognizing that skill development can change over time and be measured across a continuum) and frames their linguistic practices (i.e., speaking another language at home and/or being bilingual) as detrimental to their academic success.

One of the reasons that an assets-based perspective is critical is evidence that framing EL students in deficit ways and in terms of limitations rather than resources could have negative long-term consequences. One empirical example involves the case of students classified as Long Term English Language Learners (LTELLs) (Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015). This label connotes limited potential to learn English, and it happens to be correlated with lower school performance outcomes. Most recent research has found that LTELLs are the EL students most likely to drop out of school, and that, compared with other EL students, they tend to be retained in EL programs longer (Hopkins, Thompson, Linqanti, Hakuta, & August, 2013; Olsen, 2010). Consequently, they have less exposure to the academic content that is needed to succeed academically, both in high school and in college (Hopkins et al., 2013; Menken & Kleyn, 2010), which can limit their abilities to enroll in or complete college. Thus, the connotation of the LTELL label that students have limited potential and will not learn English quickly may be related to assignments that separate them from opportunities to take more advanced coursework that would prepare them more to graduate from high school and enroll in college.

Later on, we will examine and compare in depth the labels that have been more commonly applied to EL students and advance an argument for using the term EL. But first, we examine the policy developments that first identified these students as having distinctive rights and correspondingly have shaped services for these students at the federal, state, and local levels.

2.5 English Learner Policy Development and the K-20 Landscape

Understanding the progression of language minority children through the U.S. educational pipeline into college requires a deeper look at the policy development on the politics of language instruction for this diverse group of students at both the federal and state level. This policy development has exclusively occurred at the K-12 system level, and the enforcement of policies at higher levels (e.g., federal, state) has been extremely decentralized; that is, states and districts have had considerable autonomy in deciding how to address the needs of EL students. If EL students are not defined separately and classified consistently at the federal, state, and local levels in higher education, the status of EL policy in K-12 education provides a critical component of the context for understanding how and why systematic policies at the federal and state levels have not explicitly addressed the needs of EL students in higher education.

While EL student policy has not been developed to facilitate higher education enrollment as a direct outcome, legal and historical analyses of the intent of language policy for ELL students suggest that longer term outcomes such as the opportunity to attend a postsecondary institution or the ability to gain meaningful employment may have been part of the indirect goals of this legislation created to ensure greater educational opportunity. Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 stipulated important requirements regarding the recording of progress by English Language Learners (ELs), much latitude in regard to the type of language instruction provided by a district is still largely a matter of state discretion, although the level of discretion from the federal to the state level has varied over time (Moran, 1988). Nonetheless, policy development regarding the education of EL students can be traced back at least to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which is credited for creating the environment for the first major federal legislation addressing the educational opportunity of ELL students, via the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968.

The evolving definition of educational rights for these students is instead intertwined with the rights accorded from protection from discrimination by national origin and access to education as a right for participation in the American citizenry via the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982; San Miguel, 2004). However, not unlike the rights to a free K-12 public education accorded to undocumented students via another U.S Supreme Court decision, *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the educational rights of EL students have not extended to higher education and, at the K-12 level, instead have mostly remained mired in debates regarding the type of language instruction to be provided if at all.

Protests to the teaching of languages other than English, separate from campaigns of the violation of language rights of Native Americans, emerged well before the 1960s (Wiley, Lee & Rumberger, 2009). But the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968, also known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1968, was the first acknowledgment of federal responsibility for the educational well-being of language minority students (Petrzela, 2011). Moran (1988) notes that this legislation may have influenced other states to adopt similar legislation, in that between 1968 and 1973, six states adopted similar BEA legislation at the state level and a number of other states repealed statutes mandating English as the only language of instruction. Moreover, evidence of the promise of the long-term benefits of language instruction as a form of opportunity had become part of the policy development of BEA. Hearings leading to the passage of the BEA document involved Hispanic parents and community leaders advocating for the BEA as a necessary step in promoting full participation of linguistic minorities in the social, political, and economic stages of American life and society (Moran, 1988). These leaders argued that educational failure of linguistic minorities resulting from inadequate schooling instruction required interventions. Improved educational opportunity was heralded as a key method for improving the long-term outcomes of Hispanics.

This act was innovative, represented a major political victory for Spanish-speaking groups, and later benefited other non-English speaking students and their families. However, the Act came with limitations. First, according to Petrzela (2011), the Act articulated arguments based on the deficiencies, rather than efforts

to maintain bicultural schooling and practices. Second, the Act came with limited funds (approximately 85 million dollars) that would be insufficient to truly implement and adequately enforce language instruction programs across the country, especially since it was enacted on a voluntary basis (Petrzela, 2011). Despite its remarkable place in educational policy regarding the equal education of children, the Act placed such responsibility on state and local organizations within an environment with little guidance and even weaker enforcement. Such gaps in enforcement would eventually lead to additional court rulings and federal guidance measures through subsequent reauthorizations of the BEA that validated the use of transitional bilingual education programs incorporating native languages, another Supreme Court case in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974, clarifications to *Lau* via the *Lau Remedies* (1975) and federal guidelines regarding language instruction pedagogical requirements in *Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981).

By the twenty-first century, however, two key policy movements in the education of EL students appeared to dominate policy discussions and decisions. The first was that of a change in the emphasis from transitional bilingual education programs utilizing native language instruction as the preferred method of instruction to that of an emphasis on English language acquisition as noted in the No Child Left Behind Act via the renaming of the BEA to the Title III of NCLB entitled Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient Students. (Mavrogordato, 2012). A clear emphasis on English language acquisition was made prominent in this new federal policy, even if the NCLB Act did not state a preference for the type of language instruction, maintaining the practice of state autonomy on this instructional matter.

The second critical policy development was the introduction of a new era of state policy mandating the restriction of forms of bilingual and/or ESL instruction or mandated English immersion in schools beyond a certain number of years through state voter referenda about whether EL instruction should be provided in public schools, as seen in California, Massachusetts, and Arizona. This policy reality has been recognized in several recent state-based studies on EL student outcomes. Kim and Herman (2009), for example, provided an analysis of three states with various reclassification criteria to avoid substantial differences that might be overlooked in a nationwide analysis. Acknowledging problems associated with the use of cross-sectional data when longitudinal data are not available, the authors' findings suggest that differences in the stringency of state reclassification criteria might influence the reported size of the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students across state context (Kim & Herman, 2009). In a multi-state study examining the effects of English language immersion policy in California, Massachusetts, and Arizona, as compared to Texas, using Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–1999 (ECLS-K) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), separately, Garrett found highly mixed results incorporating a difference-in-difference design. Specifically, her analyses utilizing ECLS-K data revealed no consistent policy impacts on achievement, while results using the NAEP data indicated a modest positive effect of policy implementation on fourth grade math

achievement for all students and a similar modest positive effect on reading achievement for EL students. State level differences were prominent, with EL students from Arizona experiencing a negative effect on math NAEP scores as a result of policy implementation.

Notably, Garrett's study was one of the first econometric analyses of the impacts of statewide English immersion policy. However, the analyses utilized cross-sectional data (the NAEP) that did not account for when a student entered school as an EL student, nor how long the student had participated in language instruction. Meanwhile, ECLS-K data, while longitudinal, could only capture relatively short periods of implementation exposure by the state, given the timing of the cohort and the state policy changes. In both cases, state policy changes were documented only up to middle school grades, with large gaps in achievement assessment at the high school level. In sum, this research suggests that the effects of state policy on the academic achievement trajectory of EL students are becoming of greater importance when taking into account long-term outcomes such as high school graduation and college enrollment, as it is well established that that academic achievement at the elementary and secondary school levels significantly affect the odds of college enrollment.

2.6 Background on EL Students and Their Academic Preparation in K-12

In this section, we review literature on EL students in K-12 education that is most salient to their experiences in higher education. We begin by discussing how EL students are labeled and defined in K-12 research and explain our rationale for calling these students, *EL*, rather than several of the other terms that have been used in the literature. We continue by discussing how these students are identified through practices such as academic testing, as well as how their support services are determined at the K-12 level. Finally, to provide a foundation for our discussion later about demographic characteristics of EL students in higher education, we provide some demographic characteristics of EL students in K-12 here, because research on the K-12 population of ELs is more developed than in higher education literature and because it is important to understand qualities that might shape EL students' K-12 academic preparation system for college.

2.6.1 Defining Terms for English Learner Students in K-12 and Higher Education

Describing, categorizing, and labeling learners of English is a difficult but imperative task in sorting information in the existing scholarship on these students. The difficulty arises initially from the non-specific vocabulary and acronyms used in the

professional and academic fields. The English Learner population is highly unusual in that it has accumulated so many different labels over the years, and several of these labels are still concurrently in use. In existing scholarship and legislative documents, the terms used to describe this population have included: (a) *Limited English Proficient* (LEP) (e.g., Tichenor, 1994), (b) *English as a Second Language* (ESL) (e.g., Ignash, 1995), (c) *bilingual students* (e.g., García, 2009), (d) *English language learners* (ELLs) (e.g., Curry, 2004) (e) *Linguistic Minority* (LM) students (e.g., Kanno & Harklau, 2012b); and (f) *English Learners* (e.g., Callahan, 2005; Gándara & Rumberger, 2007). These various terms are still in use for at least four reasons.

