LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC
CHALLENGES

by

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my parents, my loving husband Nizar, my two wonderful children Faris and Talia, and to all the students out there whose voices are not heard.

Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

English Learner ....EL
Long-Term English Learner ....LTEL
Limited English Proficiency .... LEP
English Language Development ....ELD
No Child Left Behind..NCLB
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills...BICS
Cognitive Academic Language Skills………………………………………….CALP
Critical Race Theory………………………………………………………… CRT

Abstract

LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

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George Mason University, 2016

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Long term English Learners (LTELs) at the high school level face many academic challenges. Some researchers attribute LTELs' academic difficulties to a gap in academic literacy; although it is likely there are other contributing factors to why so many of these students are struggling. Based on both Critical Race and Sociocultural theoretical frameworks, I sought to gain further insight into the difficulties these students face in school through providing opportunities for LTELs' voices to be heard. Through a qualitative approach of counter-storytelling, I explored the perceptions of why these students feel they struggle in school. I suggest that including student narratives on this topic will shed light on additional factors that are contributing to these students' academic challenges and will further inform research in this field as well as encourage much-needed discussions on various means of providing additional support for these students.

Chapter One

English Learners (ELs) are the fastest growing student population in the United States (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011). A student is considered an EL after the evaluation of a home language survey indicates that English is not their native language or a language that is spoken at home. An English language screening is then used to determine if students are limited in their English proficiency. Once that determination has been made, the student is labeled as an EL until that student meets the state's criteria for reclassification as proficient in English. Long-term English Learners (LTELs) are ELs who have been labeled as being limited in their English language proficiency for six or more years. These LTELs account for the majority of the current EL population in the United States (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011). While these students struggle with the reclassification process, many of these students face additional challenges at school.

My personal interest in LTEL began early in my teaching career. As an ESL teacher, I was trained in specific techniques and strategies geared towards students who were newly arrived immigrants to the United States. My first years of teaching, my goal was to help students identified as LEP to access the high school curriculum at our school by scaffolding materials for them and providing opportunities to practice oral and written English language skills in a safe, judgement-free environment. But my second year of teaching, the type of student that was placed in my ESL classes was no longer the

immigrant student I was trained to teach, but rather students born and raised in the United States but who continued to test as limited in their English proficiency- LTELs. I felt inequipped to teach these students, first, because I had no experience in my student teaching or teacher education classes on the needs of these students, and second, because as a school, these students were often not given direct language support (like the classes I taught provided) and therefore these students were resentful of being in classes with immigrant students who were learning English for the first time.

Every school year, more and more LTELs were being placed in our ESL classes and a constant struggle existed on how to best serve these students. Was it best to place them with immigrant students with the same LEP level and provide the same type of instruction for both groups or was it more beneficial to place them in mainstream classes and not provide ELD support? Our school administration did not have the answers and neither did the central ESL administration for the district. I took it upon myself to do my own research on who these students are and what specific needs they have and most importantly the best way to provide services for these students. This is where my journey began, before becoming a doctoral student, I was a teacher looking for answers on how to best help these students who were in my classroom. I felt unprepared to teach them and desperate to connect with them and support them.

This chapter will outline the achievement gap that exists between the general EL population and non-EL population in U.S. high schools and describe how LTELs are specifically affected by this gap.

Statement of Problem

LTELs comprise the majority of ELs in the United States. Many of these students are born in the United States, and they have only attended school in the United States. Most LTELs are orally proficient in English and their home language, which in most cases is Spanish. However, unlike other ELs, these students lack the literacy skills of their home language and are weak in academic literacy in English (Olsen, 2010). Low academic literacy skills can be linked to inability to be reclassified as proficient in English; hence, these students will likely be unable to reach English proficiency. Moreover, prolonged reclassification also suggests lower academic performance compared to those who have been reclassified (Flores, Painter, Harlow-Nash, & Pachon 2009). Flores et. al (2009) found that when students, such as LTELs, remain labeled as limited English proficient (LEP) for extended periods, these students underperform academically. Therefore, LTELs are students who are in danger of being outperformed in school by their non-LTEL peers. One of the most important effects of academic underperformance is the students' tendency of failing to obtain a high school diploma (Olsen, 2010). According to the Pew Research Center (2013), the majority of ELs are Latino/Hispanic; therefore, I will use many statistics in this essay that pertain to Latino/Hispanic students, which inadvertently encompass ELs as well. The dropout rate for Hispanic students, who comprise the majority of ELs in the United States, is 11.4% compared to 6.8% as the national average (US Department of Education, NCES 2015). The United States Department of Education also disaggregates the dropout rates for Hispanics in the United States by immigrant generation. First generation immigrants are those who were born in the United States to immigrant parents. Most LTELs are first

generation immigrants, although many are second-generation immigrants who were born to parents of first generation immigrants. Recent Hispanic immigrants exhibit a dropout rate of 24.7%, while the dropout rates for first and second-generation immigrants are 8.8% and 8.6%, respectively. In order for educators and educational stakeholders to be aware of additional contributing factors to these students' academic performance, research is needed to understand the effects of the achievement gap on ELs, and specifically inquire about LTELs' perceptions of the reasons they feel they face difficulties in school.

Key Terms

English Learner (EL). A student who is determined to be acquiring English and has not yet reached academic fluency in English. This classification is determined through a screening process that differs from state to state. A student remains labeled as an English Learner until he/she is reclassified based on specific criteria that determine fluency in English. In this dissertation, EL will refer to any student who remains classified as fluent in English and is still receiving some type of service to support access to mainstream curriculum.

Long-Term English Learner (LTEL). A long-term English Learner refers to an EL who has yet to be reclassified after 5-7 years of receiving EL supports (Olsen, 2010). This student is often born and raised in the United States, and has only attended school in the United States.

English Language Development (ELD). This term is used to refer to the direct support systems ELs are given to help them to understand the functions and forms of the

English language. These supports vary in their delivery models, but the purpose is to help students understand the structures of the English language.

Academic Achievement. Academic achievement is a broad term used to define a student's performance in school. In this dissertation, this term will be used to refer to a student's performance on assessments, the graduation rate of certain student subgroups, and college readiness of students based on the amount of college preparatory classes they have taken in high school.

Academic Literacy. This term refers to the language forms and functions used in both reading and writing in various academic disciplines. Marzano (2004) refers to academic literacy as the vocabulary and structures used to communicate in core academic areas. For example, students in a biology class will need to use reading skills to be able to read a lab report that differ from reading skills needed to read a comic book.

Content Areas. In U.S. schools, the content areas are used to refer to English/language arts, science, social studies, and math. These definitions are the most commonly used in the literature and will clarify the type of services these students receive.

ELs in U.S. Public Schools

The section will briefly discuss who ELs are and provide an overview of the services that they are provided in U.S. public schools. I will then discuss the characteristics of LTELs and how they differ from other ELs.

EL Definition. English Learners (ELs) are a rapidly growing subgroup of students in both elementary and secondary schools in the United States (Pandya, McHugh

& Batalova, 2015). While some states have seen continuous growth in their EL population in the past 10 years, such as California and Texas, many states like Nevada and North Carolina are only recently seeing this population increasing. According to Pandya, McHugh, & Batalova of the Migration Policy Institute (2015), from 1990 to 2010, California's EL population grew by 56% and Texas's EL population grew by 96%. During the same period in Nevada, the EL population grew by 398% and in North Carolina by 395% (Pandya, McHugh, & Batalova, 2015). Generally speaking, ELs are students who are not "proficient" in English based on annual assessments given to determine their proficiency levels. Many of the assessments given to determine proficiency integrate the four linguistic domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking and measure students' social and academic language proficiencies within these domains (Crawford, 2004).

      EL services. In 1974, the Supreme Court intervened on behalf of the civil rights of ELs who were expected to "sink or swim" in school without any direct supports to help these students learn English, in addition to learning content area materials. Before legal action was taken to protect the civil rights of ELs, some states' submersion process was a part of a calculated policy of racial exclusion for Mexican-American students (Crawford, 2004). Crawford (2004) reports that corporal punishment for not speaking English was a common practice at the time of the Supreme Court's ruling and that these policies were to enforce white Anglo domination in the region. *Lau vs. Nichols* stated that schools must provide ELs with services to assist them in being able to understand instruction and access curriculum (Crawford, 2004).

States have differed in their interpretation of this legislative proceeding. Some states, such as Texas, have provided bilingual education to ELs, while other states, including Arizona, give students one year of English Language Development (ELD) services and then a mandatory transition into mainstream classrooms (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). Most states, like Virginia, provide ELs with a variety of supports that vary in their service delivery models. According to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2015) one popular model is the pull-out model. ELs in Virginia can receive pull-out instruction wherein they are "pulled" into small groups from their mainstream classrooms by an ELD specialist to receive additional language support. Critics of this approach suggest that this model is still perpetuating a deficiency attitude in which the ELs' lack of English proficiency is a handicap and thus remedial instruction is needed (Crawford, 2004).

Another model, mostly seen in secondary schools is the self-contained model. Students are placed in self-contained classrooms with only other ELs and are given direct instruction that uses second language acquisition strategies and techniques delivered by ELD specialists. This model usually combines the use of language supports such as reading or writing strategies in addition to supporting a content area such as math, social studies, or science (VDOE, 2015). While this model provides more academic supports for ELs, the goal of acquiring English and transitioning into mainstream classes is the ultimate goal. Currently, many schools in Virginia are using a co-teaching model to provide ELD services to ELs. In this model, ELD specialists and mainstream teachers co-plan and instruct a class that includes both ELs and non-ELs. The ELD specialist is

responsible for supporting language development, such as writing styles or vocabulary usage, while the mainstream teacher is responsible for the delivery of the content area material such as teaching photosynthesis in a biology class (VDOE, 2015). While various service delivery models exist to support ELs, Calderón, Slavin, & Sanchez (2011) warn educators that not one size (or model) fits all in relation to the type of effective instruction ELs need in order to be able to access mainstream content material.

Characteristics of long-term ELs. While many ELs are immigrants to the United States, the majority of them are not. An estimated 80%-90% of ELs in middle and high schools were born and raised in the United States (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011). Most of these students are identified as being limited in their English language proficiency (LEP) upon entering kindergarten; they remain unable to reach English language proficiency in the average timeframe needed by most language learners. Cummins (1996) suggests that most school-aged ELs need about five to seven years of schooling to be able to fully access grade-level academic curriculum. Once this has occurred, these students are reclassified as "Formerly English Learners" and any ELD services are presumably no longer needed for these students. However, based on their inability to test as proficient in English on annual state language proficiency assessments within this timeframe, these students continue to be labeled as ELs and, in most cases, continue to receive ELD services. Umansky and Reardon (2014) estimate that a full 60% of Latino ELs reach high school as LTELs and a quarter of these students never meet the criteria to be reclassified. This prolonged and almost stagnant group of ELs is referred to as Long-Term ELs (LTEL). Long-term English Learners face similar challenges in their

academic achievement as other English Learners; however, they face additional challenges that often contribute uniquely to a gap between them and their non-EL peers.

Achievement gaps are divisions that exist in the academic performance between white, middle class students and other minority subgroups, such as students on free and reduced lunch and ELs. The existence of these gaps is evident based on national educational data and various educational studies. The next section will explore the achievement gap that exists specifically for ELs and non-ELs and various contributing factors that are related to this gap and how LTELs are specifically affected by this gap.

English Learner Achievement Gap

This section will retrace important factors that have impacted EL achievement in the United States. I will begin with a discussion of the role No Child Left Behind has played on requiring states to assess ELs. The rest of the section will attempt to further explain specific areas where the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs can clearly be documented: assessment, graduation rates, and college readiness. This section will then conclude with the impact the achievement gap has on long-term ELs.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In 2001, the re-authorization of the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Act was passed in which additional accountability mechanisms and standards-based measures were tied to federal funding of public schools (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001). This act, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), requires states to test all students during certain grade levels in the subjects of language arts and mathematics and, subsequently, use the results as the primary means of measuring the annual performance of states, districts, and schools. These assessments

must measure students' knowledge of the content of the state's academic standards (NCLB, 2001). In order to receive federal funding, states are required to show that increasing percentages of students are reaching a proficient level over time. Because a historical achievement gap between White and minority groups continues to exist, states and districts are also required to measure separately the progress of specific groups of students, including English learners (NCLB, 2001).

The federal government defines English learners as limited English proficient (LEP) learners whose native language is not English and who have yet to be assessed as reaching English language proficiency (Crawford, 2004). The label used to describe these students differs from state to state, in most instances these students are referred to as English Language Learners (ELLs) and, more recently, as English Learners (ELs) (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). Other researchers have suggested the use of the term Emerging Bilinguals to combat the deficiency undertones of being labeled as "limited" in English proficiency (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). However, to remain consistent with prevailing research and contemporaneous with the majority practice, the term English Learners (ELs) will be used to refer to this subgroup throughout this paper. The federal government and most states do not disaggregate data on LTELs from the general EL population; therefore, most federal and state data is inclusive of all EL subgroups including LTELs (Kim & Garcia, 2014).

Assessments. In order for schools to reach adequate yearly progress as defined by NCLB, each district and school must generally show that all students in each subgroup, i.e. black, Hispanic, ELs, students with disabilities, meet the state's proficiency

goals and that at least 95 percent of the students in each subgroup participated in the assessments (2001). In addition, schools must show that students in these various subgroups are graduating on time at a predetermined rate and that the graduation rate of these subgroups continues to increase yearly. As a subgroup, ELs are not performing academically at the same level as White, non-ELs based on NCLB measures. Studies have shown that ELs have not met state proficiency goals in language arts and mathematics tests in nearly two-thirds of the 48 states from which data was obtained (Congressional Hearing on the Impact of No Child Left Behind on English Language Learners, 2007). More specifically, reports based on student performance on standardized tests have shown that the reading and math achievement of ELs across the United States in fourth and eighth grade have not improved (Maxwell, 2013). Not only have they not improved, ELs continue to underperform in relation to their non-EL counterparts.