First, some terms are used more often in some sectors of education than in others (e.g., K-12 versus higher education). Second, different terms highlight particular and distinctive aspects of this population. For example, the terms may emphasize the lack of English proficiency or, by contrast, the ability to speak another language (e.g., Limited English Proficient vs. bilingual). Third, different terms are used in different states or even in different districts to label the population. Fourth, some terms are used to define only the students from these populations (e.g., English Language Learners, English Learners, Linguistic Minority), whereas others are used to also define targeted academic support programs for ELs (e.g., English as a Second Language).

Unfortunately, some of the labels mentioned earlier are rigid and perpetuate the notion that these students (and their families) are deficient in their potential for academic growth. Furthermore, some of the labels are dependent on assessments of English proficiency, and there is evidence to suggest that the validity of these assessments is questionable (see Florez, 2010 and Mahoney, Haladyna, and Macswan, 2010). A discussion about what these labels actually mean, how they have evolved, and most importantly, the implications of using such labels on students' academic trajectories is absent from current research. In this chapter, we choose the term ELs and, in doing so, we recognize that English proficiency is best described along a continuum of skill development, rather than a dichotomous framing of that development. We also assert that this group of students (and their families) have diverse resources and funds of knowledge (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011), even though they may still be developing linguistic skills in English. In what follows, we provide a rationale for choosing the term *English Learners* (ELs) for these students to apply to the context of higher education research.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) is one of the oldest terms coined to refer to this population of students. Today, it still remains the official term employed by the federal and state governments to broadly describe individuals who are 3–21 years old, currently enrolled in elementary and secondary school, who were not born in the U.S., and “whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the State’s proficient level of achievement on State assessments” (NCLB, Title IX, Sec. 9101, 25). However, the term is no longer widely used by practitioners (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007), because many find the deficit orientation implied in the word “limited” problematic (Cummins & Miramontes, 2005).

Similar to LEP, the term *English as a Second Language (ESL)* is one of the oldest terms used to refer to these students. As more immigrants came to the United States, policy makers, educators, and the public in general became more interested in them learning English, so the term ESL emerged. This term was commonly used both educationally and linguistically through the 1980s. At the time of writing this paper, the term is still widely used to refer to a program of instruction designed to support this student population at the K-12 level and in community colleges. However, while ESL is still used to describe curricular programs for these students, the term *English Language Learner (ELL)* has become the preferred term in the field of education. First used by Mark LaCelle-Peterson and Charlene Rivera in 1984, the label ELL emerged as a term to describe students who are non-native speakers of English and who are in the process of attaining proficiency in English (Wright, 2010). Therefore, in K-12 schools, *ELL students* are often described as the participants in *ESL programs*. By contrast, in higher education, especially in community colleges, ESL remains the most commonly used term to refer to these students *and* the targeted academic programs in which they are enrolled (e.g., Razfar & Simon, 2011).

More recently, researchers have begun to shorten the term ELLs to refer to these students as English Learners (ELs). No specific reason for this shift in terminology has yet been explicitly articulated or justified. As stated earlier, most scholars and practitioners prefer to use the terms EL or ELL, because these terms indicate that students are actively learning and attaining proficiency in their new language. Although EL or ELL are much less deficit-oriented labels than LEP, these labels have their own sets of problems (Wright, 2010). According to Wright, the term ELL focuses attention only on proficiency in English. To counter this sole focus on English, Ofelia García (2009) introduced the term emergent bilinguals to better capture the linguistic repertoire of students and their families. Second, Wright (2010) also explained that, when native English students are very young and are developing their oral language skills, they can also be framed as ELLs. Therefore, the label can be confusing in early childhood education, when even native English speakers may still be developing their language skills.

Other labels have been and continue to be used to describe this same population of students. The term *Linguistic Minority (LM)* students is used more often in research than in practice, and refers to a much broader category of students than *LEP, ESL, ELL, or EL* students. It “include[s] the entire set of multilingual individuals who speak a non-English language at home” (Kanno & Harklau, 2012b, p. 2). Accordingly, the English language proficiency of LM students ranges from native-level to zero proficiency. Therefore, it is critical to distinguish among different levels of English proficiency when understanding college enrollment and persistence, as LM students with native or near-native levels of proficiency appear to have similar postsecondary outcomes as their non-LM counterparts while LM students with lower levels of proficiency have far lower postsecondary outcomes than their non-LM counterparts (Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015). Furthermore, although ELLs clearly are LM students, care should be taken not to use the term LM students when referring exclusively to ELLs. LM students may be fluent in English and may even lack proficiency in their home language (Wright, 2010). Likewise, there is some

worry about the use of the term “minority” because, in increasing numbers of schools and communities across the United States, the majority of students are speakers of “minority” languages (Wright, 2010).

Although *ELL* and/or *EL* are currently the most widely used terms to refer to these students in the general field of educational research, these terms are not consistently used in higher education research. Our initial review of research in higher education journals specifically indicates the higher education field has most often employed the terms LEP (Tichenor, 1994), ESL (Ignash, 1995), or ELL (Curry, 2004). The term *EL* was not found in any of the higher education journals we searched and examined in detail for this review. Despite this current situation, we suggest that higher education researchers employ the term *EL* in future research for two reasons. First, *EL* has been used as the primary term to trace these students’ trajectories from secondary to postsecondary education in particular studies that did not appear in higher education journals (e.g., Callahan, 2005; Gándara & Rumberger, 2007; Kanno & Harklau, 2012a). Because K-12 academic preparation is so important for *EL* students (and students in general), using the term *EL* can integrate and connect different sectors of the P-20 (pre-school through graduate school) continuum when understanding *EL* students’ educational pathways. The capability of tracking *EL* students from K-12 to higher education may become more and more common in states with growing populations like Texas and Florida. These states are increasingly adopting integrated tracking systems across sectors to identify previous *EL* students (those who are no longer using *EL*-targeted curricular programs) and to follow *EL* students currently using postsecondary educational services focused on developing language skills in English – whose descriptive terms can vary from institution to institution (e.g., Flores & Park, 2014).

Second, we propose that the term *EL* should be used moving forward because even scholarship and government documents about these students in K-12 education seem to be evolving toward employing the term *ELs* (e.g., Hopkins et al., 2013; Linquanti & Cook, 2013; U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Because *EL* is being increasingly used in studying transitions from K-12 to higher education (e.g., Callahan, 2005; Gándara & Rumberger, 2007; Kanno & Harklau, 2012a) and is applicable to both contexts, we believe this term holds the most potential to coherently and consistently represent this category of students across the P-20 education continuum.

Therefore, in the rest of this research synthesis, we will primarily use *EL* as the term to describe these students, specifically students who are still developing complete proficiency in English. However, when citing research that addresses groups of students who are characterized by a full range of English proficiency skills (including complete proficiency), we will use the term *LM* students. That is, we will distinguish *EL* status from *LM* status, because *EL* includes only those students with lower levels of English proficiency, while *LM* includes all native speakers, regardless of their level of proficiency. It is important to keep in mind that while we will use *EL* and *LM* to describe *student* characteristics, we will use the term “*ESL*” when referring to the *programs* that serve *EL* students in either K-12 or postsecondary education. This is because that term is still primarily used to characterize the

range of programs and services targeting these students across the K-20 spectrum. Now, we will describe in more detail how these students are assessed to participate in these programs as well the nature of these programs, particularly with reference to legal and policy movements. Understanding how these students are assigned to programs in K-12 schooling is crucial for understanding how their needs are addressed (or not addressed) in higher education.

2.7 Identifying and Serving EL Students in K-12 Education

In K-12 education, ELs are identified as having limited English proficiency by their school or district, and therefore are deemed in need of additional linguistic and academic support services. It is a federal requirement that all states provide ELs with adequate linguistic and academic support until disadvantages stemming from their linguistic barriers have been removed (Gándara & Orfield, 2012; Regan & Lesaux, 2006). In fact, the Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision in *Lau v Nichols* (414 U.S. 563, 1974) based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, found that limited English speaking students had to be provided with equal access to the curriculum of the public schools. Afterward, Congress passed the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA, 1974), which codified the *Lau* decision and tasked states “to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation” by ELs in instructional programs.

A subsequent Fifth Circuit Court Appeals case, *Castañeda v. Pickard* (“Castañeda v. Pickard, 648, F. 2d 989,” 5th Cir., 1981) specified what the “appropriate action” meant by developing a three-pronged assessment to determine whether school districts were fulfilling their obligation to their ELs with three questions about whether the program was: (a) based on sound educational theory; (b) implemented effectively with adequate resources and personnel; and (c) periodically evaluated to determine its effectiveness in remedying language barriers (Hakuta, 2011). Therefore, although far from standardized, the identification, ongoing assessment, and reclassification of ELs regularly take place across public K-12 schools. By contrast, as the legal rulings do not extend to postsecondary education, personnel in each of the U.S.’s approximately 4500 postsecondary institutions make their own decisions about whether and how to identify and serve students who come to their institutions with limited English skills.