The federal National Assessment on Educational Performance (NAEP) of 2013, which measured students' performance on mathematics and reading, clearly showed this achievement gap. For example, ELs in 4th grade level mathematics scored an average of 219 points while non-ELs scored an average of 244 points. At the 8th grade level, ELs scored an average of 246 points and non-ELs scored an average of 287 points. Reading scores indicated an even larger discrepancy between EL and non-EL test performance. On average, ELs tested in reading in the 4th grade level scored an average of 187 points while non-ELs scored an average of 226 points. At the 8th grade level, ELs scored an average of 225 points and non-ELs scored an average of 270 points (U.S. Department of

Education, 2014). Therefore, in both mathematics and reading at the 4th and 8th grade

levels, ELs are significantly underperforming on assessments in these areas compared to

their non-EL peers.

The majority of states failed to meet their goals, which suggests that the ELs in

their states did not achieve proficient scores on reading and math assessments. This can

be related directly to the achievement gap that exists between ELs and non-ELs on state

assessments (Congressional Hearing on the Impact of NCLB on English Language

Learners, 2007).

Graduation rate. While achievement testing is the central component of state

accountability systems under NCLB, these systems also consider graduation rates as an

academic accountability indicator at the high school level (Swanson & Chaplain, 2003).

Obtaining a high school diploma is an important indicator of future economic success. In

addition, graduation rates are a key indicator of high academic performance for local and

federal educational systems. Public opinion supports the notion that higher graduation

rates for a school or district correlates with a more efficient and successful the school

system. Under NCLB (2001), schools and districts are accountable for academic

achievement levels, based on both test scores and high school graduation rates. NCLB

employs both measurements to help prevent an unintended negative incentive of high-

stakes accountability systems that push low-performing students out in order to raise

schools' test scores (Menken, 2009).

However, the graduation rates for EL students and White, non-ELs differ greatly,

which implies that the mandatory testing required for graduation affects ELs. The U.S.

Department of Education tracks multiple data sets on primary and secondary public school students in the United States. The national percentage of on-time graduation rate for the United States was 78.2% in 2010 (2014). The graduation rate of ELs in 2010 was 57% (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The data from the state level also reflects this discrepancy in graduation rates between ELs and non-ELs. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), for example, reported that the state percentage of on-time graduation was 89.1% in 2013. However, the graduation rate for ELs in Virginia was 75.4% for that same year. This rate was the lowest among all of the various subgroups in Virginia including students who are economically disadvantaged (83.1%) and students with disabilities (85.6%) (VDOE, 2015). According to Kohler and Lazarin (2007), poor educational achievement among ELs is linked to high school dropout rates *and* lower enrollment in higher education. Because of the predominance of Hispanics identified as ELs, EL success is intrinsically intertwined with overall Hispanic student achievement (Good & Masewicz & Vogel, 2010). With that said, more than 59% of Hispanic ELs are high school dropouts (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). In terms of higher education, only 10.4% of all undergraduate students are Hispanic compared to 69% of undergraduates that are White (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007).

College readiness. Other factors such as low rates of enrollment in gifted programs or advanced placement classes also illustrate the gap between ELs and non-ELs in schools. Kanno and Kangas (2014) suggest that ELs were about 45% less likely to enroll in college-preparatory classes than their non-EL peers. And in Callahan's (2005) study of a large rural high school in California, less than 2% of ELs took courses in high

school that would make them eligible for admission to a four-year college. It is the opinion of the researcher's own professional experience, that it has been very difficult to convince guidance counselors to enroll ELs in more advanced courses. Kanno and Kangas (2014) found that most school administrators, including guidance counselors, were reluctant to enroll ELs in these courses due to their concerns that these students would find the classes too challenging and in turn would affect these students' chances of graduating on time. In terms of reclassification of ELs to an English proficient status, Umansky and Reardon (2014) found that because of the lack of exposure to more academic rigorous classes at the high school level, many ELs fail to meet the reclassification criteria. Therefore, not only are ELs being denied access to college preparation classes that would help them after high school as many of their White, non-EL peers enroll in, this lack of exposure has also impacted their exposure to academic rigor needed to be reclassified as English proficient. Ultimately, a vicious cycle of tracking and remedial placements have continued to widen the gap between ELs and non-ELs, as well as contribute to the continual placement of certain students in low-tracking classes that are preventing them from being exposed to the material needed to make them proficient in English.

LTELs and the Achievement Gap

Differing from ELs as an entire group, LTELs are in a delicate position in U.S. schools. Many enter school at the primary levels and are identified as needing English Language Development (ELD) services typically designated for students with limited English language proficiency. By the time many ELs reach the fifth grade, they are

reclassified as formerly English Learners and are exited from any ELD programs they were receiving. Yet, for the majority of these ELs, they continue to be assessed as LEP as they enter middle and high school, hence the term "long-term" (Flores, Painter, Harlow-Nash, & Pachon 2009). This stagnation of English proficiency is directly related to academic achievement. According to the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, Flores et al. (2009) found, ELs that were not reclassified by 8th grade, were outperformed by non-ELs and reclassified ELs on math and reading assessments. In addition, LTELs were less likely to participate in college preparation classes such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes and are more likely to drop-out of high school than their non-EL, reclassified EL, and immigrant EL peers who were not born in the United States but enter U.S. schools upon arrival to the country (Olsen, 2010).

How have LTELs "gone under the radar" for so long without having their unique needs addressed? Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2012) refer to these students as an "Invisible Population." They have many characteristics of struggling students such as weak literacy skills, which are often attributed to their EL status. Most striking about these students is their weak academic literacy juxtaposed to their native-English oral skills. The ELD services these students receive in elementary school often contribute to their lack of ability to be reclassified (Olsen, 2010). Many have inconsistent ELD program experiences ranging from bilingual education to no ELD services at all (Menken et al., 2009). At the secondary level, these inconsistencies are more prevalent and more influential than ever because of the high stakes testing that is now a requirement for graduation in many states (Menken, 2009). The severity of the impact this achievement

gap has on LTELs coupled with the struggles that many LTELs face motivated me to explore this field further and the next section will discuss the purpose of the study.

Purpose of the Study

Extensive literature exists on what researchers, administrators, teachers, and parents believe to be contributing factors to why LTELs are underperforming in school. However, these students rarely voice their opinions regarding to what they attribute their challenges. The intended purpose of this study is to examine LTELs' perceptions on why they feel that they are struggling in school. The research question addresses the specific focus of the study.

Research Question

This dissertation aims to answer the following research question: What do LTELs perceive to be contributing factors related to their academic challenges?

The next chapter will provide an in depth review of the literature in the field, the theoretical frameworks that are the groundwork for this study, and the relationship between the literature and theory frame the research for this paper.

Chapter Two

This section will discuss the literature on factors that have contributed to the

achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs and the theoretical frameworks that guide

this research. The first section will discuss the roles that teacher quality, socioeconomic

status, and race play on the academic achievement of ELs. The second section will

discuss the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT), specifically

highlighting the importance of student voice in achievement gap research. Lastly, an

overview of Sociocultural theory will provide insight into the role rich learning

environments play on minority students' learning.

Contributing Factors of Achievement Gap

While the evidence for the existence of a gap in academic achievement between

ELs and non-ELs is apparent, specifically for long-term ELs, based on the data gathered,

the causes for the continued widening of this gap are more elusive. Poplin and Weeres

(1992) seminal work discussed students' perspectives on why they felt an achievement

gap existed in school. Figure 1 illustrates the seven major issues that researchers found to

be contributing factors to the achievement gap. While researchers have suggested several

possible correlated factors that contribute to this inequality, the most salient features in

current research include the impact of teacher quality, effects of low socioeconomic

status, and the ubiquitous presence of institutional racism that continues to plague U.S.

institutions, including public schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). This section will

discuss the roles teacher quality, socioeconomic status, and racism have played on the achievement gap.

Relationships	Race, Culture, and Social Class	Values
Teaching and Learning	Safety	Physical Environment
	Despair, hope, and the process of change	
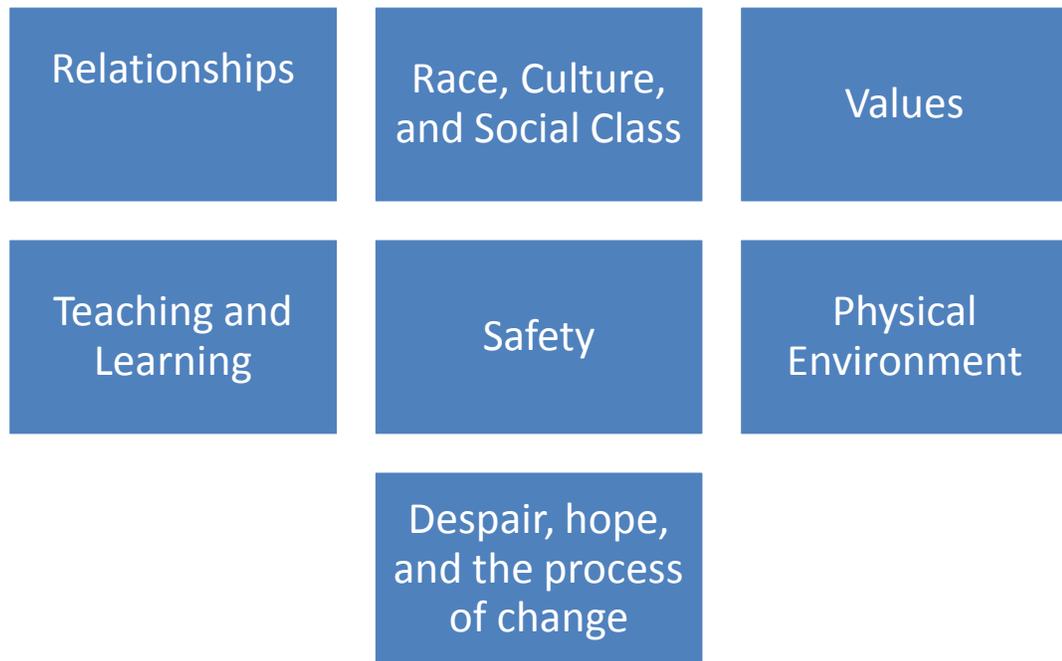
Figure 1. Major issues from inside the classroom.

Teacher quality. Low-qualified teachers are considered to have less than three years of teaching experience, only a Bachelor's degree, and are less likely to have certifications or endorsements in multiple areas. Furthermore, low-qualified teachers tend to come from less prominent teacher preparation institutes (Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015). Researchers find that low-qualified teachers are more likely to teach in schools with higher proportions of minority, poor, and low-performing students

(Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015). Furthermore, researchers have linked low-qualified teachers to poor student performance amongst minority groups, such as ELs (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2005). According to Barton (2004), researchers have found that minority and low-income students are more likely to be taught by teachers with fewer than three years of experience; also, minority students are taught by substitutes at more than double the rate of White students.

While not all ELs are provided with low-qualified teachers, many are taught by teachers who have not previously been exposed to teaching students whose first language is not English (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). Gandara and Contreras (2009) claim that while in some instances ELs might be exposed to high quality teachers, these teachers are often not sufficiently trained in teaching students about language and its use across genres and multiple disciplines. On the other hand, other studies have shown that teacher quality has little or no effect on student achievement but rather the type of instruction students receive plays a significant role on decreasing the gap between White and minority students (Desimone & Long, 2010). Studies have shown that a relationship does exist between teacher quality and time spent on instruction. These same low-qualified teachers, who spend less time on instruction, most often teach minority students (Kalogrides, Loeb, & Beteille, 2013).

Alternatively, teacher preparation institutes such as Teach for America, suggest that the key to closing the achievement gap primarily lies within teachers' attitudes towards students' abilities. One way to do this is to train and employ better teachers that command high expectations of students' abilities. These same teacher preparation

institutes have further suggested an improvement in the quality of the leaders who make decisions in schools and school districts while ensuring that teachers, principals, and parents expect the students to meet challenging academic standards (Yatvin, 2009). In other words, teachers of minority students, such as ELs, should hold these students to high academic expectations and encourage rigorous efforts to achieve these goals. It is clear that whether it is teacher credentials, time on instruction, or teachers' attitudes about the abilities of their students, that teachers play a significant role on the achievement of ELs.

Socioeconomic status. While teacher quality is one possible contributor to the achievement gap, socioeconomic status is often generally linked to various educational aspects, such as access to resources needed for students' success in school. A recent study finds the gap in standardized test scores between affluent and low income students has increased by about 40 percent since the 1960s, and the imbalance between rich and poor children in college completion has grown by about 50 percent since the late 1980s (Theoharis, 2010).

Rothstein (2004) suggests that school reform efforts alone are inadequate to overcome the social class characteristics that influence the achievement gap of poor and affluent students. He calls for public policy changes to address the social and economic conditions of families that influence the learning of their children, suggesting that as long as schools operate in isolation from parents and communities, the achievement of these students will continue to decrease (Rothstein, 2004).

While it is clear that poverty is related to academic achievement, it is important to also point out the role it plays on school-related factors as well. In schools where more than 75% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-lunch, 49% of those students enrolled in those schools are Hispanic and 88% of high-minority schools with a 90% minority population are high poverty schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Niehaus and Adelson (2014) found that 70% of ELs are enrolled in only 10% of the nation's schools and that these schools tend to be in urban areas where higher populations of minority students are living in poverty. Therefore, a disproportionate number of students from minority homes, such as Hispanics, are being taught at schools with a less diverse racial and socioeconomic population.