Today, all states are legally required to identify ELs upon entry into a K-12 public school and to provide them with appropriate linguistic and academic support until they are deemed English proficient.¹ However, it is up to individual states and districts to develop a system for identifying ELs who need language support programs, and it is also up to them to determine when these students no longer need the support and change their linguistic proficiency status to reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) (Regan & Lesaux, 2006). Most states rely on standardized test scores on English language proficiency tests to make decisions about whether a student is classified as EL and whether a student should be reclassified as fluent

English proficient (Regan & Lesaux). Unfortunately, significant evidence suggests that ESL programs are not preparing ELs to study the academic content and develop the language skills needed to succeed in mainstream K-12 classrooms, and, by association, to prepare adequately for postsecondary education (e.g., Mahoney & McSwan, 2005; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Rios-Aguilar, González Canche & Moll, 2012).

Federal laws require states to provide not only language support services, but also *academic* support to enable ELs to overcome the academic limitations they might have incurred while learning English (Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981; see Gándara & Orfield for more on the legal rights of ELs). Faithful implementation of the laws therefore should entail the assessment of ELs' academic performance as well as English proficiency for reclassifying them as English-proficient. In reality, however, although some states use academic benchmarks (e.g., grades, state achievement exams) along with English proficiency assessment for reclassification, others reclassify ELs once they have reached a certain English proficiency level, as measured by the standardized language proficiency test adopted by the state, regardless of their academic performance (Regan & Lesaux, 2006).

Consequently, although in theory, reclassification as RFEP means that the student no longer requires additional language and academic support to be able to perform *academically* at a level comparable to non-ELs, in reality, it is likely that many RFEP students are not truly “fluent English proficient” nor sufficiently academically prepared to be self-sufficient in the mainstream classroom. As noted earlier in our discussion of the importance of the extent to which implications of labels are asset or deficit-oriented, these processes that occur in K-12 education (i.e., labeling, assessment, reclassification decisions, and access to academic opportunities) have critical consequences for many ELs attempting access to or transitioning to postsecondary education, but have not yet been properly addressed in current higher education research.

2.8 Diverse and Multiple Identities of EL Students in K-12 Schools

In addition to having less than native English proficiency, ELs tend to have other sociodemographic and schooling characteristics also found to be associated with lower college participation and attainment. First, ELs are more likely than non-ELs to come from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds (Callahan, 2005; Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015; Wright, 2010), a factor negatively related to college enrollment and attainment (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). Recent figures indicate that the majority (66 %) of ELs in K-12 schools come from families with income below 200 % of the poverty level, nearly the twice the proportion of non-ELs (37 %) (“A distinctive population,” 2009). Second, ELs are more likely than non-ELs to be first-generation college-going

students (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). In 2005–2007, just over one in five (22 %) of EL K-12 students, only half the proportion of non-ELs (44 %), had at least one parent with a postsecondary degree (“A distinctive population,” 2009). Like lower socioeconomic status, first-generation status has been found to have an independent and negative association with college enrollment and postsecondary degree attainment (e.g., Horn & Núñez, 2000; Núñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Perna & Titus, 2005).

Moreover, ELs, especially first-generation immigrant ELs, are a highly transient population (Nevárez-La Torre, 2012; Rance-Roney, 2009), and their frequent mobility can disrupt the continuity of their K-12 schooling. Some ELs, including those who live close to the U.S.-Mexico borders, are *transmigrants* (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994) who move back and forth between their country of origin and the U.S. while others move frequently within the U.S., as their parents search for better employment opportunities (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). As these students move across schools or districts, they may not receive consistent academic support. For instance, an EL student may be in a bilingual program in one school, move to another district and test out of the ESL program, but then later move again to another location, and subsequently be placed back into the ESL program in that new district (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). Generally, student mobility is negatively related to being placed in advanced level and college preparatory courses in secondary school (Schneider, Swanson, & Riegler-Crumb, 1998). High performance in one K-12 school may not translate to an assignment to a college preparatory track in another school. Thus, due to this potential for differential placement, even high achieving ELs who frequently relocate geographically are more likely than others to become tracked into lower level courses relative to their academic abilities. This placement issue can have obvious consequences for college preparation, enrollment, and outcomes.

Furthermore, ELs also typically attend schools with limited resources to prepare them for college. ELs are more likely than non-ELs to attend highly segregated schools (with high concentrations of ELs and minority students) that receive less funding than other schools (Consentino de Cohen, Deterding & Clewell, 2005; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). They are also more likely to be taught by less experienced teachers and teachers with provisional certification (Consentino de Cohen et al., 2005; Fry, 2008).

In addition to the factors mentioned earlier, it is important to remember that ELs are a highly heterogeneous group of students in terms of their home languages, proficiency in English, prior schooling, and other sociocultural factors (Suárez Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Wright, 2010). A common misconception is that all ELs are immigrants, born outside the United States. While some educators and scholars think most ELs are foreign born and that many are undocumented, the reality is different. According to Ruiz de Velasco’s (2000) analysis, while children of immigrants made up 19 % of the school-age population, only about 33 % were classified as LEP (Urban Institute, 2000, which used the term LEP). The Urban Institute also reported that the majority of LEP students are U.S.-born citizens, finding that 76 % of elementary school LEP students and 56 % of LEP students at the

secondary level were born in the United States (Urban Institute, 2000). Finally, the same study stated that undocumented immigrant children made up less than 2 % of all students in elementary school (grades pre- K–5), and less than 3 % of all students in secondary school (grades 6–12).

There are significant differences between U.S.-born and foreign-born ELs, even among students from the same ethnic group. Some of these differences include: (a) U.S.-born ELs receive extensive exposure to English before beginning school from playing games, media, and interacting with siblings, friends and other community members; (b) U.S.-born ELs, unless they participate in bilingual or heritage language programs outside of school, often do not have opportunities to completely develop their native language; (c) Foreign- born ELs who attended school in their home country typically have strong native language skills; (d) Foreign-born students with strong native language literacy skills may learn to read and write in English faster and better than U.S.-born ELs; (e) U.S.-born ELs (unless they are in a bilingual program) face the difficult task of learning to read and write first in their weaker language (English) and thus may learn more slowly; (f) Some older foreign-born ELs may have studied English as a foreign language in school, as part of programs that typically place more emphasis on reading and writing than on listening and speaking; and (g) Some foreign- born ELs have experienced disruptions in their education or never attended school in their home countries because of poverty, oppression, or war. (Wright, 2010, p. 15)

Notably, this review focuses on U.S.-born ELs who have been educated in the United States, although some of our analysis and recommendations may also apply to other sub-groups of EL students. English learners also differ substantially in terms of their home language. Scholars and practitioners need to be aware of the great linguistic diversity of ELs (Wright, 2010), as collectively, EL students in K-12 classrooms speak at least 460 different languages (Batalova, Fix & Murray, 2007; Kindler, 2002). As this brief review shows, ELs are a heterogeneous group of students with respect to dimensions including socioeconomic, immigrant, and racial/ethnic status. Numerous K-12 school practices and policies affect their transition to postsecondary education. Because it has such critical consequences for transitions to college, understanding the K-12 context that EL students navigate is a necessary prerequisite to understand ELs' transitions to postsecondary education. Having described this context, we next discuss our approach to reviewing literature on ELs and postsecondary education.

2.9 Method

This review of scholarship on ELs in higher education integrates literature from higher education and related fields to advance conceptual guidelines and related recommendations for future research on ELs in higher education. First, we explain our method to review the research literature in this area. Second, we present the

results of an initial content analysis of selected higher education journals. Third, because of the limited scholarship in these journals, we discuss our process of expanding our search to other fields, such as applied linguistics, to integrate a wider variety of literature into our current understanding of ELs.

Because this chapter was written with a higher-education audience in mind, we began our search by examining published journal articles in the field of higher education. We examined literature in the following high-impact, peer-reviewed journals in higher education: *Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, *Review of Higher Education*, and *The Journal of Higher Education* (Bray & Major, 2011). In addition, we reviewed two representative community college journals, *Community College Review* and *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, because of the relative prevalence of scholarship on EL students in community college journals.

To capture more recent scholarship, we limited the initial review to studies published between 1990 and 2015. Because there are many labels used to define and describe ELs, we searched for articles containing any of the following key words, noted earlier in this review: *limited English proficient (LEP)*, *English language proficiency*, *English as a Second Language (ESL)*, *English language learners (ELL)*, *English learners (EL)*, *linguistic/language minority (LM)*. We searched several electronic databases, including JSTOR, SAGE online, and Google Scholar to capture a substantial portion of the peer-reviewed literature about these students in the higher education field. Through the search process, we identified a total of 38 peer-reviewed journal articles. Seventy-six percent of the articles were published in the two community college-focused journals. Notably, most of the studies about these students in community colleges employed the labels of ESL (e.g., Ignash, 1995; Lambert, 2014; Smith, 2010), ELL (e.g., Almon, 2014; Curry, 2004; Reynoso, 2008) and/or LEP students (e.g., Tichenor, 1994). Having made a quantitative assessment of the prevalence of literature on ELs in these journals, we moved toward a more qualitative assessment involving a content analysis of the topics covered, before proceeding to analyzing the actual findings of the studies.

2.9.1 Initial Content Analysis

After identifying peer-reviewed articles in this field, we conducted a descriptive content analysis to learn more about how scholars examine EL students in higher education. Content analysis strategies have similarly been used to study the coverage of other topics in higher education, including feminist scholarship in higher education (Hart, 2006) and the portrayal of adult students in scholarly discourse (Donaldson & Townsend, 2007). Our initial content analysis revealed three prominent themes. First, we found that studies identified did *not* tend to focus their analyses on ELs. Rather, studies tended to confound ELs with other sub-groups of students, including Hispanic (e.g., Chávez, 2014; García, 2010; Kraemer, 1995;

Torres, 2014), immigrant (e.g., Conway, 2009), and/or academically unprepared students (e.g., Howell, 2011). That is, these studies examined the variability in a population by accounting for language use as one of many factors. In fact, only 26 % of the articles identified (i.e., Almon, 2014; Baker, 2014; Bunch & Kibler, 2015; Curry, 2004; Estrada, Dupoux, & Wolman, 2005; Flores & Drake, 2014; Lambert, 2014; Mulready-Shick, & Parker, 2012; Reynoso, 2008; Zhang, 2015) focused on ELs as the central topic. These studies paid close attention to the services and programs that ELs receive, and to how these students navigated and made sense of their educational journeys while attending college. Notably, six of these studies appeared during the last couple of years (2014–2015), suggesting an emerging awareness of the importance of this population in the field of higher education.

The available scholarship of ELLs in community colleges pays particular attention to issues related to students' psychosocial adjustment in college. Specifically, Estrada et al.'s (2005) study investigated the effects of locus of control and other predictors on personal-emotional and social adjustment to community college in ELL students. Results of their study indicated that locus of control (i.e., stress and being a first-generation college student) was significantly associated with both social adjustment and personal-emotional adjustment. Similarly, Reynoso (2008) studied how Dominican ELLs achieved academic resiliency despite facing many personal, academic, and environmental adversities. Campa (2010) addressed this same topic for Mexican American women who were EL students in a community college. Finally, Mulready-Shick and Parker (2012) studied ELL student experiences in nursing classrooms. Four themes emerged from their analyses and included the ways students made adjustments, overcame doubts, demonstrated determination, and co-created community in the college classroom. Collectively, these studies show the vulnerabilities that ELLs experience, but also the resources (i.e., resiliency) and supports (e.g., family, peers, etc.) that help them overcome obstacles while pursuing their college education.

Three studies in particular explored topics that were directly relevant to ELs' access to and success in college. Flores and Drake (2014) examined the relationship between ELL identification in K-12 education and likelihood of being placed in remedial classes at community and 4-year colleges, using state-level data from Texas. They found that on the whole students who had been identified as ELs during their K-12 education were more likely to be designated as needing remediation at the college level than non-ELs, but also that the patterns varied considerably by race/ethnicity. Almon (2014), in a qualitative study of ELs at one community college on the East Coast, identified lack of finances, full-time work, and family obligations as three biggest challenges to ELs' retention in community colleges. Bunch and Kibler (2015), in providing a descriptive overview of four innovative alternatives to traditional remedial education in California community colleges, argue that community colleges need to not simply focus on preparing students for academic English and literacy necessary for college-level work, but to offer programs with the "integrated goals of supporting students' language and literacy development and promoting their progress" (p. 30).

A second theme that emerged in the content analysis of the literature in higher education journals was that instead of examining the transition to college or the college experiences of ELs, most of the available scholarship includes just a minimal number of language measures. This was not surprising, given the data limitations discussed toward the beginning of this piece. For example, Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) use the variable *language spoken at home* in their analyses to analyze how self-efficacy and stress were related to academic success in college, but they neither explained their rationale for including this variable, nor provided a profile of ELs in their study. Similarly, Chávez (2014) used the term ESL to refer to nonnative speakers of English without providing any information on the actual English proficiency of the participants or whether or not they were ever identified as ELs in K-12 education and/or in community colleges.

Third, and perhaps most striking, virtually no published research in these journals focused on EL students enrolled in 4-year colleges. Even the few articles published in the non-community college-oriented journals, the *Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education* and *Review of Higher Education*, addressed EL status primarily in the context of community college students. These studies addressed topics including: (a) transfer from 2- to 4-year colleges (i.e., Kraemer, 1995; Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2004), (b) the remediation process of students in community colleges (i.e., Howell, 2011), and (c) persistence in community colleges (i.e., Conway, 2009). The only exception was the study by Flores and Drake (2014), which included 4-year college students who were identified as needing remediation; however, their study did not focus specifically on issues related to 4-year college ELs.

Notably, the fact that the higher education journals have paid only marginal attention to ELs' transition to college does not mean that this topic has not been explored elsewhere. In fact, we have identified an as-of-yet-small but burgeoning body of literature on ELs' college access in a variety of related fields. These fields include K-12 education, applied linguistics, sociology, and policy analysis research (Hurtado, 2015). Because the authors of this manuscript come from different but complementary disciplinary backgrounds spanning these fields (applied linguistics, policy analysis, sociology etc.), we were able to bring in relevant research findings from different fields for this synthesis. Based on our specialized knowledge, we first identified studies in these other fields that addressed ELs in higher education. Then we reviewed the findings in these studies to organize the current knowledge base about the EL students' transitions to higher education. In this process, we identified six themes through which to classify current literature pertinent to ELs in higher education: (a) postsecondary outcomes (already discussed at the beginning of his piece), (b) academic college preparation in K-12, (c) academic experiences after entering higher education, (d) financial constraints, and (e) sociocultural experiences, and (f) EL students' linguistic and cultural assets. To strengthen the description of these themes, we conducted further literature searches with more specific keywords about these specific topics.

2.10 Key Themes in Literature about ELs' College Access and Success

In this section, we elaborate on the identified key themes in the literature that are salient to ELs' college access and success. The studies cited focus solely or primarily on EL students. They come from fields including higher education, K-12, applied linguistics, policy, and sociology. Among these studies, we identified the following themes: (a) postsecondary outcomes, (b) academic college preparation in K-12, (c) academic experiences after entering higher education, (d) financial constraints, (e) sociocultural experiences, and (f) EL students' linguistic and cultural assets. We discussed the first theme – postsecondary outcomes – at the beginning of this chapter, in order to provide a sense of why ELs need to be examined as a distinctive population in understanding issues of college access and success. Now we discuss critical factors identified in the literature that shape ELs' postsecondary outcomes.

2.11 Academic College Preparation in K-12

Research well documents that, regardless of a student's sociodemographic background, rigorous academic preparation in high school is among the strongest factors influencing college access and success (e.g., Adelman, 2006; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Unfortunately, national-, state-, and district-level data indicate that ELs face significant barriers in preparing academically for college admission and success (Núñez & Sparks, 2012; Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015; Robinson, 2011). Toward the end of high school, ELs perform academically at lower rates than their counterparts. For example, on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, 17-year-old ELs scored about 5 and 3 years behind their non-EL counterparts on reading and mathematics achievement, respectively. These achievement gaps for young adult ELs were wider than those between 9-year old ELs and non-ELs. Furthermore, the gaps between ELs and non-ELs were larger than those between low-income and non-low-income students (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Furthermore, research shows that long-term EL students have substantially lower odds of passing state-mandated subject exams than students who have taken an ESL program for 3 or less years (Flores et al., 2011). At the district level, some have shown that the rate of reclassification of ELs does not always lead to higher achievement scores (Robinson, 2011). Similarly, research suggests that too few years of ESL services can be damaging to the educational prospects for reclassification and subsequent achievement scores (Rios-Aguilar, González Canche, & Sabetghadam, 2012).

Research discussed previously indicates that several structural factors contribute to ELs' underachievement beyond their limited English proficiency. These factors include: (a) limited access to advanced-level college preparatory courses in high

school (Callahan, 2005; Callahan et al., 2010; Gándara, 2008; Kanno & Cromley, 2015; Kanno & Kangas, 2014), (b) ELs' concentration in resource-poor K-12 schools (Valdés, 2001), (c) inadequate ESL services in these schools (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010), and (d) inappropriate timing of reclassification into non-EL status (Abedi, 2004; Mahoney & McSwan, 2005; Solórzano, 2008).

Large-scale research analyses show that ELs are greatly underrepresented in high-level academic courses in both middle school (Wang & Goldschmidt, 1999) and high school (Callahan et al., 2010; Kanno & Cromley, 2015; Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Rodríguez and Cruz (2009) argue that EL status is working as a gate-keeping or tracking mechanism for access to advanced college preparatory courses in K-12 education. Kanno and Kangas (2014) found that after ELs complete EL sheltered courses (such as EL Physical Science and EL Algebra 1), they were often automatically placed in remedial-level courses of the same subjects, posing barriers to access to advanced-level courses. Indeed, Callahan et al. (2010) found that, holding other critical factors (including academic performance and English proficiency) constant, LM students in ESL programs were 45 % less likely than LM students who had not been placed in an ESL program to enroll in college preparatory science courses, and 48 % less likely than their counterparts to enroll in college preparatory social science courses. This limited access to rigorous curricula perpetuates a cycle of low achievement, through tracking these students into lower level courses, which in turn results in lower academic achievement and lower academic preparation for college (Long, Conger, & Iatarola, 2012; Long, Iatarola, & Conger, 2009).

2.12 Academic Experiences after Entering Higher Education

As noted earlier, there is no coordination between the identification of ELs in K-12 schools and at the college level. Once ELs arrive in college, the EL/RFEP status from K-12 education typically no longer applies. That is to say, colleges and universities have their own ways of identifying ELs, usually based on the SAT Critical Reading and TOEFL scores and in-house placement tests at 4-year institutions, and the College Board's ACCUPLACER or the ACT's COMPASS placement test scores at community colleges (Bunch, Endris, Panayotova, Romero, & Llosa, 2011; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Williams, 1995) and do not necessarily consider whether the students had already been reclassified as English-proficient prior to enrolling in college. For instance, a student who had been reclassified as English-proficient in eighth grade could be again classified as an EL upon entering college for course placement. Unsurprisingly, this "rebecoming ESL" (Marshall, 2010) presents a confusing and highly distressing turn of events for many LM students who had thought that they were fully proficient in English and therefore finished with ESL programs.