The link between socioeconomic factors and ELs is clear purely from the demographic. In the United States, an overrepresentation of minority children among the poor exists. According to the Pandya, McHugh, and Batalova (2015), in 2010, 39.4 percent of black children, 34 percent of Hispanic children and 38 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native children lived in poverty, which has been defined as an annual income of $22,113 that year for a family of four. Comparatively, about 18 percent of white, non-Hispanic children live in poverty.

Furthermore, disproportionate amounts of students who are living in poverty also have parents of immigrant status. The Pew Research Center study on poverty and immigration status (2013) reports that about 4.5 million children of all races born in the United States have at least one parent not legally in the country, and more than two-thirds of impoverished Hispanic children are the children of at least one immigrant parent. This

overrepresentation of minorities among the poor is subsequently manifested in the above-discussed studies focusing on economic status.

Race. While racial minority students are overrepresented as poor or underprivileged in the United States and both teacher quality and socioeconomic status are intertwined at the school level with more less-qualified teachers teaching at schools that serve predominately-underprivileged students, within this realm, race plays a distinct role that should be examined in the context of the achievement gap in education. However, to understand better the role of racism in educational settings, it is imperative that one of the theoretical frameworks of this paper be explored first: critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory originated from the Civil Rights Movements and from the onset, its focus has been on social justice, liberation, and political empowerment of minorities in the United States (Taylor, 1997). While the initial focus of this theory was the legal implications, it later evolved into a form of legal scholarship that attempts to understand the effects White supremacy plays on minority groups and the oppression this supremacy causes in our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). In terms of a theoretical framework, critical race theory examines the unjust and unequal distribution of power and the effects this distribution plays on legal, political, and educational consequences (Patton, Ranero, & Everett, 2011). McCoy (2014) suggests that there are key tenets to critical race theory that include but are not limited to permanence of racism, experiential knowledge, interest convergence theory, intersectionality, and commitment to social justice.

Permanence of racism can be explained as the ever-existing presence of racism in our society. According to Ladson-Billings (2013) racism is an ingrained part of U.S. society, so much so, that at times it seems invisible to those who perpetrate it, yet it governs all political, social, and economic domains. This can further be manifested into Peggy McIntosh's idea of "White Privilege" in which those of power and dominance (White people) do not see the unearned advantages they have based solely on race (2013).

Experiential knowledge refers to the concept of counter-storytelling or counter narratives and the essential role they place in contesting traditional methods of scholarship (McCoy, 2014). Counter-storytelling can take many forms such as counter narratives, family histories, biographies, or chronicles. Including counter-storytelling elements is essential to critical race theory as a methodology in educational research because it adds context to positivist perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Not only does this method of data gathering add context, it provides a voice to historically marginalized people (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

According to Taylor (2009) convergence theory is based on Marxist ideologies that suggest that upper and middle class people only tolerate lower class people's advances when it is to their own benefit. The originator of this theory, Derrick Bell, suggested that the advancement of People of Color only occurs when it aligns with the advancement of White people (1980). He uses *Brown vs. the Board of Education* as an example of convergence by pointing to two benefits obtained from this decision. Firstly, the decision would prove to the rest of the world that the United States was a world

leader that fought communism, and secondly, educating individuals in the south would move that region from an agrarian society to a more industrialized one; both outcomes would ultimately benefit those with political and economic power. Intersectionality suggests that while racism is the crux of many structural inequalities, it often intersects with other subordinated identities such as gender, language, and sexuality. Ladson-Billings (2013) warns that critical race theory should not be based on racism alone, rather it is a complex relationship with other oppressed identities and that this theory is strengthened because of this interconnectedness.

Lastly, a commitment to social justice is an integral part of critical race theory. Critical race theorists are committed to establishing a socially just society and educational system (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). According to Jones, Abes, & Quaye (2013), critical race theory attempts to eradicate racism completely and empower those of oppressed and marginalized groups. In sum, Ladson-Billings (1998) espouses that critical race theory "challenges the school environment to understand the ways in which racism is manifested in schools and society and to reveal the adverse effects of racism on student learning and development" (p. 20).

Critical Race Theory

Through the additional lens of critical race theory, a deeper perspective is gained on its relation to the education available to English Learners. Although critical race theory's origins were focused on the effects of racism on Black Americans in the United States, it can easily be applied to the unjust treatment of other minority groups such as Latinos and Hispanics. During the Civil Rights Movement of 1960s, Latinos in states

such as Texas battled against the segregation of schools and pushed for enforcement of the government's responsibility to provide equal and equitable resources to Latino students in the United States (Valenzuela, 1999). Often referred to as the Chicano Movement, Latinos in the United States faced similar educational and socioeconomic struggles as Blacks, and one outcome of this movement called on the desegregation of schools and access to equal educational opportunities that non-minority students received (Olsen, 1997). The Supreme Court case of *Brown vs. The Board of Education* desegregated schools in the United States; however, equitable education for non-White, non-English speaking students was not achieved. In fact, Latino students and ELs continue to receive a subpar education, evident from the achievement gap of these students and their White, English-speaking counterparts.

Two seminal pieces of work that illustrate the ramifications of the early Chicano movements and Civil Rights Movements on the educational opportunities future Latino and Hispanic students have experienced in the United States are Dr. Laurie Olsen's *Made in America* (1997) and Dr. Angela Valenzuela's *Subtractive Schooling* (1999). These books are both ethnographies that examine the educational experiences of Latino youth in U.S. high schools. Both also highlight the inequalities in resources available to these students, the disparity in teacher quality of those who teach these students, and overall academic achievement differences.

With regard to ELs, there is an inherent segregation and stigma involved with being labeled as deficient in English language skills as the U.S. public school system refers to these students. For example, the term "Limited English Proficient," often

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creates a microcosmic school within a school for these students. Perceptions about these students' abilities (or inabilities) often focus on their linguistic abilities in English. Olsen (1997) reports on several teachers who tend to hold negative perceptions towards their EL students' abilities in general. Valenzuela builds upon these teachers' negative perceptions and postulates that a consequence of these perceptions is often a non-existent student-teacher relationship. Furthermore, studies have shown that teachers, especially those who are White, often have lower educational expectations for ELs and other minority students (Marx, 2000; Terrill & Mark, 2000). Niehaus and Adelson (2014) found that teachers of ELs reported that compared to non-ELs, ELs had fewer adaptive skills, higher externalizing problems, and more overall problems learning. In one study, a researcher, compared the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of groups of White pre-service teachers and Hispanic pre-service teachers, showing that Hispanics believed their Mexican-origin students were capable of succeeding academically, while their White peers indicated relatively lower expectations and predicted students' school failure (Jimenez, David, Pacheco, Risko, Pray, Fagan, & Gonzales, 2015). Jimenez et al. (2015) stresses the importance of an additive schooling model wherein teachers build on the linguistic strengths of ELs to improve academic achievement while diminishing the current deficit model of focusing on the weaknesses ELs face.

Linguistic discrimination is in itself a form of racism that prevents those who are not yet proficient in English to be denied equitable educational opportunities as their English-speaking, White peers. A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center (2013) found that almost two-thirds of white and black respondents thought lack of proficiency

in English was the primary barrier to academic achievement for Hispanics in the United States. This has led to the overwhelming perception that Hispanic children, ELs specifically, are underachieving because of their inability to speak English (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). Gandara and Contreras (2009) argue that while English language acquisition may be a challenge for many Hispanics, and certainly for ELs, it is not the core educational challenge for this subgroup, and consequences of racism play a more influential role on the educational achievement of these students.

Referring back to the 1974 Supreme Court case *Lau vs. Nichols,* the federal government ruled that all students must have equal access to school curriculum by providing instructional programs to "rectify the language deficiency" of these students (Crawford, 2004). Many states implemented this requirement by providing instruction to ELs to improve their English and therefore allow access to grade-level curriculum. Yet, this implementation model neglected to capitalize on the students' linguistic abilities in their native language.

Sleeter in Valenzuela's *Subtractive Schooling* (1999) suggests that two levels of racism exist. The first is economical in which one group violently conquers another group and forces their cultural beliefs and values on the conquered group. The other level of racism she suggests involves the conquering group treating the conquered group as subordinates and continually reinforcing their dominance through violence and intimidation and by assaulting the conquered group's culture and identity. Valenzuela (1999) builds on Sleeter's first level of racism with the theory of *subtractive schooling* whereby ELs' native cultures and languages are stripped from their identities and these

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students are forced to adapt to American cultures and customs in place of their own. Subtractive schooling is one form of institutional racism that comes into play with English Learners. Additionally, many ELs come from countries that were conquered in the past by western English speaking countries, and while now these students live in the United States, they are expected to "replace" English for their home languages and "American" culture for their own (Olsen, 1997), a practice that pervaded their home country when conquered.

More recently, many highly Hispanic-populated states, for example Arizona, have furthered these racist sentiments by the adaptation of an English-only movement with the prohibition of bilingual education for students whose first language is not English and an unrealistic model that gives ELs only one year to be reclassified as English proficient (Umansky & Reardon, 2014). In contrast to the copious amounts of research on the benefits of a bilingual education (Thomas & Collier, 2002), schools in these states have often replaced bilingual instruction with only English instruction and once again a submersion approach to these students' linguistic and, ultimately, educational achievement. Again, this deficit model and forced acculturation of these students is one that can be examined through the lens of critical race theory and suggests that institutionalized racism and lack of equitable schooling based on race often results in a gap in the academic achievement of minority groups like Blacks and Hispanics in the United States.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT)

Another critical theoretical framework that is necessary for understanding the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs is sociocultural theory. Similar to critical race theory, sociocultural theory extends into various factors of the achievement gap such as the role of teachers and instruction, as well as understanding the role societal and cultural norms affect learning. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that humans' language and thinking was linked to their social origins and that culture affects various mechanisms of human nature and development. Vygotsky posits that language is the most powerful and pervasive of all of human creations and that through the systems we use to communicate and make meaning humans are also mediating their thinking (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). It is through participation in cooperative productive activities that culturally valued skills and linguistic knowledge are transmitted and improved upon over succeeding generations, as individuals appropriate them and employ them to use as they participate in these activities (Tomasello, 1999). Therefore, learning is an inseparable part of participation in communities of practice, as is the development of one's personal identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It follows, therefore, that learning does not occur as the result of teacher transmitting knowledge to students and students copying and memorizing; rather, it requires the learner to actively take up, transform, and appropriate knowledge (Haneda, 2014). While this idea is theoretical, Vygotsky believed in the importance of merging theory and practice so that theory informs practice and practice informs theory. The relationship is dialectical and he referred to this concept as praxis (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). In terms of language acquisition, Lantolf and Poehner (2014) consider sociocultural theory as a lens that not only can be used to understand second language

acquisition, but to deploy principles and concept of the theory with the intention of promoting second language development through appropriate instructional practice.

With the understanding of the importance that culture and language play on an individual's learning process; educators can be more sensitive not to exclude students by relying only on the dominant culture and language as the only framework for instruction. Jimenez et al. (2015) suggests that educators of students whose first language is not English, such as ELs, take part in various professional development workshops that focus on including culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy, both approaches derived from sociocultural theory. Additionally, educators must be able to utilize students' cultural backgrounds to help build background knowledge and to be able to provide appropriate scaffolds for learning new material.

The concept of tapping into students' individual culture without trying to replace it with the dominant culture, for example American culture, is referred to as *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). They even go on to suggest that students from different cultures and languages cannot make learning meaningful without being able to access their funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). A culturally sensitive teacher is able to effectively access students' funds of knowledge and help students to build connections to the materials presented in class. Orosco and Klingner (2010) suggests that in order for teachers to employ these strategies while working with ELs, practitioners must develop an educational context. Furthermore, he posits that educational context is grounded in the belief that "learners be provided with high-quality instruction with the most effective practices that are not only based on, but also

incorporate, these learners' cultural and linguistic heritage and experiences that facilitate learning and development" (p. 266). Therefore, the belief that all students, including ELs, possess a vast and rich knowledge base, which stems from their cultural experiences, is an important aspect for educators of culturally and linguistically diverse students to understand in order for these students to perform highly in school.

Attempts to Close Achievement Gap for ELs

Federal reform. While gaps between ELs and non-ELs long existed before the enactment of NCLB, NCLB has brought greater attention to these gaps and changes to NCLB are needed to reduce or eliminate the current academic achievement gaps that exist. In 2007, a congressional hearing took place in Washington, D.C., led by Cornelia Ashby, Director of Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues for the Government Accountability Office, and Peter Zamora, co-chair of the Hispanic Education Coalition (Congressional Hearing on Impact of NCLB on ELLs, 2007). This latter organization unites 25 local and national organizations in support of improved educational opportunities for Latino students and families, to discuss the impact NCLB has had on English Learners. The panel made some recommendations based on their assumption that government—federal, state, and local—must commit to better serving the EL student population. They warned that if the large and growing population of ELs in our public schools does not improve its academic achievement levels, NCLB will not meet its goals and the United States' economic competitiveness will suffer. The following are the recommendations made by the panel to address the No Child Left Behind Act implementation concerns (2007):

- The U.S. Department of Education must fully enforce NCLB assessment provisions for ELs and provide effective and ongoing technical assistance in the development of appropriate assessments to state education agencies.

- States must focus attention and resources upon developing and implementing valid and reliable content assessments for ELs, preferably in the native language.

- A reauthorized NCLB should establish a separate funding stream to assist states in developing and implementing appropriate academic assessments for ELs.

- A reauthorized NCLB should require that states that have significant EL populations from a single language group develop valid and reliable content assessments designed specifically for members of that language group, i.e. incorporating first language knowledge.

- States, schools and school districts must implement the most effective instructional practices that will provide EL students with the best opportunities to develop both English proficiency and content area knowledge.

- The federal government and states must allocate significant resources to support the certification of teachers trained in best instructional practices for ELs.

- The federal government, states, school districts, and schools must allocate resources for the professional development of the best instructional practices for ELs for all teachers who teach ELs.

- The federal government must fund scientifically-based research and disseminate findings on best effective practices for EL student instruction.

- Federal, state, and local school officials must ensure that ELs are fully and appropriately included in NCLB accountability.

While these changes would indeed bring support to ELs, once again, LTELs were not included in these recommendations. Recently, Congressional representatives and senators are discussing additional recommendations to restructure NCLB or completely overhaul it.. Interestingly, the Senate's suggested Every Child Succeeds Act to replace NCLB clearly addresses the needs of ELs and specifically focuses on the needs of long-term ELs. Similar to NCLB (Every Child Succeeds Act, 2015), this bill provides resources to states and school districts to establish, implement, and sustain high-quality language instruction educational programs designed to ensure that English learners develop both English language proficiency and meet the same challenging academic standards that all children are expected to meet. Under Title III funding, the bill requires states to measure school districts' progress in these areas, and provide assistance and support to those in which language instruction educational programs are not effective. In addition, the bill also provides incentives to states and school districts to implement policies and practices that will lead to significant improvements in the instruction of English learners, including effective professional development for teachers, parents, and community in engagement practices. Most interestingly, the bill affirms the state's responsibility to establish and implement statewide entrance and exit procedures for English learner programs, and "provides additional information to states and school districts to help meet the needs of long-term English learners and English learners with a disability" (p. 4). Therefore, changes to NCLB and the possible replacement of it

altogether is promising for all ELs, specifically, LTELs, but is still not the sole solution to bridging the achievement gap. Additional local reforms are needed to further help ELs succeed academically and programmatic changes are needed to address specifically the needs of LTELs.

  School reform. NCLB held state governments accountable for the assessment and achievement of all students. Within states' responsibilities were particular requirements for the instruction and assessment of ELs. Again, according to NCLB (2001) states must identify, assess, and show evidence of achievement specifically for ELs. Furthermore, states remain responsible for providing appropriate and adequate instruction to recently arrived EL students so they will gain English language skills and be able to master content knowledge in reading/language arts and other subjects. Ultimately, the interpretation and implementation of enabling ELs to be successful in school is left to the states and school districts, who will decide what an "effective" program entails.

  Many states with high EL populations, such as California and New York, provide a variety of programs such as dual-language immersion, bilingual education, and sheltered instruction to serve ELs (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011). Similarly, Virginia, a state with a growing EL population, offers a variety of programs to meet the needs of ELs (Virginia Department of Education, 2015). However, the effectiveness of these programs varies based on the needs of the ELs they intend to serve.

  While states differ on their interpretation of how to implement instruction for ELs, no state, until recently, has specified services that would directly support the needs

of LTELs. More often than not, these students have received the same services, if any, that newcomer ELs receive, which does not adequately address the needs of LTELs (Menken, K., Kleyn, T., & Chae, N., 2012). Dr. Kate Menken and Dr. Laurie Olsen are both experts in LTEL research. Dr. Menken is based in New York, one of the largest states serving ELs in the United States and Dr. Olsen researches in California, the state with the largest EL population. Both researchers have studied the characteristics, needs, and challenges of LTELs. Recently, both researchers have made recommendations and suggestions for effective programs that would address the unique needs of ELs at the secondary level.

Based on the research that demonstrated that LTEL students had weak literacy in both English and their home languages, Menken and her team designed a program to address their biliteracy (2009). Until this intervention, New York high schools and EL programs did not differentiate the needs of LTELs in their native language. Previously, if any native language support was given it was in the form of foreign language classes where LTELs were mixed with students who were non-native speakers. The LTELs in this study were primarily Spanish speaking and therefore the interventions focused on the biliteracy in Spanish and English. According to Menken (2009):

> LTELs benefit from high school programs in which academic literacy
> skills are taught explicitly in both English and the students' native
> languages, and where native language arts classes focused on native
> language literacy development are offered to LTELs. Furthermore, we
> recommended that explicit literacy instruction become part of all content-

area subjects, such as Math, Science, and Social Studies, in addition to

ESL and native language arts classes, and that a school's approach to

literacy instruction must be uniform and coordinated across all subject

areas. (p. 9)

Thus, the program included three specific course structures for LTELs in ninth and tenth grade. First, students would be enrolled in Spanish for Native Speakers Language Arts class with the intention of developing strong foundational knowledge in Spanish academic language and literacy. Second, students received ELD services but were separated from newly arrived ELs so that the instruction could focus on academic literacy. Lastly, content-area classes focused on the content knowledge with the addition of content-specific literacy learning. Teachers involved in all of these programs received specific ongoing professional development and one-on-one trainings that emphasized best practices and strategies to be used in their classes.

The findings from this intervention suggest that LTELs who were placed in these classes had gains in various aspects of academics based on pre-test and post-test results. First, students' grade level reading abilities showed an improvement. On average, students went from being three grade levels behind in reading to an average of two grade levels after one year of interventions. Second, students' English language proficiency in reading and writing was measured. Students gained an average of one hundred points on the reading and writing section of this test, which propelled the LTELs from an intermediate level of English proficiency to advanced or proficient levels. Therefore, the interventions showed gains in improving students' literacy and transitioning students

from intermediate levels of English language proficiency to being advanced or even reclassified as former LEP.

In addition to English literacy, this intervention also included an integral component of improving Spanish literacy. Based on Cummins' "Threshold Hypothesis" the linguistic transfer of literacy skills is more prominent when literacy in the student's native language (L1) is well developed and therefore those literacy skills are transferred into the target language (L2) literacy (Crawford, 2004). Commonly, language teachers refer to this process as language transfer; however, transfer is only beneficial in a second language if the learner has acquired literacy skills in L1. For many LTELs, as mentioned previously, oral skills in L1 are quite developed which correlates to their oral skills of English, which are also developed. However, LTELs lack developed literacy skills in L1, which many hypothesize as one aspect that hinders their performance in reading and writing in English. Therefore, an effort to enhance LTELs' literacy skills in Spanish would enhance their literacy skills in English. The mandatory participation in Spanish for Native Speakers' classes by LTELs was with this eventual outcome in mind. Once again, pre and post-test scores were used to measure student achievement in Spanish literacy before and after the students participated in this class. Students' in these classes showed gains in their Spanish literacy skills, whereas, students who did not participate actually showed a loss in their Spanish literacy skills.

In sum, this three-prong intervention was aimed at ultimately transitioning LTEL students from a fossilized state of intermediate proficiency, that they had remained at for several years, to improvements in areas of literacy that would lead them to being

reclassified to an English proficient status. Although the research was done in only two schools with high LTEL populations, the initial results were promising, suggesting that through a combination of native language instruction, custom-tailored English literacy instruction, and content-area literacy initiatives, students were able to progress in their proficiency levels after years of stagnation.

Dr. Laurie Olsen of *Californians Together* (2010), an English Learner statewide coalition of parents, teachers, education advocates and civil rights groups, has done extensive research on LTELs in California public schools. In her studies of effective programs to close the achievement gap for these students, Dr. Olsen looks at four different program models that some California high schools have incorporated to best serve LTELs and address the "entrenched non-participation and non-engagement that frequently characterizes Long-Term English Learners" (p. 16). All the programs designed to meet LTEL needs incorporated similar key components, which included a focus on oral language, student engagement, academic language, and expository text in reading and writing. In addition, all programs incorporated routines of goal setting, improving study habits, and the use of empowering pedagogy that includes voices of those who have been marginalized in our mainstream U.S. education system. While these components were included in all of the program models, they were implemented in various methods.

The first high school adapted a program that first focused on the professional development of all teachers in advancing English language development. Different content areas focused on specific language functions within their concentrations, for

example, the social studies and science departments decided to focus on reading and writing compound and complex sentence structures. Furthermore, all teachers were expected to incorporate writing and reading throughout their curriculum including Physical Education and Fine Arts teachers who used methods such as journaling and writing critiques. In addition to support in the content areas, English Development classes also focused heavily on reading and writing strategies. One of the most important initiatives was independent reading or silent sustained reading. Students were given some freedom in their reading selections and were required to read a minimum of one hour every night as well as respond in journals to their readings.

The second high school program was the creation of a class entitled "Mainstream English Learner Support." The classes were designed to address the academic language needs of LTELs through the collaboration between English learner curriculum and English language arts standards. Students in these classes were also simultaneously enrolled in grade-level English classes, yet, the focus of the specially designed classes was academic language related to language arts and language skills related to various literature genres, while the grade-level English classes focused on the content such as themes or figurative language.

The third program similarly created a class that would uniquely serve LTELs' academic language needs: Academic Language and Support (ALAS). One major underpinning of the course is that instead of a remedial reading course, the curriculum is frontloaded to support the core English classes as well as to support other academic subjects. One stringent component of this program is that when possible, the same

teacher would teach LTELs in this ALAS class as well as teach them in their mainstream English class. By doing so, the teacher can pre-teach relevant vocabulary and literacy skills in the ALAS class and cover the material as dictated by the curriculum in the English class. The last program, was very similar to the one developed by Menken and her colleagues in New York. LTELs received ELD courses designed to focus on academic language and college readiness. The same students were enrolled in an innovative Spanish class that prepares students for bilingual careers. Similar to other schools mentioned above, professional development in reading instruction across the curriculum is also an integral component.

While the programs are still in their infancy, it can be very difficult to determine how effective they have been in closing all the achievement gaps of LTELs. Recent results have shown that students in *all* of the above programs have shown a significant increase in their reading frequency, advancement in reading levels, and improvements in writing. Additionally, LTELs in these programs are being reclassified as English proficient, emerging from their fossilized intermediate status, at a faster rate than LTELs who are not in a specifically designed program. Lastly, LTELs are showing an average increase of 88 points on California's state English language arts exam and higher rates of passing on the California Exit Exams. The results are promising and suggest that specifically designed courses to address LTEL needs fostered by a knowledgeable and trained faculty can prove to support these students' academic success.

Curriculum reform. While program development and educator training is imperative to improving long-term ELs academic achievement and closing the

achievement gap, we must remember the importance of incorporating these students'

cultural experiences into their learning experiences. Under the theoretical framework of

critical race theory while incorporating sociocultural practices, one practice that can be

implemented in classes with long-term ELs is the infusion of critical literacy into the

curriculum. By including new literacies that include various cultural perspectives,

alternatives to the mainstream and dominant forms, an environment of inclusion is

promoted (Street, 2003). For example, most students in English classes read classic

literature written by western, white, male authors that focus on western, dominant culture.

Critical literacies, including new literacies, suggest that teachers understand diversity

perspectives that call attention to the way language creates social identities and include

multiple voices in texts and veering from only the dominant forms (Behrman, 2006).

Teachers can promote these perspectives in all content-areas allowing for students of all

backgrounds, including LTELS, to feel more included in the curriculum and perhaps

maintain their interest in school, which, as Olsen (2010) reminds us, disengagement with

the school is a common characteristic of LTELs.

Role of Student Voice in Research

One of the strongest principles of Critical Race Theory is the notion of counter-

storytelling. Counter-storytelling or counter narratives offer the perspectives of those

typically marginalized or oppressed to have a voice in the research (Cook-Sather, 2006).

Students' voices in the research can provide a variety of insight into better understanding

phenomena such as those related to academic achievement. Smyth (2006) suggests that

student voice can greatly impact teachers' beliefs, expectations, and attitudes towards

students. Within that realm of trust, student voice can also yield reform. Allowing students' voices to be heard allows them to be active participants in their education and engage in research and the distribution of power (Mitra, 2009). According to Bron and Veugelers (2014), student voice also helps to focus on diversity of practice and supports social justice and demographic values. Bron and Veugelers (2014) warn that while marginalized youth are often the intended beneficiaries of various educational policies and reforms, they are usually not involved in the development of the policies. Cook-Sather (2006) also suggests that authorizing students' perspectives can improve educational practices because teachers, parents, and administration hear the students' perspectives and can ultimately change current practice. In sum, students' voices not only add a powerful layer to educational research but also empower students. Figure 2 shows the relationship between Critical Race Theory, Sociocultural Theory, Achievement Gap, and student voice research interconnect with research on Long-Term ELs.

In this chapter, I have examined the various theoretical frameworks that are the groundwork for this study. Achievement gap literature illustrates the ever-widening gap that exists between ELs and non-ELs in US public schools, especially in the areas of reading and math. Critical Race Theory suggests that ELs are marginalized in US schools because of their race and ethnicities, and these students are not provided opportunities to create counternarratives as to the ways in which they are being institututionally marginalized. Sociocultural Theory provides insight into the importance of students' languages and cultures play on their educational experience and how teachers should incorporate these aspects into students' learning. Lastly, student voice literature is an

important mode of reporting data because it allows for the students to feel empowered and allows them for an opportunity to contribute to a counternarrative. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology for this research.

Figure 2. Theoretical frameworks relationship.

<div align="center">**Chapter Three**</div>

Methodology and Research Design

      I employed a qualitative research approach for this study to capture long-term ELs' perceptions of their academic challenges. Qualitative research is intended to help the researcher better understand a phenomenon which can emerge through providing voices to those individuals who are likely not to be heard (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research can have various designs; the design for this study is based in CRT. This model attempts to explain how students' ethnicities shape their perceptions about learning (den Brok and Levy, 2005). In this research, the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Sociocultural Theory are used to identify and address social issues. By providing an opportunity to express their perceptions, contributions to a counter narrative was created that is often an important tenet of Critical Race Theory. The creation of a counter narrative through students' voices was the medium used to investigate the following research question: What do LTELs perceive to be contributing factors related to their academic success/challenges? Figure 3 illustrates the relationship of the data collection and analysis within a CRT qualitative approach.
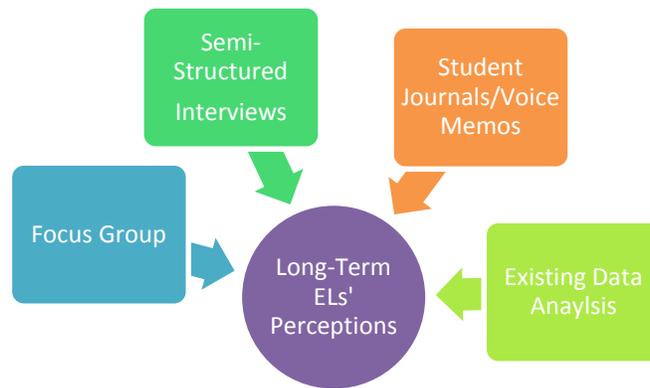
Figure 3. Relationship of data collection.