In general, EL identification and ESL support at the college level are far less regulated than in K-12 education. Likewise, there is an unmistakable shift between the sectors in beliefs about who is responsible for addressing the linguistic chal-

lenges of ELs. As discussed above, in K-12 schools and districts are held accountable by the federal and state legislation for removing the language barriers for ELs. However, in postsecondary education, the onus unmistakably shifts to the students to overcome their own language barriers to gain access to college-level coursework. Put differently, ESL *support* in K-12 education becomes ESL basic skill *requirements* in college. These basic skill requirements usually entail a set of additional ESL courses that students must take and pass at their own cost and time, before they are allowed to take regular academic courses or graduate from college (Hodara, 2015; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Williams, 1995).

College readiness or the lack thereof has recently taken center stage in the nation's concern over college completion. Related is the explosion of research focusing on the community college as a gateway to degree completion as well as that of remediation and its effectiveness in moving students through to college completion. While the research is mixed in that some states show a positive effect of remediation on credit degree completion (Ohio) while other states do not (Texas and Florida), the story of the EL student trajectory as it relates to remediation has been examined in New York and Texas (Flores & Drake, 2014; Hodara, 2015). The connection between remediation entry and EL students is perhaps the most complex of relationships since both are temporary statuses that are also dictated by institutional identification (postsecondary) and state context. For example, California is a state that has banned bilingual education programming but has strict college readiness formulas for 4-year institutions and has moved all remedial programming to 2-year colleges. New York has the fourth largest population of English learners and has varying cut-off scores regarding remedial or ESL mandatory participation within one college system (City University of New York).

In sum, the remedial story for EL students is one of great variation at the institutional and state level. Furthermore, as data across the various jurisdictions EL students is still being examined for validity, the verdict on whether ELs – former or newly identified – are academically successful is not clear. Moreover, it is also not certain that the developmental/remedial education status as an identity is the primary identity for EL students, as previous work shows that the diversity of this group yields outcomes that indicate high success levels for some ELs who may or may not be immigrant students. Furthermore, placement testing and course requirements related to remedial education vary widely across individual institutions, let alone sectors (2-year and 4-year), and states.

For these reasons, it is currently difficult, if not impossible, to draw broader conclusions about the influence of basic skills requirements on related interventions on EL students' pathways; a full discussion of how these affect EL students' trajectories is beyond the scope of this review. Generally, though, in community colleges, whether students need to take ESL classes is largely determined by the initial placement tests that all students are required to take prior to registering for courses. LM students (who include ELs and other English-proficient but non-native-speaking English students) are often confused about whether to take an ESL placement test or a regular English placement test.

In community colleges, performance on a single placement test is often the only criteria used to assign students to courses although multiple performance measures are recommended for placing any student in college courses (Bunch & Endris, 2012; Bunch et al., 2011). This method of course assignment can limit ELs' access to mainstream academic courses (Razfar & Simon, 2011). Furthermore, students may not be provided adequate information or recommendations about available courses, and subsequently enroll in courses that are less appropriate for their academic abilities or interests, or delay them from transferring or graduating (Bunch et al., 2011).

At 4-year institutions, policies regarding LM students who do not meet their English language proficiency standard typically fall into one of two types (Kanno & Grosik, 2012). The first involves the remedial approach to ESL, that is, to require ELs to take a set of non-credit ESL courses either before or concurrently with their regular undergraduate programs. The second is the first-year writing program approach, whereby ELs are placed in ESL sections of the first-year writing course that all students are required to take. An equity-oriented perspective assumes that institutions are accountable for supporting ELs in higher education, therefore, the second type of ESL instruction is preferable than the first type, as it integrates language and writing instruction, and minimizes the potential for stigma and delays in course-taking progress (Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Kanno & Varghese, 2010). There is some evidence that 4-year institutions are moving in this direction, as evidenced by the Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCC) call to writing composition teachers and program administrators to "recognize and *take responsibility* for the regular presence of second language writers in writing classes, to understand their characteristics, and to develop instructional and administrative practices that are sensitive to their linguistic and cultural needs" (CCCC Committee on Second Language Writing, 2001/2009, emphasis added).

2.12.1 *Financial Constraints*

As noted previously, ELs are far more likely than non-EL students to come from lower-income backgrounds ("A distinctive population," 2009). The majority of LM college students are in the lower half of the income distribution among all college students, while about three times as many LM students (37 %) as non-LM students (13 %) in selective 4-year institutions come from the lowest income quartile (Núñez & Sparks, 2012). There is evidence that financial considerations may be even more important for EL students than others in influencing whether or not students decide to apply to college in the first place. In their analysis of ELS: 2002, Kanno and Cromley (2015) found that family income was a significant predictor of whether or not ELs applied to 4-year colleges, but not a significant predictor for either native speakers or English-proficient LM students.

The conditional effect of family income for EL students suggests that EL families have limited access to knowledge about differences among scholarships, grants,

and student loans, and so could be unaware of the full set of resources they could apply for to pursue college education (Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Rodríguez & Cruz, 2009). Immigrant EL students in particular may be less familiar with the structure of the U.S. postsecondary education system and the variety of postsecondary options available that require different levels of financial commitment. Even if ELs do apply and receive significant grant aid to pursue selective postsecondary education, it is likely that low-income EL students are still taking out loans to handle their discretionary educational expenses and to support their families while in college (Melguizo & Chung, 2012).

Families can offer an important source of emotional, moral, and financial support to some ELs (Varghese, 2012), but often, ELs are also supporting their families, financially or through caretaking. Namely, EL college students are more likely than others to be employed full-time, be enrolled part-time, and support dependents (Núñez & Sparks, 2012). Qualitative studies also indicate that working or caring for children can hinder ELs' capacity to devote more significant effort to their studies (Almon, 2010, 2014; Harklau, 2013; Razfar & Simon, 2011). One study, however, indicates that supporting families and children motivates Mexican American women EL community college students to develop a stronger purpose in college (Campa, 2010).

The extent to which these students "choose" or are influenced by external factors to work can vary. One qualitative study of EL university students indicated that over half worked while attending college, supporting their immediate families in the U.S., and, in some cases, sending remittances to relatives in their countries of origin (Kanno & Grosik, 2012). In another study, one Latina EL college student chose to work while going to college, because in her family, earning income (rather than being entirely financially dependent) would give her more privileges, such as priority access to the only family bathroom in the morning, so that she could leave for college earlier in the morning (Harklau, 2013). Other related factors, such as living at home and having a long commute to college, can make it more challenging for EL students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, to engage more fully in university life.

2.12.2 Sociocultural Experiences

EL students' sociocultural experiences also shape their college access and success. As noted previously, many EL students come from families with no prior postsecondary experience and from under-resourced K-12 schools. Together, these factors limit their access to "college knowledge" (Conley, 2005) or cultural capital (McDonough, 1997) about the heightened academic expectations for college-level work, as well as how to prepare for, apply to, enroll in, and navigate college. Qualitative research indicates that limited access to college knowledge can pose challenges to ELs' enrollment in any college or in more selective colleges (Kanno, 2015). As for other groups like first-generation college-going students, ELs may

have less access to critical knowledge about the application process, like information about when to take admissions tests like the SAT in time for eligibility to be admitted to a college during their senior year in high school (Hodara, 2015). As noted previously, even after they arrive in college, ELs can encounter barriers to succeeding in academic coursework, a condition related to sociocultural as well as academic reasons. Academic placement policies are often framed in bureaucratic and esoteric language, which can make understanding of course placements or transfer requirements even harder to interpret for ELs than for other students (Bunch & Endris, 2012). Furthermore, ELs' language and culture can be marginalized in college curricula, in practices such as discouraging Spanish from being spoken on campus (Holmes, Fanning, Morales, Espinosa, & Herrera, 2012). The degree of marginalization of EL students' language and culture, ELs' own attitudes about their cultural background, and the extent to which college personnel understand and address these students' experiences, can also affect their academic engagement (Fuentes, 2012; Holmes et al., 2012; Shapiro, 2012; Varghese, 2012). Moreover, encountering limited diversity in the racial/ethnic, linguistic, and the cultural composition of a campus's student body can influence EL students to feel isolated on campus (Almon, 2014; Kanno & Grosik, 2012).

Social relationships and interpersonal support also influence ELs' college experiences and capacity to succeed. Relationships with institutional agents (Stanton-Sálar, 1997) who inform them about and encourage their participation in college life can further ELs' ability to engage in college activities and to feel a sense of membership in the university (Holmes et al., 2012; Razfar & Simon, 2011; Varghese, 2012). Informal, friendly relationships that students cultivate with peers and instructors, study groups outside of formal classes, and interactions with professors during office hours can also provide support for EL college students (Leki 2007).

EL students who spend limited time on campus can find it more challenging to participate in study groups or visit their professors during their office hours (Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Razfar & Simon, 2011). Furthermore, particularly in 4-year institutions, EL students who have to take extra remedial (possibly ESL) coursework may find it more difficult to connect with an incoming cohort of students, because they may not be enrolled in the same classes and have fewer opportunities to interact academically or socially with a consistent peer group (Fuentes, 2012; Kanno & Grosik, 2012). If ELs' chances of interacting with their professors and peers are limited by minimal time on campus, having strong relationships with them can facilitate socioacademic integrative moments (Deil-Amen, 2011) that involve positive connections between instructors or peers around academic content.

2.12.3 EL Students' Cultural and Linguistic Assets

The potential for bilingualism is often framed as a deficit in today's society, but it can also help cultivate assets that are valuable in schooling and the workplace (Callahan & Gándara, 2014). For example, ELs who are children of immigrants

may hold extra responsibilities for their families, sometimes serving as translators (Almon, 2010; Louie, 2009; Suárez Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Valdés, 2001). While this could be positioned as an additional barrier to performing well in school, developing the capacity to translate can also enable ELs to move more skillfully between different cultures, drawing on funds of knowledge from their families and communities (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). Furthermore, ELs who are highly proficient in English recognize cognitive growth and benefits due to their linguistic skills, which enhance their capacity to contribute in the workplace (Callahan & Gándara, 2014).

In addition to navigating multiple cultural contexts and developing bi- or multilingualism, immigrant EL students may also exhibit “immigrant optimism” and higher motivation to succeed in education (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Suárez Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Such factors may account for why LM students in some cases fare *better* than their non-LM counterparts in postsecondary outcomes. In fact, two national studies of beginning college students in 4-year institutions found that, holding a battery of other student and institution level factors constant, LM students were in fact *more* likely than their non-LM counterparts to attain postsecondary degrees within 6 years of beginning college (Arellano, 2011; DeAngelo et al., 2011). First-generation immigration status likewise has been found to be an independent and positive predictor of college degree attainment (Kanno & Cromley, 2013; Sparks & Núñez 2014).

This review of the research suggests that, while ELs are understudied in higher education, EL status nonetheless has distinctive and meaningful consequences for college access and success. Consistent with a multilevel intersectionality perspective (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b), several sociodemographic identities and academic, financial, and sociocultural factors influence these students’ postsecondary trajectories. Although ELs can encounter many challenges in pursuing higher education, they can also possess assets for success, which is consistent with an integrated capitals and funds of knowledge perspective (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). Conceptual frameworks to study ELs in higher education must therefore account for a complex range of skills, social identities, and contextual influences on postsecondary outcomes.

2.13 Conceptual Frameworks for Studying ELs’ College Experiences

This research review suggests that not only linguistic skills, but other academic, financial, social, and cultural factors must be addressed in theoretical approaches to understanding ELs’ college experiences. Furthermore, because ELs typically attend high schools with fewer resources and are subject to the effects of local, state, and federal policies shaping their academic instruction, it is also important to account for these situated contexts in understanding ELs’ postsecondary access and success (e.g., Perna, 2006). Before, we have addressed multilevel intersectionality (Núñez,

2014a, 2014b) as a methodological lens to attune researchers to the awareness of how multiple identities (e.g., socioeconomic, race, ethnicity, citizenship, immigrant status, gender) affect Latino students' postsecondary trajectories. The empirical research that we have just reviewed illustrates the importance of taking into account these multiple identities when examining reasons for ELs' postsecondary outcomes. In addition, we have addressed an integrated capitals and funds of knowledge perspective (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011) to attune researchers to the possibility that, while many EL students face challenges in transitions to higher education, they also can bring resources such as bilingualism that are not recognized as valuable by the dominant culture in the U.S. (Callahan & Gándara, 2014).

In this section, we build on these perspectives to identify three explanatory conceptual frameworks to guide research on EL students in higher education. These theories and concepts, taken together, account for a full range of factors found to influence ELs' transitions to higher education. One of these frameworks – Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction – can be linked with the integrated capitals and funds of knowledge perspective (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011) to recognize resources that are valuable for non-dominant as well as dominant communities.

First, we discuss how Bourdieu's (1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1986) theory of social reproduction can address ELs' access to resources and the situated contexts that influence their postsecondary opportunity structures. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital has been applied most commonly to understanding inequalities in educational opportunity for historically underrepresented groups in higher education (McDonough, 1997; McDonough & Núñez, 2007). In addition to academic, financial, cultural, and social capital, Bourdieu (1977c) articulates linguistic capital as a critical resource that shapes life opportunities (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). We extend Bourdieu's theory to recognize the importance of other forms of capital based on funds of knowledge for EL students (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). To specify further the meaning of linguistic capital in a college context, we subsequently discuss how Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework of academic English literacy incorporates linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural/psychological perspectives to outline an array of critical academic skills to succeed in college. Third, we address how Leki's (2007) framework of socioacademic relations contributes to a fuller understanding of how social and cultural contexts affect ELs' college experiences. We feel that these three theoretical frameworks provide the most potential to guide researchers to explain mechanisms and processes influencing ELs' transitions to college.

2.13.1 Bourdieu's Theory of Social Reproduction and Integration with Funds of Knowledge

Two key findings of our research synthesis are that ELs tend to come from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds than other students and to have less access to social and cultural, particularly linguistic, resources necessary to succeed in college

(e.g., “A distinctive population,” 2009; Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Núñez & Sparks, 2012). Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977a; Swartz, 1997) speaks to the importance of economic, cultural, and social factors in shaping educational inequities. Specifically, it posits that these inequities are perpetuated by “two major systems of social hierarchies: (1) an economic system where position and power are determined by money and property [and] (2) a cultural or symbolic system where cultural, social, and symbolic capital provides individuals with status and the potential to dominate” (McDonough & Núñez, 2007, pp. 141–142). Thus, this framework is particularly productive for studying EL students because of its recognition of the importance of economic, cultural, and linguistic factors in shaping educational opportunities. However, we argue that, to be most salient to EL students’ experiences, Bourdieu’s concepts of capitals must incorporate the role of funds of knowledge (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). First, we will outline Bourdieu’s framework of social reproduction in relation to Rios-Aguilar et al.’s (2011) integrated capitals and funds of knowledge framework.

Bourdieu’s theory posits that the interplay of four concepts, *field*, *habitus*, *practice*, and *capital*, shapes an individual’s life opportunities, such as postsecondary outcomes (McDonough et al., 2000). This theory assumes that individuals and groups will marshal whatever resources they can to jockey to advance their life opportunities and outcomes. The field is the context within which these individuals and associated organizations (in this case higher education) compete for a finite number of opportunities (McDonough et al., 2000). Habitus is based on family, schooling, and related experiences and involves the orientations and dispositions individuals develop toward this process of advancement (Bourdieu, 1977a; McDonough, 1997). Practice includes the calculated and improvisational strategies that individuals employ to access useful resources in educational advancement (Bourdieu, 1977a; McDonough & Núñez, 2007).

Among these four concepts, capital by far is the most commonly used to study postsecondary access and success (McDonough & Núñez, 2007). Capital refers to tangible or intangible resources necessary for educational advancement and encompasses many types, including: (a) academic capital (in this case, academic preparation and skills), (b) financial capital (economic wealth), (c) linguistic capital (proficiency in, and ease with, the dominant language), (d) cultural capital (information that is not always communicated explicitly in school, but is necessary for educational advancement), (e) social capital (social networks and relationships that facilitate access to educational opportunities), and (f) symbolic capital, which is the capacity to define which resources are useful and valued in educational advancement, and typically privileges the values of higher over the lower socioeconomic classes (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1986; McDonough, 1997; McDonough & Núñez, 2007).

Although some scholars critique Bourdieu’s theory for casting the resources of lower socioeconomic classes in a deficit perspective (e.g., Giroux, 1983; Musoba & Baez, 2009; Yosso, 2005), Bourdieu’s original argument is not that these resources of lower socioeconomic classes are themselves inherently worthless, but that they

are less valued in some specific fields. For example, in the U.S. educational context, bilingualism is often cast in a negative light. However, that does not mean that bilingualism inherently lacks value. In global markets, by contrast, bilingualism is a highly valued skill and form of capital (Callahan & Gándara, 2014). Therefore, Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus allows the possibility that different skills might be valued very differently in different fields and contexts.

The framework of Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) expands on this very possibility, asserting that the funds of knowledge perspective can complement the forms of capital perspective when explaining mechanisms and processes that shape educational opportunity. It urges education scholars to combine the notions of social and cultural capital with funds of knowledge in order to develop a more complex and nuanced understanding of underrepresented students' educational and occupational trajectories. The expanded framework that Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) propose is important for a number of reasons. First, social and cultural capital are typically framed from a perspective that privileges the dominant classes. Consequently, continuing to study attainment solely in light of resources valued by the dominant culture will further perpetuate a deficit approach to understanding EL students' educational trajectories. Integrating capitals and funds of knowledge perspectives highlights and values the resources (including diverse language skills) possessed by EL students, families, and communities, thus challenging a deficit mentality and providing a richer and more accurate picture of how EL students can be supported to pursue postsecondary education.

At the same time, however, Rios-Aguilar and colleagues (2011) assert that conducting research entirely from a funds of knowledge perspective may understate the power structures that function within the dominant system. Therefore, they make a compelling argument for an integrative framework that does not equate forms of capital with funds of knowledge nor privilege the forms of capital over funds of knowledge. Instead, when funds of knowledge and the forms of capital are used *simultaneously* to study educational opportunity, then, education scholars get a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of students' academic experiences.