Overview of Data Collection Instruments

The following section will describe the methods of data collection employed in this research.

Pre-existing data. Each school system has a wide range of data on students in their district or county. This data can vary from demographic information to test performance. Large data such as school district data provides a larger sample set than those that are involved in interviews, for example. Additionally, this data allowed me to explore descriptive statistics about this population including percentages of LTELs in the setting, the percentage of LTELS at the various LEP levels, the percentage of LTELS at each grade level, and the percentage of LTELs that are failing one or more classes. I used this data not only to find participants for the study but to explore their demographic information and academic performance as well.

Semi-structured interviews. Interviewing is an important qualitative research tool which enables the researcher to understand better the participants' views of the world

through the participants' words. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that interviews attempt to provide insight into the everyday lived experiences of subjects from their own perspectives. Interviews will allow the participants to share their perspectives in more detail and in more depth. Patton (1990) states:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we
>
> cannot directly observe … We cannot observe feelings, thoughts,
>
> and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at
>
> some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that
>
> preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how
>
> people have organized the world and its meanings they attach
>
> to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions
>
> about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to
>
> allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

The interviews were semi-structured because they were conducted in a fashion that focused on certain themes, however, both the participants and I provided additional information or questions that were not necessarily designed before the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interviews in this study focused on the participants' perceptions about why they feel they face challenges in school.

Focus group. Focus groups are an additional data collection method often used in qualitative research. While it does involve the researcher interviewing the participants, it differs in the data collection is with a group of participants simultaneously. Creswell (2008) suggests that focus groups provide an additional advantage over one-on-one

interviews in that participants are provided opportunities to interact with each other and often encourage a cooperative, open dialogue. Creswell (2008) advises that focus groups are most advantageous when four to six participants are involved. Therefore, I designed two focus groups for this study. The first focus group had four participants and the second focus group had the remaining four participants. In the focus group sessions, I sought to expand upon some of the central themes that emerged from the one-on-one interviews as well as provide additional insight on the participants' perceptions.

Journals. Journals are a data collection tool used to gather participants' firsthand experiences and narratives. These personal narratives can provide field notes for the researcher and capture the participants' candid feelings and personal reflections on a specific topic (Creswell & Plano, 2011). In this specific research design, journals provided me with further insight into the participants' perspectives without my direct involvement. I provided the participants with two journal prompts: one after the interview and one after the focus group session. The prompts were in English and Spanish and the students had the option of providing a written response (handwritten or typed) or a verbal response in which they could record a voice memo.

Theoretical framework for research design. In Poplin and Weeres (1992), the researchers noted the importance of having voices from "the inside" be heard when it comes to students' academic achievement. I wanted to maximize the opportunities for students' voices to be heard in my research and therefore asked open-ended questions about students' perceptions with the intent to create an organic, open dialogue without any preexisting notions of why I felt these students faced challenges. In authorizing the

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students' voices and providing broad, open-ended questions, I allowed the students to share their narratives in a variety of ways: one-on-one with me, collectively with their peers, and individually through their journal prompts.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section will describe how I collected the data based on each tool used and then how I analyzed the data. As a teacher at the research site, I had access to pre-existing data for the county in which the school is located. The data I used included demographic information such as age, grade, LEP levels, and years in U.S. schools. This data also provided information on the number of classes students were failing as well as the type of classes they were failing (math, science, social studies, or language arts). I used this data 1) to find participants that met the intended criteria and 2) to gather descriptive statistics on the overall LTEL population at this setting. I intended to use this large data set to provide background information on the LTEL population in this particular setting and provide a broad context of the participants' current educational environment.

The interviews were conducted with eight participants. I chose participants based on their LTEL status and additional criteria discussed in the participants section below. I accessed this information through the pre-existing data provided by the county. The site where the interview was held has "supplemental periods" which are often referred to as study hall or flex hours in which students do not receive direct instruction from the teachers, but are provided opportunities to do missing work or enrichment activities. The participants met with me during their supplemental periods for these interviews so that no

direct instruction was missed. They provided their permission to record the sessions on

the researchers' iPad. The audio recorder program "Recorder" was used to record the

sessions and the participants were given a pseudonym for each audio file they recorded.

The interviews were semi-structured. I asked two questions related to why the

participants felt they have difficulty in school. Additional questions arose based on the

participants' responses. I wrote an analytic memo after each interview was completed

reflecting on the initial reactions of the interview and possible insight or additional

questions arising from the interview (Maxwell, 2013). After the interviews were

completed, I transcribed the interviews. First, I coded the transcripts using In Vivo

coding. This coding allowed me to keep the integrity of the students' voices by selecting

quotes from the transcripts that I determined were salient or prominent throughout the

text. For the second coding process, I chose to use Value coding. Saldaña (2009)

suggests that values coding is applied to qualitative research because it can reflect the

participants' perspectives of views on a topic. Value coding has various constructs but I

decided to code the transcripts based on primarily three constructs: beliefs, personal

values, and attitudes. In conjunction with the transcriptions, the memos helped to weave

the salient codes and assertion developments into themes (Saldaña, 2009). I analyzed the

codes from these transcripts for emerging themes.

The focus group sessions were held in two different sessions with two different

sets of participants upon the completion of the interviews. The participants were the

same participants from the interviews. In each session, additional follow-up questions

pertaining to the participants' responses from the interviews were asked to the focus

group. The researcher recorded the sessions on the iPad. The focus group sessions were also conducted during the supplemental periods mentioned earlier and lasted approximately 45 minutes each session. I wrote an analytic memo after each focus group session to reflect on particular reactions I had from the focus groups. The session was then transcribed and the same coding process as implemented in the interviews was done in the focus groups.

For the third data stream, students took the opportunity to reflect on their academic challenges through journal entries. The same interview participants completed two journal prompts. The first prompt occurred directly after the participant's one-on-one interview, and the second prompt happened after the focus group session. The participants had two weeks to complete the entries upon receiving the prompt. The entries could be handwritten or typed or a third option of providing a orally recorded response was permitted. I collected the responses and quanitatively analyzed them by using both In Vivo coding and Value coding.

Once both sets of codes were completed, I combined the codes for both data sets and began to collapse similar codes into categories and subcategories. I accomplished this by color-coding various codes using an Excel spreadsheet. For example, I highlighted in red codes that pertained to school. Because some categories, for example school, could further be broken down into smaller subsets, I created additional subcategories such as teachers, environment, and content. Each of these codes was also color-coded and grouped based on which category was the best fit. From these

subcategories, I was able to see connections between certain subcategories and

relationships within categories and then I was able to find emerging themes.

Participants

The participants for this study were from a largely EL-populated high school in

the mid-Atlantic region. I chose the participants using a purposeful sampling or

purposeful selection because I intentionally selected individuals to participate in the

research (Creswell, 2008). The criteria for the participation was that the student must be

an LTEL who ranged in age from 14-20 years old, currently labeled as a ninth grader,

currently failing two or more classes, currently enrolled in school, has an LEP level of 3

or 4, and is not documented as having specific cognitive, behavioral, or emotional

disabilities. In addition to the aforementioned criteria, I required both parental consent

and the students' assent to participate in the study. For the interviews, I interviewed eight

participants. Four of the participants were male and four were female. Table 1 includes

the demographic information on the participants in this study.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

# of Participants	Data Collection Method	Gender	Grades
8	Interviews	Equal male to female ratio	9th
4	Focus group session #1	Equal male to female ratio	9th
4	Focus group session #2	(same participants from interviews)	9th

		(same participants from the interviews)	9th
8	Journal Entries		

Setting

The setting was a suburban high school in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. North Shore High School (a pseudonym) is a high school in one of the largest public school districts in the state. The school is one of the oldest schools (opened in 1972) in the county. This number of students attending North Shore High has steadily increased over the past five years (Virginia Department of Education, 2015) and the current enrollment for 2015-2016 school year was 2442. The demographics of North Shore are 22% white, 18% black, and 47% Hispanic, and 10% identified as other (Prince William County Schools, 2015). The demographics of the administration are 60% white and 40% black, and the teaching staff is 80% white and 20% is non-white. Fifty-two percent of the student population is on free/reduced lunch (Prince William County Schools, 2015). The EL population of the school is equally diverse. At the time of the study, North Shore High School had 501 ELs enrolled who were currently receiving EL services. Another 199 former ELs attend North Shore High School and do not receive direct EL services, but an ELD teacher who works at the school continuously monitors them. Of the EL population at North Shore, 68% of the students are considered to LTELs. This percentage is based on the number of years a student has been labeled as an EL but remains to be reclassified as English proficient.

Validity

I took many measures to ensure that I completed the study with full integrity and fidelity. The most significant threat to this study is researcher bias. As a teacher and researcher, I found that it was very difficult to separate those two responsibilities I have from each other. I attempted to conduct my research without any preconceived notions, and I do not believe that I imposed my own personal beliefs on to the participants or influenced their responses in any way. However, I empathized with the participants as they shared particularly emotional situations, and thus their responses affected me emotionally. Maxwell (2013) claims that a qualitative researcher should divulge any possible research biases, because validity in qualitative research is achieved through integrity as opposed to objectivity. By disclosing my personal biases, I attempt to address possible reactions or reflections about the data collected, although I was mindful not to let my personal biases affect the responses of the participants in any way, and maintain the integrity of the research conducted.

I took additional measures as well to not pose threats to the validity of the findings. The first measure to ensure the validity of the data was the inclusion of rich data collection. Maxwell (2013) suggests with interviews and focus groups that the researcher transcribes data verbatim. This process eliminates any subjectivity that notetaking alone might introduce. Secondly, after each interview, I wrote an analytic memo, which reflected my thoughts about the interview and initial responses about it. When I met with the participants a second time for the focus group, I shared my analytic memo from their individual memo with them. This technique of respondent validation is

an effective way of ruling out that I might have misinterpreted what the participants shared with me (Maxwell, 2013). Thirdly, I incorporated a triangulation approach to gathering data. I used three data streams to explore the research question of this study in order to reduce certain biases that occurred by using only one method. Lastly, I shared my initial and second coding, categories, and themes with a colleague of mine who is not familiar with the topic of this study. I did this to have someone with more objectivity on the topic look at the data and perhaps find any gaps or underlying themes that I missed.

Summary

This study was a qualitative research design authorizing students' voices to provide opportunities to create a counter narrative with the intent to gain more of an understanding of long-term ELs' perceptions of contributing factors to their academic challenges in school. The design used three data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and journal responses to gain insight into the perceptions these students have on why they are struggling in school. I used both In Vivo coding and Value coding to code, categorize, and search for emerging themes in the data. Lastly, authorizing these students' voices in the research provided an opportunity for these students' narratives to be heard and to contribute to their overall educational experiences.

Chapter Four

I designed this study to provide LTELs with an opportunity to share their perceptions on why they felt they face challenges in school. Through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and journal responses, students discussed their perceptions openly. Staying true to CRT, I created a counter-narrative that authorized these students' voices in a reflection of the struggles they encounter. The following sections will discuss the context of the research in more detail, recount the data collection procedures used, explain the data analysis process, and discuss findings from the data analysis.

Context

School district. North Shore High School is part of the second largest public school district in this mid-Atlantic state, Prince William Public Schools. According to the county's website, Prince William Public School boasts a student enrollment of approximately 87,000 students. Of these 87,000 students, approximately 32% are identified as white, 32% are Latino, and 20% are black. A racially diverse student population is often coupled with an economically diverse population. Approximately 37.5% of the student population in Prince William Public Schools is economically disadvantaged. Lastly, the EL population of the county is approximately 21% of the total student population. According to the Department of EL Programs and Instruction for the county, the mission of this department is as follows:

> [The office] oversees and maintains services provided to English Learners (ELs) and immigrant youth in support of state and federal regulations. The main

functions are to provide comprehensive registration services and ensure high quality school-based programs that assist ELs to reach proficiency in English while meeting and exceeding state content standards. Central Registration Services responds to requests for information and assesses for EL Program eligibility. Instructional Services supports educators in implementing best practice techniques for ELs. Translation Services facilitates communication with families of ELs.

ELs' academic achievement has been a particular focus of the county for the past three years specifically. The attention to this student population stems from a federal investigation by the US Department of Justice in 2011 that led to an investigation on the infringement of ELs' rights to an equitable education in the county. Various violations of ELs' rights were found and the county signed an agreement with the Department of Justice that outlined specific measures to be taken to ensure that ELs were receiving equitable instruction. Specifically, funds were to be allocated for resources designed for ELs, minimum time requirements were in place allotted to EL instruction based on proficiency levels, and all teachers were provided professional development trainings on EL instruction and were required to show evidence of the implementation of these strategies in their classroom instruction. School administration was also tasked with evaluating teachers on key indicators outlined by the Department of Justice agreement, such as ensuring teachers allowed students to use native language, differentiating instruction based on English proficiency levels, and requiring teachers provided multiple opportunities for ELs to practice language skills in the classroom.

Not only did this agreement with the Department of Justice dictate to school administrators how teachers were to instruct and support ELs, the agreement also outlined how ELs were to receive instructional services, the minimum required minutes of service, the type of services they were to receive, and which teachers could provide these services. This allocation plan, as the Department of Justice referred to it, was born out of the county's lack of a standardized EL program. Prince William County Schools are site-based managed, therefore potentially every school in the county can decide what type of EL services they choose to implement and these programs can vary from school to school based on the discretion of the school administration. In an attempt to standardize some of the services ELs were receiving, the Department of Justice created certain EL services' requirements to which all schools with ELs were to adhere. The schools' principals agreed to meet these requirements as part of the agreement. An example of one of these requirements is that ELs who are assessed at a level 1, level 2, or level 3 must receive direct ELD services with a teacher who is certified in ESL. This ELD class must focus on language arts and literacy instruction, and only two consecutive LEP levels are allowed to be seated in the class; for example, Level 1s and Level 2s can be seated together, however, Level 3s could not be in the same class. In addition to having only two consecutive LEP levels in the same ELD class, only ELs can be seated in those classes as well. With requirements such as these, schools were tasked with restructuring their EL programs to ensure that they adhered to the requirements of the allocation plan.

Setting. North Shore High School, one of the first high schools in Prince William County Schools, was built in the 1970s and has an unwelcoming exterior, which consists of a tannish, worn façade with no color or windows facing the main street. A marquee outside displays, "Football Training Season- Starts June 21." A huge banner is above the main entrance that allows visitors to recognize that North Shore is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. According to the school's website, IB programs are a specialty to which students must apply to gain entrance. The mission of the program is to develop internationally minded students and help students become active members of their local, national, and global communities. Next to this banner, is another banner that reads "*Time Magazine*'s #1 U.S. High School- 2003."

The faculty and visitor parking lots face the school, and are filled with several rows of teacher and administrator cars. There is a police car permanently stationed in the first row of the parking lot closest to the school entrance. This car belongs to the full-time resource officer who works at North Shore High School, a middle-aged, White male with a clean-shaved head named Officer Gerkin (pseudonym).

The interior of the school is equally lackluster. Shoe marks cover the old-fashioned, freckled tile floor. A security desk is placed next to the main door of the school with a combination of school security and teachers fulfilling the responsibility of asking each visitor to the school for a picture ID. The school colors, maroon and gold, are painted on the walls of the school, the lockers, the doors, banners, and bulletin boards. Right behind the security desk is a picture of the teacher of the month. She is a middle-aged, White woman with long brown hair and a big smile. The poster reads

"Congratulations, Ms. H." In my ten years of teaching at North Shore High School, I have never seen the teacher of the month be an ELD teacher or Special Education teacher. The school activity committee is in charge of the voting and selecting of teacher of the month. One time I asked about the process for choosing teacher of the month. I was told that students had to go to the student activity room and complete a ballot in order to participate. However, these directions are not displayed anywhere in the school and it seems more like privileged information students share with each other who are aware of the process.

From a teacher perspective, North Shore High School often appears as three schools in one. There are IB students who take specialized classes in order to receive an IB diploma, which is different from the diploma received by the rest of the student body. The same teachers teach the IB students every year and they take classes entitled "IB Psychology" and "IB Theory of Knowledge." The class sizes for an IB class range from about 10-15 students per class. Teachers often desire teaching an IB class at this school because they have a smaller class size and a selected group of students. At the end of the school year, each class takes an IB exam, which is heavily monitored and given top priority by administrators to ensure that the test administration proceeds smoothly. Non-IB teachers are required to help monitor the administration of these exams during their planning blocks. An IB committee, comprised of individuals external to North Shore High School, scores the exams, and then they communicate with North Shore's IB coordinator the results of these high stakes exams. This past May, I monitored an IB Math exam. This opportunity provided me a rare glimpse into the IB world because these

students are not visible in the parts of the school where I teach. They usually are on the third floor of the school and do not intermingle with my ESL students. While I was monitoring the exam, I noticed a rather homogeneous group of students, mostly White and Asian students. Out of curiosity, I confirmed with the IB coordinator at the school, that 75% of the "IB diploma candidates" as she refers to them are white, 12% black, 7% other, and 6% Hispanic. Additionally, only 7% of the IB diploma candidates were identified as being prior EL services recipients; however, no current ELs are in an IB program. This disproportionality is common amongst ELs in the US school system. ELs are often underrepresented in advanced courses or college preparatory classes.

    In contrast to the IB diploma candidate students, immigrant ELs are more visible in the school. These students often gather in common areas such as the gym lobby in the morning and the cafeteria entryways during lunch. They are often heard conversing in Spanish with one another. While ELs at North Shore come from various linguistic backgrounds, the majority of the ELs are Spanish-speakers from mostly Central America: El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. The immigrant ELs at North Shore vary in the type of ELD support they receive, which unintentionally relates to who teaches these students, into which classes they are placed, and who the other students in the class are. All students at North Shore take seven classes over a two-day block schedule. Each class is 90 minutes in duration; even-numbered classes are one day and odd-numbered classes the next and so on. ELs' schedules and their assigned classes are determined by their LEP level. ELs with lower proficiency levels take more ELD classes taught by ELD teachers, and only ELs are in those classes. Students with a higher LEP level, take less

ELD classes, but receive language support in their mainstream classes either by having an ELD co-teacher in the classroom or by being placed with mainstream teachers who have been trained on ELD techniques and strategies. All immigrant ELs take a special ELD class in addition to the classes needed to graduate from high school such as language arts/English, science, social studies, etc. Because there is such a high concentration of ELs at North Shore, most ELs take classes primarily with other ELs and the amount of inclusion in mainstream classes is limited based on the county's ELD requirements. Additionally, most of the teachers who interact with ELs are also limited based on those who have received training and whose administrators choose to select to be assigned to teaching ELs. The service delivery model of mainstream classes that are taught by teachers with EL training are referred to as sheltered instruction classes.

The third type of student at North Shore is a combination of the non-IB and non-immigrant ELs. In reference to non-immigrant ELs, this group is comprised of LTELs who have yet to reach English proficiency. LTELs are the largest EL population at North Shore. The ELD program at North Shore recognizes that LTELs have different needs than immigrant ELs and voices their input on what type of classes and supports these students most need. Most often, LTELs are placed in co-taught classes for language arts/English where a mainstream teacher and an ELD teacher provide instruction. The class is a mixture of LTELs and non-ELs. For non-English classes, LTELs are scheduled in classes with teachers who have received specific training to work with ELs. In my observation of LTELs over the years, I have seen a clear distinction in their interactions at school versus immigrant ELs. LTELs mostly converse in English with one another.

They often do not identify themselves as being from another country other than the United States. The LTELs interact with non-ELs in the hallways and at lunch. They are more involved in extracurricular activities such as school sports and clubs than the immigrant ELs. In addition, they do not interact with immigrant ELs. Based on my observations at school, LTELs are separate from immigrant ELs based on their classroom placement, need for a variety of instructional supports, and individual choice. In elective classes where these students are often mixed, LTELs and immigrant ELs do not sit near one another nor interact with each other.

The landscape of North Shore is typical of high schools with a large EL population that is relatively new to the school. The influx of ELs over the past ten years has steadily increased in the area where North Shore is located. Uniquely, North Shore has enrolled the most immigrant unaccompanied youths in the county. The teaching staff at North Shore has also reflected this increased enrollment of ELs. In 2006, the ELD department had five teachers certified to teach ELD classes. In 2016, the department staffed 14 ELD teachers who are all certified in ELD, and many of whom are certified in other content areas as well, such as English, biology, and social studies. The rapid growth of the EL population at North Shore coupled with the opening of two additional high schools in the area have shifted the school's student demographics from predominately white to predominately minority students, such as Hispanic/Latino, black, or mixed races.

A discrepancy exists between the academic performance of the overall student population and those of ELs at North Shore. While the data provided by the state on this

achievement gap does not disaggregate the ELs between LTELs and immigrant ELs, with the LTELs representing a majority of ELs, it can be safe to say that the data reflects LTELs' achievement accurately. The overall student achieved measurable objectives (AMO) for Reading was 86; however, ELs scored 80. Furthermore, in mathematics, the overall AMO was 72, yet the EL population scored 64. Many other achievement gaps exist between ELs and non-ELs, which I will highlight in upcoming sections. The next section will discuss the demographic and academic information of each participant.

Participants. Participants for this study were all high school ninth graders, who came from Latino/a backgrounds, and were identified as LTELs based on the number of years they have received LEP services. Table 2 provides a more detailed demographic of information on these students and Table 3 illustrates their academic situations.

Table 2

Participants' Detailed Demographic Information

Name	Age	Gender	Grade	Additional Spoken Languages
Jorge	16	M	9	Spanish
John	15	M	9	Spanish
Andrew	16	M	9	Spanish
Jairo	15	M	9	Spanish
Sandra	15	F	9	Spanish
Emily	14	F	9	Spanish
Andrea	16	F	9	Spanish
Tania	14	F	9	Spanish

Table 3

Participants' Academic Information

Name	LEP Level	# of years identified as LEP	LEP literacy scores (2014-2015)	# of classes currently failing	Name of classes failing
Jorge	3	9	3.6	1	US VA History
John	3	9	3.4	3	Earth Science, Alg. 1 pt. 1, Art
Andrew	4	6	4.1	2	Chemistry, US VA History
Jairo	4	9	4.1	3	Earth Science, Art, Algebra I
Sandra	3	6	3.2	2	Biology, World History
Emily	3	9	2.9	3	Spanish for Native Speakers I, Alg. 1 pt. 1, Biology
Andrea	3	8	2.7	3	PE II, Algebra I, Biology
Tania	4	7	3.3	7	World History, English 9, Alg. 1 pt. 1, Earth Science, Individual Living, PE, Chorus

There were equal numbers of male participants, 4, and female participants, 4.

The average age of the participants was 15 years old. All the participants were in 9th grade, but varied in age because some were repeating ninth graders while others were first year ninth graders. All participants self-reported an ability to communicate in Spanish to a certain extent.

The academic information of the participants varied as well. Their LEP status is based on a scale of 1-6. Level 1 students are considered beginners/novices and Level 6 students no longer are labeled as LEP, and thus do not receive direct services according to the site's school district. The average LEP level of the participants in this study is Level 3, which is considered an intermediate level of English proficiency. The average years the participants have been identified as being LEP was approximately 8 years. Again, to be considered as an LTEL, a student must be identified as being LEP for 6 or more years. Because much of the research on LTELs suggests that these students have weak literacy skills, I also wanted to include their literacy scores in the study. These scores are based on their annual English proficiency assessments. An individual can score between 1.0-6.0 in literacy on these assessments. The average literacy score of the participants was 3.4, which is equivalent to an intermediate level of academic literacy. Each student enrolled in seven classes during the 2014-2015 school year. The average number of classes the participants were failing was 3 out of 7. Lastly, each participant enrolled in one English class, one science class, one social studies class, one math class,

and three electives, which varied depending on the participants' interests or counselors' discretion.

The content areas in which most participants were failing were science (7 out of 8) and math (5 out of 8). This data is reflective of the overall EL population at North Shore. For instance, in the 2014-2015 school year, the overall student pass rate for Earth Science, a freshman-level science class, was 70%; however, for ELs the overall pass rate was only 54%. In Algebra I, a freshman-level mathematics class, the overall student pass rate was 64%, and the EL pass rate was 50%. Therefore, my participants' performance in these classes is reflective of the overall EL performance school-wide in these subject areas.

In addition to their content classes, the participants all enrolled in a "Reading Improvement" class because their ELD teachers identified them as needing extra support in their literacy skills, typical of much of the LTEL population. An ELD teacher instructs this class and uses a mixture of an online reading program and in-class texts selected by the teacher. The class contains only ELs, most of whom are LTELs. This class serves as their ELD services, as required by county guidelines based on their LEP status. In the content classes, i.e. science, social studies, math, and English, these students are in sheltered instruction classes. Teachers who are certified in their content areas teach sheltered instruction classes at North Shore; additionally, they have all received 45 hours of professional development on sheltered instruction techniques for ELs, which included scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and direct literacy and vocabulary instruction. The content area classes are composed of ELs and non-ELs. Some of the classes have one

teacher, while others have an additional Special Education teacher who assists students, both ELs and non-ELs, who have been identified as needing special education services.

Procedure

I divided the data for this study into three streams: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. I transcribed and coded all the collected data. The initial coding process was done using In Vivo coding which kept the fidelity of the students' words by using their direct quotes as codes. A second round of coding was done using value coding. This process allowed me to categorize students' responses as an attitude (A), a belief (B), or a value (V). Once the codes were complete, I color-coded the responses by category. I aligned the categories to the various perceptions that the participants indicated relate to their struggles in school. Figure 4 illustrates my initial categories, subcategories, and eventual themes that emerged while analyzing the data.

Category #1- School	Category #2- External Factors	Category #3- Self
Subcategories:	Subcategories:	Subcategories:
Teachers	Parents	Lack of focus
Environment	Non-academic responsibilities	Disinterest
Content	Friends	Laziness
Theme 1: teaching styles do not meet the needs of the learners **Theme 2:** teachers interactions with students deter student learning		**Theme 3:** beliefs about personal attributes relate to achievement

Figure 4. This chart delineates the initial categories, subcategories, and eventual themes that emerged while analyzing the data.

I will discuss the findings by theme. Each theme relates to the research question: What are LTELs' perceptions of why they face academic challenges in school?

Theme 1: Teaching styles of teachers do not meet academic needs of students. The first theme is that LTELs' perceive that the teaching styles of their teachers do not meet their academic needs. Several participants attributed the challenges they face in school to the teaching style of the teachers of the classes they were failing. By teaching style, I refer to the way teachers deliver instruction as well as their overall practices in the classroom. For instance, some teachers prefer a teacher-centered instructional approach; the teacher provides the instruction and does the majority of the talking in class and students respond with planned activities given by the teacher. In this study, the participants recognized two components of teaching styles that they felt contributed to the challenges they faced at school, which I categorized as the following: delivery of instruction and the lack of direct language instruction. Delivery of instruction refers to the way the teacher relays information to the class. This delivery can take various forms such as providing notes, lecturing the class, or engaging students in cooperative learning activities. Direct language instruction refers to how the teacher specifically teaches English language structures or forms to the class. For example, teaching students upcoming vocabulary from a text before the students read the text is one way teachers can provide direct language instruction to their students.