In the case of ELs transitioning to and persisting and succeeding in college, this collaborative framework can help highlight the multiple resources, including linguistic ones, that students bring to the classroom. In addition, instead of viewing students as lacking and/or in need of remediation, this particular lens views students as bringing multiple linguistic resources to the classroom. Consequently, it urges faculty, staff, and administrators to utilize these resources to help students succeed academically.

Incorporating an expanded conception of resources into a Bourdieuan framework would provide a more accurate view of the range of factors affecting ELs' postsecondary outcomes, and recognizes the assets that ELs bring to postsecondary education as well as the challenges they face (Kiyama, 2010; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012). The research reviewed indicates specific examples of assets that ELs find helpful in transitions to college: (a) family support (Varghese, 2012), (b) fluent bilingualism (Holmes et al., 2012; Yosso, 2005; Kanno & Cromley, 2013), and (c) among immigrant EL students, immigrant optimism (Kao & Tienda, 1995),

which fuels higher motivations and aspirations toward degree completion (Yosso, 2005).

One implication of expanding the notion of capitals to include funds of knowledge is that various resources may differ in their utility for students from different backgrounds. Specifically, although academic capital, financial capital, and cultural capital (particularly parental education) are well documented as important factors affecting college-going and completion for students in general (e.g., Adelman, 2006; Horn & Núñez, 2000; Núñez & Cuccaro Alamin, 1998; Walpole, 2007), emerging research evidence suggests that access to these resources does not predict ELs' postsecondary outcomes in the same way as for non-ELs. For example, Kanno and Cromley (2015) found that academic capital was a less strong predictor of 4-year college enrollment for EL students than for non-EL students. This study also found that a cultural capital measure of being in school that sends the majority of graduates to 4-year colleges was significantly associated with college enrollment for non-ELs, but not for ELs. Similarly, using a multiple capitals framework to study the broader population of LM students, Núñez and Sparks (2012) found that fewer indicators of capital in their model were significant predictors of LM students' than non-LM students' college choice. Put simply, these quantitative models found fewer or less significant predictors of college outcomes in conventional models of capitals for EL students than for non-EL students, suggesting that other resources not being measured in these models affect EL students' outcomes.

Rios-Aguilar and colleagues (2011) retain the Bourdieuan concept of capitals because Bourdieu's social reproduction theory provides conceptual tools to study power relations that affect EL students through mechanisms like classification and identification of students and the provision of services for these students. Less research has employed Bourdieu's notions of habitus, practice, and field described earlier (Swartz, 1997). However, research evidence suggests that these concepts could also be useful in guiding research on ELs.

Habitus can be useful because it highlights how individuals develop preferences and dispositions toward postsecondary education in different contexts such as family, schooling, and other dimensions of the social world. Some qualitative research suggests that EL students develop orientations toward succeeding in higher education that integrate dominant U.S. narratives of success with non-dominant narratives that are more collectively based, such as an orientation toward the family. For example, an in-depth study of one EL transitioning to college (Varghese, 2012) found that the student drew on multiple discourses to construct her educational identity. These discourses emphasized: (a) working hard within the institutional system to get ahead (a dominant discourse in the U.S.) and (b) family support to get ahead (a less dominant discourse in the U.S.). As such, this student integrated dominant and non-dominant "frames of reference" (Varghese, 2012, p. 158)—a habitus—and invoked these discourses in different times and settings to navigate postsecondary education. Similarly, a study of one group of EL Mexican American community college students found that they navigated the dominant culture of the institution while developing a strong purpose to serve their families and communities (Campa, 2010). While the concept of habitus reflects these students' orientations, the concept of

practice reflects the strategies and behaviors that the students used to enact their *habiti*. These empirical findings further support the utility of employing an employing a funds of knowledge perspective and Bourdieuan framework simultaneously (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011).

Bourdieu's notion of field can also be useful in research on ELs in higher education, because it recognizes the role of contested struggles to shape educational opportunities on a macro-level. As noted earlier in this research synthesis, federal and state policies in the educational field, including NCLB and bilingual education policies, affect ELs' access to college preparatory instruction in the K-12 setting. They also can affect the provision of remedial education in different states. Furthermore, immigration policies, such as the one of individual states allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition, can also shape postsecondary opportunities for certain ELs (Institute for Higher Education Law and Governance, 2013).

2.13.2 Scarcella's Multidimensional Framework of Academic English Literacy

While Bourdieu's framework can shed light on multiple influences and supports for EL students, it does not address in depth what exactly constitutes linguistic capital. Such concrete conceptualization is essential in analyzing the role of language in ELs' educational opportunities. Scarcella's (2003) framework of academic English literacy provides further guidance on how to organize the understanding of linguistic capital in a postsecondary setting. Her conception of linguistic proficiency incorporates multiple dimensions: linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural/psychological factors. According to Scarcella (2003), academic English "is a variety or a register of English used in professional books and characterized by the specific linguistic features associated with academic disciplines" (p. 9).

In general, English is context-specific, varying in different settings, according to such factors as discipline, content, formality, class, geographical location, and race/ethnicity. Some varieties of English are more useful in some contexts than others. Academic English tends to be most useful in a higher education setting, but could be less useful on the street (Scarcella, 2003)—a notion that echoes Bourdieu's assertion that the value of a form of capital is field-specific. It is also dynamic and changing in accordance with how various disciplines change, so learning academic English also entails learning skills to adapt to changes in language.

Based on research about literacy and linguistics, particularly among college learners, this framework of academic English posits that there are three major dimensions that constitute academic English: linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural/psychological. First, the linguistic component focuses on how the language is spoken, including the use of different sounds, words used in everyday versus academic settings, grammar, genres in appropriate settings (e.g., apologizing, requesting things), and discourse (e.g., knowing spoken strategies to maintain conversations or to communicate continuous lines of thought) (Scarcella, 2003).

Second, the cognitive dimension of academic English involves the process of building knowledge about ideas and concepts in a given topic area, analyzing and evaluating ideas and concepts, and thinking about communication in different ways (for example, revising text or choosing among alternative words before speaking the appropriate one) (Scarcella, 2003). Third, the sociocultural/psychological dimension involves learning appropriate discourse patterns in a particular community. For example, one college student may fail a class because she did not know the norms or behaviors necessary to communicate effectively with her instructor, while another who knows these norms and behaviors could communicate early on with her instructor and strengthen the skills needed to pass the course.

Notably, acquiring literacy in this fashion does not have to mean adopting frequently used (or dominant) methods of communication wholesale. Rather, students can consciously choose to employ multiple discursive practices in different settings. This framework could be useful in studying ELs and postsecondary education because it takes into account multiple dimensions of language skills, including the role of social context in determining which skills and discourses are useful. Thus, Scarcella's framework resonates with empirical research that sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic dimensions of EL students' identity promote a sense of membership in college and of their agency as learners (Holmes et al., 2012).

2.13.3 Leki's Socioacademic Relations for ELs in College

Leki's (2007) concept of socioacademic relations emphasizes faculty and student interactions that influence EL students' literacy development. It is grounded in an emergent view of language learning that has moved from framing learning as an autonomous cognitive activity toward considering the political, community, and institutional contexts that shape and are shaped by this activity (Firth & Wagner, 1997). Drawing primarily from sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000), this view posits that language learning is not exclusively a cognitive activity. Rather, it is, in essence, a social process dependent on various forms of interaction between the learner, peers, and more knowledgeable or experienced learners (Leki, 2007). The varied forms of interaction among these actors presuppose some kind of social relationship. This relationship is dynamically constructed by the participants in the activity that brings them together within a given setting, in the context of their varied goals, actions, beliefs, and sociocultural histories, and further mediated by the tools inherent in or brought into the system (including semiotic tools like language) (Leki, 2007).

Consequently, since language learning theory assumes that individuals learn in concert with others, learners' identities and positions serve to help them understand their educational trajectories in college. This means that the experiences of ELs in higher education are significantly influenced by their interactions with peers and faculty in coursework and in their social identity development as ELs. Leki's (2007) notion of socioacademic relationships captures both the social dimensions of the relations established by ELs and others in their environments, as well as the aca-

ademic contexts that help to define and determine the nature of the interactions. Leki (2007) indeed found that socioacademic relationships (predominantly with faculty) played a powerful role in the extent to which students perceived their college experience in positive terms.

Because ELs are not formally classified once they reach higher education, Leki (2007) argued that it is difficult to identify and address these students' distinctive needs. Consequently, it can be difficult for ELs to assert their own agency and to resist the identities that instructors and possibly peers assign to them through evaluations and judgments. The implications of this research are that ELs' socioacademic interactions in class shape not only their persistence in college, but instructors' perceptions of their capabilities. Furthermore, this research also hints at the complexities inherent in ELs' status in English-dominant countries like the U.S., and the increasing importance of finding appropriate and non-deficit oriented ways to refer to them as a group (e.g., ESL, LEP, RFEP, etc.).

We posit that the theory of social reproduction integrated with funds of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977a; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011), Scarcella's (2003) expansive concept of literacy, and Leki's concept of socioacademic relationships (2007) can be employed separately or together to address the importance of the range of factors found in our review of empirical literature to influence ELs' college transitions. Furthermore, these theories recognize the assets as well as the challenges that EL students bring with them to higher education. Therefore, these frameworks can guide the identification of critical problems facing ELs in the transition to higher education, design of research to address these problems, and formulation of implications based on the results.

2.14 Implications for Future Research

This review indicates that precollege and college academic experiences, financial considerations, sociocultural experiences, and cultural and linguistic assets all shape EL students' transitions from K-12 to higher education. This empirical evidence informs our advancement of three conceptual frameworks to guide future study of ELs in higher education. In addition to applying these more holistic and asset-based frameworks, we recommend developing further research and research capacity regarding: (a) college and career preparation, (b) postsecondary enrollment and outcomes, and (c) data collection efforts on federal, state, and local levels.

2.14.1 College and Career Preparation

Access to advanced college preparatory coursework in K-12 is paramount for EL students' college access and success. One way to achieve this is to organize school curricula to improve access to college preparatory courses. This approach to organization can include integrating academic and vocational or technical curricula to help

prepare EL students for careers as well as college (Gándara, 2008). Another is to shift instructional approaches within courses.

With respect to the first approach, examining how and why EL students are tracked into lower level courses and how to correct this trend continues to be a critical direction for future research. Detracking (e.g., Oakes, Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997) can open opportunities for EL students to access college preparatory courses. Another way to organize schooling to broaden postsecondary opportunities for EL students is through a *multiple pathways* (Oakes & Saunders, 2008) approach – to offer curricula that move beyond the traditional dichotomy between academic and vocational education to “prepare all students for *both* college and careers” (Oakes & Saunders, p. 5, original emphasis). This typically involves replacing large, comprehensive high schools with smaller high schools with specific areas of career specialization that combine rigorous academic education with technical training. According to Gándara (2008), the multiple pathways model could offer ELs engaging coursework, authentic opportunities to practice English in the workplace, exposure to various career options, and opportunities to earn money while learning.

Another reason that this line of inquiry would be useful is because it may address the needs of the 50 % of ELs who either drop out of high school or graduate from high school but never enter postsecondary education (Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015), and therefore they need alternative pathways to prepare for careers. Although there is no hard evidence for this yet, it is possible that many ELs who do not enroll in higher education may consider Career and Technical Education Programs (CTE). As with multiple pathways, there is little, if any, information on the extent and kinds of career and technical (CTE) education programs available to ELs, how much guidance and support are given to them in choosing such a program, the challenges ELs face in pursuing a CTE program, and how successful they are in finding a job in their area of expertise or pursuing further training upon high school graduation. There has been some research on teaching instruction in CTE programs for ELs (Hernández-Gantes & Blank, 2009). However, more research is needed to examine the extent to which ELs are enrolled in multiple pathways or CTE, and the extent to which multiple pathways and CTE models that aim to integrate instruction academic and vocational skills result in improved postsecondary outcomes for ELs.

The second area of inquiry in this arena involves classroom instruction: how K-12 teachers might adjust their instructional strategies to make academic content more accessible to students who are still learning English. This idea is by no means new, and there is a large body of literature on specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE), the most widely adopted model of which is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013).³ Although SIOP has become widely known in K-12 education, and many inservice and preservice teachers have received training, there are in fact surprisingly few evaluative studies of the effectiveness of the SIOP model (e.g., Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012). As with multiple pathways, there needs to be rigorous evaluations of the relationship between SDAIE practices and ELs’ postsecondary opportunities. Similarly, future research ought to extend studies that assess effects of innovative teacher programs and small-class sizes on postsec-

ondary enrollment and employment (e.g., Dynarski, Hyman, & Schanzenbach, 2011) to focus on EL students, specifically.

We note here that there has also been a long and often politically charged debate on whether bilingual education or English-only instruction is more effective in promoting ELs' academic achievement (e.g., Crawford, 2003; Cummins, 1981; Thomas & Collier, 2002). However, given that the majority of ELs do not have access to bilingual education (Crawford, 2007), we have limited our discussion here to how to promote ELs' academic learning within monolingual English instruction.

2.14.2 Postsecondary Enrollment and Outcomes

Emerging research about ELs' experiences in 4-year institutions indicates that these students tend to feel marginalized in the college setting, especially when they are channeled into developmental education courses. One important dimension shaping these students' sense of belonging or marginalization is the extent to which their language and culture are affirmed in the institutional setting (Fuentes, 2012). Understanding how different kinds of 4-year institutional settings influence ELs' experience would be valuable, because emerging research suggests that selectivity of a 4-year institution is positively related to the extent to which ELs feel connected with the college (Kanno & Grosik, 2012). Another area ripe for research in both 2- and 4-year institutions regards the effectiveness of ESL instructors at the college level, as the working conditions of college instructors in general is a topic that is also severely underexplored.

2.14.3 Data Collection Efforts and Sharing on Federal, State, and Local Levels

Longitudinal research with national samples of EL students could extend the base of research on EL college students' experiences from mainly single-institution studies to include multi-institution studies. Although the National Center Education Statistics (NCES) has collected valuable longitudinal data that includes some measures of linguistic proficiency, the number of measures collected on students' linguistic background has declined in recent years. A comparison of the two most recent NCES studies to track students from high school into college is instructive. The National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) included 14 questions regarding students' linguistic backgrounds in the base-year survey. These questions addressed the first language that students were exposed to, their most frequently used languages, with whom students spoke various language(s) students, and how proficient they were in each of these languages. In contrast, the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS:2002), included only four questions on linguistic

backgrounds. These questions focused on identifying native speakers of English and the English proficiency of nonnative speakers, precluding the possibility of identifying native speakers of English who were also bilingual or multilingual. Consequently, in ELS: 2002, only nonnative speakers were conceived of as potentially being bilingual/multilingual, due to limitations in the data described at beginning of this review.

Other NCES postsecondary longitudinal studies asked even fewer questions about language skills. For example, the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL: 2009) asked students to identify their primary language and any other languages they spoke, but omitted questions regarding students' proficiency in any language, including English. In another example, the Beginning Postsecondary Students Study of 2004 (BPS: 2004) asked one question regarding whether or not students were native English speakers or not.

Because "experience suggests that students who are not counted won't count when decisions are made and priorities are set" (Engle & Lynch, 2009, p. 7), we recommend that data on EL status be collected in educational policy studies funded and supported by state, federal, and private funding agencies moving forward. Importantly, these studies should be longitudinal and, where possible, integrate, K-12 and higher education sectors. Specifically, we believe that the information should be collected on: (a) bilingual or multilingual students, regardless of whether they are native speakers of English; (b) these students' proficiency in English and other languages; (c) the settings in which these students employ their languages; (d) the extent to which these students have opportunities to use their non-English language(s) at school, with friends and/or adults; and (e) whether these students have received bilingual or multilingual education at any point during their U.S. school career.

Some states, such as Texas and Florida, have connected data across educational sectors on ELL students, allowing for long-term assessment of a diverse array of ELL students (e.g., Flores & Park, 2014). The ability of these merged state databases to follow the student throughout a longer educational trajectory, such as into graduate school, provides data advantages that are not present in any national dataset to date. Local school districts collect critical data on EL student characteristics, but also the process of EL identification, teacher qualifications and implement changes in policy over time in EL instruction. Another important role of local school districts is providing important student progress and outcome information to the local community college districts, the postsecondary sectors where EL students are most likely to enroll. While school districts typically do not communicate with postsecondary sectors about students who have exited high school, providing this information to the postsecondary sector has obvious potential benefits for keeping track of these students' trajectories and the particular needs they bring with them to higher education. In essence, proper alignment between EL stakeholders across educational sectors has the potential to influence outcomes related to remediation, college success, and effective participation in the workforce.

2.15 Conclusion

To summarize, we have demonstrated the importance of recognizing EL students in higher education as potentially marginalized students with distinctive experiences and needs, even though their identities can also overlap with those of other marginalized student groups that have received more attention in higher education research (e.g., low-income, first-generation students, racial/ethnic, immigrant). We have shown that pre-college as well as college experiences shape college transitions for EL students, and should not be ignored in understanding ELs' postsecondary opportunities. In addition, we have traced the history of how ELs have, in essence, been constructed as a social category through the historical evolution of various policies and laws that have only addressed K-12 students. The fact that policies and laws have only focused on K-12 students has profoundly affected whether and how ELs are served at the postsecondary level.

The understanding of how ELs are constructed as a social category by policies is essential for conducting research on these students in higher education. Researchers also must understand how to label and classify these students most appropriately, because some labels for these students have carried deficit framings and been phased out of research lexicon. In this review, we also have advanced a label that we recommend best captures the nature of these students in higher education: as English Learners (ELs). Furthermore, we have addressed some of the demographic and academic characteristics of K-12 that continue to influence postsecondary opportunity for these students in terms of making the transition to college.

We have selectively drawn on the rich literature on K-12 EL students to set the stage for our review of the literature in higher education journals specifically. The limited amount of research in higher education journals, combined with research in more generalist and in some cases K-12 education journals, suggests that academic, financial, sociocultural, and linguistic assets all influence EL students' transition experiences. Based on these findings, we have advanced three conceptual frameworks that we feel together can holistically address a fuller range of factors influencing these students' postsecondary opportunities. In addition to advancing new theoretical directions, we have suggested new areas of development for research. In sum, we hope that this review guides more researchers to study the role of EL status in postsecondary access and success and to advance postsecondary opportunities for this population.

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