Delivery of instruction. Participants mentioned that often teachers in these classes talk extensively without the aid of visuals or "breaking down" of materials. One student, Jairo, voiced concerns about his math teacher: "Don't make like long explanations because if you talking for like 20 minutes I get lost." Other participants echoed this concern that teachers do most of the talking in class. Another concern mentioned by the participants emphasized the amount of instructional time that is spent on copying notes. In one of the focus group discussions, the group vehemently expressed the amount of copious notes they receive and explained that students were responsible for copying notes that were projected in the class into their notebooks. When I asked the participants how helpful notes were to their understanding of the material, their response was that it was not helpful at all, but they were forced to do them, and they did not feel that there were any other options.

These examples of extensive teacher talk and delivery of instruction through note taking both illustrate a teacher-centered approach to instruction. This type of instruction contrasts with methods that most participants believed to be more compatible with their learning styles, such as student-centered learning. Many of the participants expressed an interest in more "hands-on" instruction. Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008) emphasize the importance of providing ELs with multiple opportunities to practice key concepts by using hands-on materials or manipulatives. These researchers suggest that hands-on activities reduce the language load for students and help ELs to make connections between abstract concepts with real-life experiences.

John is a deep-voiced, fifteen year old student and refers to himself as "laid-back." He was very dismissive at first about his struggles in school but eventually began to open up to me and shared some personal insight into why he believes he struggles in school. He mentioned in his interview with me that he did not feel his teacher's teaching style helped him to understand the content. He stated, "Make it fun not always boring like be fun with it, like be more hands-on," suggesting that the traditional methods employed by his teacher were not meeting his needs as a learner. John later shared with me how much he enjoyed working with his hands and how well he could do construction and loved using tools. He also mentioned that when he finishes school he hopes to be a mechanic.

Jorge, a very tall and shy repeating 9th grader, felt similarly about the need for more interactive activities in the classroom. He referred to a science class that he especially enjoyed taking, because the teacher took the class outside and had them explore nature at a nearby pond. He stated, "You know the class is boring, you know like some people like more hands on work stuff, more than taking notes." This insight into the desire to tap into a range of activities that meet students' learning styles suggests that each participant understands the ways he/she learns best, yet is not provided those opportunities in a teacher-centered, one-size-fits-all approach.

With scaffolded instruction, teachers provide support and assistance when introducing a new concept to students (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Teachers can utilize scaffolded instruction by slowing down their speech, increasing their pause time,

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and allowing for wait time for students to process information (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

Direct language instruction. Interestingly, many of the participants mentioned the importance of additional language supports, specifically direct vocabulary instruction. While most of the participants did not recognize any other language than English as their dominant language, they still reported a desire to have more linguistic supports in the classroom, such as visuals, repetition of key concepts, and multiple exposure to new vocabulary. These supports were described in two categories: supports facilitated by the teacher to access the content in English and supports facilitated by the teacher using Spanish to access the content. One example mentioned by the participants related to supports in English was the need for direct instruction of vocabulary before the introduction of new material. According to Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2008), it is crucial for vocabulary to be front-loaded and directly taught to students in order for ELs to be successful in their content area classes.

Emily is a 15-year-old, first-time freshman, who recently has been permitted to attend a mainstream school. She has been in alternative schooling for both 7th and 8th grades due to a fight she got into on field day during her 6th grade year. Emily talked extensively about how much she relies on her knowledge of Spanish to help her with words she does not understand in English. In response to a statement Emily made about not understanding the vocabulary in her Biology class, I probed her to explain further the situation she was experiencing. She responded,

She [her Biology teacher] always do this thing like we look at the definition, but

like when she's up there and doing notes and stuff I feel like there's a whole lot of

words up there that I don't know and aren't on the vocabulary sheet. Or like on

tests, I feel like she brings up stuff we didn't even learn.

John and Jairo echoed Emily's concerns about vocabulary in the focus group by

mentioning the amount of words they felt they did not understand in the content classes,

especially when given assessments.

To better understand how vocabulary was taught in the classroom, I followed up

with the participants about how vocabulary instruction was delivered in the classes they

were struggling in. For the most part, the participants reported "looking up definitions"

and copying them into their notebooks or on a note-taker as the primary instruction of

vocabulary in the classroom. While some participants admitted to this as being a useful

resource, many of the participants felt that they needed a deeper understanding of the

vocabulary to help them grasp the usage and definitions more clearly. Again, Fisher,

Frey, and Lapp (2008) recommend that vocabulary instruction not be limited to students'

copying definitions into a notebook. Rather, students must have multiple exposures to

the vocabulary through a variety of activities such as understanding synonyms of words,

using visuals and realia to explain usage, and cloze activities to practice the usage of the

vocabulary.

Native language supports. The discussion of vocabulary instruction led to the

perceived helpfulness of having language supports in Spanish as well. All participants

reported having some level of oral fluency in Spanish. The two participants born outside

the U.S., Andrea and Andrew, both stated that Spanish was their native language. Andrea, a 16-year-old, repeating freshman, was very shy and reluctant to implicate anyone other than herself in why she feels she struggles in school. However, she was very open about how she views herself as an English learner, and she explained that there was still so much English that she did not understand. She expressed "it's not your first language [English]. And so, maybe it makes it hard to you, because you don't understand some words."

I asked those participants who among them felt that students needed Spanish in the classroom to expand on an effective implementation. Some participants mentioned allowing for the use of dictionaries and using electronic devices with translators were helpful. Emily also discussed how the understanding of cognates in English and Spanish helped her to better understand the vocabulary in Biology. The following exchange between Emily and me articulates how she is able to decipher vocabulary in English based on their cognates in Spanish:

> Emily**:** Honestly, in reading there is always some terms that come up, you know, like again and again. Like I was saying there was a word like something like – viva-something, and so like *vivir* it means life so it helps a lot to know these.
>
> Me**:** So you do think about things in Spanish and then try to translate?
>
> Emily**:** Yah like in Biology there's like a word on the test and they're like making like, I don't know how to say it, a thermobrite? It's a heat something. And that's how I got my answer.

According to the school district and school staff, all teachers assigned to LTELs have completed at least 45 hours of professional development on strategies to teach ELs. However, according to the conversations with the participants, little to no use of these strategies is being implemented. A traditional, teacher-centered approach is how the participants' perceive to be the main mode of instruction in the class. This type of instruction differs from the EL training techniques that are required to be implemented in a sheltered instruction classroom. This disconnect between the current teaching style of the teachers and the actual needs of the participants suggests that this theme addresses why LTELs feel they have difficulty in school.

Theme 2: Teachers' interactions with students deter student learning. In the previous section, the data suggest that the participants' perceived certain teaching styles or methods that were employed in the classroom did not meet their needs. Related to teaching, participants also perceived that their teachers' interpersonal skills also played a role in why these students felt they were not doing well in school. This theme is divisible into smaller subsets: perceived teachers' attitudes towards students, teacher-student relationships, and the effect of negative interactions on student motivation.

Teachers' attitudes. The participants in this study collectively agreed that teachers' attitudes contributed to their lack of success in certain classes. While participants differed in how these attitudes affected them, many participants expressed how negative comments made towards them by a teacher suggested that the teacher had a negative attitude about teaching these students. Several times the participants mentioned specific comments made by teachers in response to their asking for additional support or

content clarification in the classroom. Teachers' disposition or attitude in the classroom can create friction between the students and teachers, especially when teachers show feelings of anger or hostility (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). Jairo is a quiet, soft-spoken repeating freshman. When I went to get him for his interview with me, he was asleep in his art class. I asked the teacher if I could meet with him for a special project that he was working on with me. Her response was an example of how these negative teacher attitudes manifest in the classroom: "please, he doesn't do anything anyway." Jairo articulated the following about one of his teachers: "like I said the teacher is always sarcastic when I ask for something that's why I never ask for help." Emily further explained a similar scenario in one of her classes:

[C]uz sometimes some teachers will be so sarcastic like, like one teacher she's like "oh my God, how do you not know this, it's so easy, it's like the easiest thing ever" and she's like "figure it out." And that's why I don't ask, that's mostly my Algebra teacher. That's why, I like never ask her for help.

The participants expressed that these negative attitudes and comments made by their teachers were the first item they would change about school. They voiced that teachers need to change their attitudes to make school more enjoyable and help students to be more successful. The first focus group was with Andrew, Sandra, Tania, and Jorge (who had to leave before we started). Andrew, a very tall and thin repeating freshman, was extremely vocal during the focus group session. He considers himself to be learning English still, and he relies on his native language for support, especially in the form of using dictionaries and translating items in the class. Sandra, a first year freshman, was

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one of the only participants to be placed in advanced classes her freshman year. She was

also very vocal in the focus group, which surprised me because she seemed very shy and

held back in her one-on-one interview with me. Tania, a 14 year old, thin-framed

freshman, was the only participant of mine who took more than an hour in our one-on-

one interview. She shared so much about her life including her estranged relationship

with her father, an attempted suicide in middle school, and her feelings of loneliness and

desperation to belong in high school. In my first focus group, the following exchange

sheds light on the role teachers' attitudes play on students' learning in the classroom:

Me: What about you, Andrew, what would you change?

Andrew: Attitude. Like one of my teachers last year, like she explains something,

then if I have a question she's like "didn't I just explain this?" And she doesn't

want to teach what she just did. So, I just give up. Like, ok. I don't want to learn

this now.

Me: Does that happen a lot to you guys?

All: Yes.

Sandra: I see it a lot.

Andrew: I think that's most of the math teachers.

Sandra: Yah.

Me: So, you hear it the first time, but if you ask for the teacher to explain it, you

hear…

Andrew: "I just explained it, you weren't focusing."

Me: So, they don't help you to understand it?

Tania**:** Sometimes they just say "well, you should already know this."

Me**:** How does that make you feel when the teacher says stuff like that?

Tania**:** It gets me mad. Like can you help me? I need your help. That's why I don't ask for people's help.

Andrew**:** It's just ridiculous to get paid to do that and…

Sandra**:** Yah.

Andrew**:** You don't do your job. I mean they get paid for that, and maybe they think it's stupid, but that's what they get paid for.

Tania**:** We need to change teachers' attitude. Make them more positive.

Me: Do you think teachers' at this school, don't have positive attitudes towards children?

Tania**:** None of my teachers.

Sandra: Or my teachers.

Me**:** So, give me like a number, like 90% of teachers…

Andrew**:** It's like 50%

Tania**:** Yah, like half.

Me**:** So, like half of the teachers at school you perceive to have a negative attitude towards students?

All**:** Yah.

In sum, the participants in this study expressed the ways they felt teachers had negative attitudes towards teaching them in the classroom. They suggested that this was one of the reasons that they were not able to be successful in those classes. Many

participants felt teacher pessimism was one of the major issues they face in school, and it is a barrier to their success.

Teacher-student relationships. The topic of teacher-student relationships was one of much concern to my participants. Fredriksen and Rhodes (2004) suggest that supportive teacher-student relationships are ones characterized by low-levels of conflict between teachers and students and high levels of closeness to support students' motivation, and to support their social, emotional, and cognitive skills. All the participants perceived that they did not have any type of reciprocal relationship or felt any closeness to their teachers. They did not feel that their teachers cared for them or even attempted to build a relationship with them. This lack of relationship between teachers and the participants often led to feelings of indifference towards the teachers and towards the content of the class itself. Fredriksen and Rhodes (2004) claim that teachers are responsible for shaping the type of relationship they have with a student, and that the quality of this relationship depends on the frequency and quality of the interactions that take place to support the students' needs. With the aid of a CRT lens, Latino perceptions of teacher-student relationships become apparent. Valenzuela (1999) reminds us that students' attitudes towards school are directly related to their personal experiences with teachers.

As a teacher and a researcher, I could tell from my interviews with these students that in many cases, I was the first person to discuss with them about why they felt they faced challenges in school. One participant, Emily, shared with me her longing for teachers to ask her about how she was doing or to ask her why she was not doing well.

She did not feel comfortable initiating these conversations with her teachers, as many of the others did not, because they felt it was the role of the teacher to seek proactively these relationships with the students, not vice versa. Emily shared with me these sentiments, "[N]obody knows and nobody seems to like care and nobody asks me like when you are doing bad in school no one asks you. I mean I wish I can tell them [teachers] but I can't. It's just too much." The perception that teachers do not care about students because they are not seeking to establish a relationship or open a dialogue with the student often leads to the perception that students cannot trust teachers.

The participants in my study expressed several times their mistrust of teachers after years of being with teachers they did not feel cared for by them. Tania, who has a great deal of family issues as well, expressed her mistrust of teachers and fear of judgement from them. She stated, "I don't know. I would get close to teachers, but I feel like if I do one little slip up they will be like 'Tania, this and Tania that' and tell other teachers. So, I don't trust teachers with my stuff." Additionally, these feelings of mistrust often stemmed from specific interactions with teachers that the students perceived to be unfavorable. Jorge told me about a time when he had math homework that he was unable to complete because he did not have a calculator at home. The next day, he tried to explain to his teacher why he did not complete his work at home and she dismissed his excuse and told him that she thought he was just being lazy. I asked Jorge about how that experience made him feel and he explained that he felt that the teacher just assumed the worst of him because she did not take the time to know him and to know that he would never lie about why he did not do an assignment. Jorge mentioned that

once this interaction occurred he just decided there was no point in communicating anything to the teacher and kept to himself in the class.

A similar situation happened to Jairo. An aspiring soccer player, Jairo recalled the following situation with his Algebra teacher:

Like in the beginning of the year I wanted help in math class and I didn't get any help at all. And I asked and I asked and I didn't get any. And then I was like whatever I don't care anymore. And then I was like I'm not going to do anything else.

This perception of a non-existent relationship between teacher and student through various interactions often leads to extreme measures by students as an attempt at self-preservation. The following section discusses in more detail how both teachers' attitudes and lack of relationships with students impacts students' self-reported motivation in their class.

Impact of teacher interactions on students' motivation. The previous sections attempted to illustrate how specific interactions with students can contribute to why they feel they have challenges in school. The reactions students have and how those reactions further impact their academic challenges relate to these perceived interactions with teachers. While looking through the data, I began to piece together a cycle of frustration that students have based on these interactions with their teachers. From this frustration, a feeling of indifference towards performing well in the class develops, and to put it concisely, students give up. In the absence of a strong teacher-student relationship or communication, students are often misdirected from learning the necessary academic and

social skills (Valenzuela, 1999). As a teacher, I have heard countless conversations about why certain students are not doing well in a particular class. The most common comment I hear from teachers is "he/she just doesn't care." Yet, from my conversations with these students, I can say that they do care, or at least they did, but have often come to a point where their frustration has affected their motivation.

Both John and Tania are doing poorly in a majority of their classes. They are both first-year freshmen and came to high school with hopes of doing well and being successful. John shared his frustration with me in the following:

John: To me the most challenging part of school is like to be turning work in and what not. I forget to turn it in and everything and then I get a bad grade and everything.

Me: What is the reason you think you forget to do stuff?

John: I don't put it in like an organized place like where I am supposed to put in and then I can't find it or I find it like next week after I'm supposed to have had it.

Me: So, would you say that your biggest issue is that you are not organized?

John: Yah.

Me: Have you talked to any of your teachers about that?

John: No.

Me: Why not?

John: I don't like I don't really talk to nobody about my problems and everything I just keep it to myself.

Me: Why do you do that?

John**:** I don't know… I feel like…I feel like nobody cares at all so.

Me**:** Are (you) saying that you feel like your teachers don't care too?

John: No. All they say is that he doesn't do work and what not. They don't know what I'm doing, so.

Me: Have you ever had a situation where your teacher really wanted to know like why you didn't do your work?

John: No. All they do or all they ask is like "did you do it did you turn it in?" or what not

Me: But you've never said I forgot it or try to explain yourself to a teacher?

John**:** I did but like one time a teacher was like "did you turn in your work?" and I was like "no" and she was like "how come?" and I was like "because I forgot to do it and I didn't turn it in" and she was like "oh, are you sure, because I've heard that excuse before"

Me: How did that make you feel?

John**:** I mean it made me feel frustrated with myself and mad because the teacher said it to me.

A similar exchange took place during my second focus group. The second focus group was with John, Jairo, Emily, and Andrea. They were extremely candid about how they felt about teachers and how they felt about the impact teachers have on their success or failure in the class.

Me**:** Sometimes teachers think that students aren't motivated, you know what that means? Like they have something inside of them that keeps them going…What

would you say to that, when someone says "oh, so and so isn't motivated." Do you think that's true about yourself?

John: Nope. Just the teacher gotta do better at teaching.

Me: Ok

John: Or motivating kids and everything

Emily: Like…

John: Like you put effort into it but then the teacher doesn't do anything so what's the point?

Jairo: Like when they don't help us for nothing.

John: Like I put effort into my class, but he doesn't put effort into it.

Emily: Yah, that's true. Like in my class I feel like I'm doing all the work and she's like "oh, she's doing nothing" like last time somebody didn't put their name on the paper and it was mine because I didn't notice, and then she was passing out the papers and was saying "oh look she doesn't do nothing" and I was like oh that's my paper and then she told me I didn't do nothing in class so I don't do nothing.

These iterations of not caring anymore or giving up are prevalent throughout my conversations with these participants. I wanted to give students an opportunity to expand on what they perceived would be the ideal class, and specifically what attributes a "good teacher" has. The following excerpt portrays the participants' perceptions of what qualities an effective teacher has:

Me: So, how would you describe the perfect teacher?

John: Helps the students out, kind.

Jairo: Caring.

Emily**:** Tries to understand us, like if we have stuff going on at home. Or they try to talk to your parents and be like "what's wrong" or actually talking to you and asking you like "what other way can I help you"

Me**:** Do you feel that teachers know who you are?

Emily**:** No, cuz my teachers tell us we have too many students to worry about.

Me**:** How does that make you guys feel?

Emily**:** I mean I understand but I mean put a little effort into it at least.

Me: Do you ever try for teachers to get to know you better? Like do you open up or do you expect them to do it?

Jairo**:** I don't ever put effort.

Me**:** Why not?

Jairo**:** Because I don't' trust teachers.

Jairo**:** I would have a good teacher that could actually teach. Not like annoying, like regular people, not-loud ass mouth people.

Me**:** What else?

Emily**:** I got nothing against old people but like I feel like younger people feel you. They understand you.

John**:** Yah, that's true.

Jairo**:** Yah.

Emily**:** And they be making the room alive. Like my English teacher she be

making the room all colorful and stuff. And like with Mr. Kirk, even though he

can be boring, he's young and he tells us about stuff he did when he was our age.

John**:** No, he's just straight up horrible, I'm not going to lie.

Emily**:** It's just like because when you don't like a teacher, you tend to just not

understand them. Like when I don't like a teacher, I don't learn in that class. I

don't like you, I'm just not going to do anything.

The participants' insight into the type of teacher they would like helps to illustrate the

attributes that they perceived to be missing in their current teachers.

In sum, both theme 1 and theme 2 are related to teachers and the perceived role

they play in meeting students' academic needs, creating a positive learning environment,

connecting with students, and motivating students to be successful learners. The next

theme will illustrate students' perceptions of personal attributes they believe contribute to

the challenges they have in school.

Theme 3: Personal attributes that contribute to academic challenges. The

first question I began each interview with was simply, "Why do you feel you have

difficulty in school?" Each participant responded candidly, and initially, nearly all

participants blamed themselves for why they struggled in school. The participants were

surprisingly very critical of themselves for why they perceived they did not do well in

school. The personal attributes they reported is divisible into two subgroups: self-

reported attributes and attributes related to outside factors.

Self-reported attributes. The two most self-reported attributes participants cited for their difficulty in school were laziness and forgetfulness. As a veteran high school teacher, I can attest to the fact that, yes, high school students are often forgetful. They forget to do their homework, bring a pencil to class, sit in their assigned seat, and refrain from throwing paper across the room. Laziness, too, is apparent, as the students often plead, "I just don't want to do anything," or "can we please just not do work today?" However, from the conversations with these students, their forgetfulness and laziness often seems to stem from their frustration of not understanding the subject matter and not receiving the support they need to be successful.

For instance, when I asked John about why he had difficulty in school, he claimed it was because he forgets to do the work he is assigned to do. Farther into our conversation, he explained that he forgets to do the work because he gets many worksheets and does not remember what he is supposed to do. When I asked him if he has ever approached the teacher about the difficulty he was having remembering to do the work and getting organized, he reports that he did have these conversations with teachers but was not given any support. Therefore, he became frustrated and overwhelmed.

Sandra explained a similar situation to me. She described how much homework is expected of her and that often times she forgets to do it all because she is overwhelmed. Once again, I asked her if she has ever spoken to her teacher about these concerns, to which she responded that she had, but nothing changed and therefore she continued to fall behind. Underlying this concept of forgetting to do work is a connection between unsympathetic teachers and intense levels of frustration of the participants. I

was surprised by, yet pleased with, the participants' ability to advocate for themselves, albeit to no avail.

Another self-reported attribute students used to explain their difficulty in school was laziness. Jorge and Jairo both specifically stated how laziness affected their education. The following exchange occurred Jorge and I:

Me: What about now in high school, why do you think there is difficulty in high school?

Jorge: Most of the time probably because I am lazy.

Me: Ok, what do you mean by lazy?

Jorge: I don't sometimes just don't feel like doing the work.

Jairo echoed Jorge's feelings:

Me: I want you to think about not Algebra, because I think you said the problem was the teacher and that you don't get help from her in that class, what's another class you are having difficulty in but it doesn't necessarily have to do with how the teacher treats you?

Jairo: Probably my English class. I didn't do most of the work, so now my teacher gave me some of the work so I started doing it and I found it was pretty easy.

Me: So, is there a reason that you weren't doing the work?

Jairo: I'm lazy.

Again, both participants claim that the reason they have are having difficulty is because they are lazy. However, as I began to dig deeper, I was able to find that just as with forgetfulness, laziness often is related to something much deeper.

In Jorge's journal entry "Describe a class that you don't like and why do you not enjoy that class," Jorge wrote the following:

I can't stand my social studies class. The class is boring and she just makes us copy slides from her PPT. The work she gives us is boring cuz she wants us to copy definitions from the book. So, I just don't do anything.

Similarly, Jorge wrote the following about his Earth Science class:

I hate this class because I don't get what the teacher is talking about. Like I ask my friends for help in class, but then when I get home to do the work I don't understand it. I have an F in the class because I don't do the homework. I mean she [the teacher] thinks I'm just lazy so whatever.

Once again, the participants are blaming themselves for their academic performance; however, looking more closely, I am able to see that these attributes are often results of an underlying frustration with not understanding the subject matter.

Attributes related to outside factors. While the majority of the reported attributes related to outside factors, some attributes correlated more strongly to certain relationships or situations outside of school that the participants associated with their school difficulties. Tania's interview with me was very emotional. She spoke very candidly about her home life and certain problems she has with girls at school. One attribute that Tania, and other participants, talked about in length was the ability to focus in class

because of distractions outside of the classroom. Tania has a very rocky relationship with her father and is constantly thinking about ways to hurt him because he has hurt her in the past. Tania reported that when she does sit in class (often times she is kicked out for being disrespectful or disruptive), she thinks about how she is going to skip last period with her boyfriend to get high or about how she wants to drop out of school as soon as she can and work cleaning houses with her mom. Tania's words shed more light on the situation:

> Me: I can tell your father is a sensitive topic for you…
>
> Tania: He is. I don't like to cry about it, because I know he doesn't care if I care, he doesn't care about it. He actually gives up on me at this point. My mom is like "if he knows about the things you do he's going to be shattered."
>
> Me: Do you do these things to hurt him?
>
> Tania: No, well yah, sometimes. I know that, I know that it hurts him, and because he hurt me a lot, I want to hurt him.
>
> Me: Other than the way he acts towards you, does he hurt you in any other way.
>
> Tania: Like yesterday he threatened to hit me and I was like if you ever hit me that will be the last time you will ever see me. I would literally leave and I would never come back to you. I mean I don't even consider him my dad, I always call him Jose. Hey, Jose. But he's not been a father to me.

Tania is constantly distracted while in class because she is struggling with difficult issues at home. Similarly, Emily also has had a rough upbringing. She talked to me about how

she is distracted in class and is unable to focus because she thinks about the problems she has at home and with past relationships.

Me: I mean you are very similar to a lot of people that I talk to. You have your home life which I agree completely affects you.

Emily: Yah cuz my home life is and I have to deal with my dad and other custody stuff and back then I use to go to an alternative school and then I use to go to counselors and all this stuff.

Me: Why did you go to alternative school?

Emily: Oh, because I got in some fight with this girl and I came back like three months later and then I got suspended again on field day. Then I didn't want to go back. I was like I don't want belong here I'm a good student but then I guess I got used to it. I liked the kids that were there like the bad kids and I changed a lot I wasn't like I am now. I use to curse out the teachers and stuff and I feel like I was depressed and I was depressed because my cousin recently died, he killed himself, and so that's one of the reasons I struggled in school. I always think about him and stuff and plus that when you're young sometimes you have a boyfriend and stuff and my boyfriend, well not anymore, we dated for like two years, but it was a lot of stress too.

Me: Do you ever talk about those things with your teachers?

Emily: I used to have a counselor at N.D. [the alternative school] and it was like only my counselor and then I went to house counseling and then I saw a psychiatrist or something like that and they gave me medicine and a therapist.

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Me**:** Did that all help you?

Emily**:** I only lasted with them for like two months. My mom didn't want me to go anymore because, um, when I use to talk to my counselor, it's her job to tell stuff that's going on that, like report stuff, and there was something that happened that she reported to CPS and my mom was mad and just didn't want it anymore. My dad was just tripping about it, and I just didn't want anything so, yah.

Me**:** Were you doing better when you had all that help?

Emily**:** Um, yah, I feel like she was like got me to think of some other stuff, right now I feel like I am getting healthier mentally-wise and I don't really think of that stuff now. I mean I try not to but I do. I just want to go to school and not think about anything now. Like my ex-boyfriend, he's locked up right now, and not to be mean, but I feel like it's helping me a lot because he's not there. He's not stressing me out.

Tania and Emily both have external situations that have caused them to be depressed and seek mental health services. Unfortunately, they received this help during middle school and at high school are no longer getting this support. Their feelings of inability to focus are due to extreme situations, about which they are constantly thinking. Sandra also expressed an inability to focus in class, but her situation, based on our conversation, did not relate to specific problems she was having. Sandra talked about how she daydreams a lot and thinks about her future and wanting to be a lawyer. She thinks about how she will be able to accomplish this and often finds herself distracted by these thoughts in class.

Whether the participants felt their difficulties in school related to their forgetfulness or inability to focus, they did express that these attributes were ones that they felt they were able to control. They were not quick to blame teachers, parents, or the school for their struggles, which would have been easier than pointing the finger at themselves.

Findings Related to Literature

The theoretical framework for this study was based on three parts: the achievement gap of minority students versus non-minority students, critical race theory, and social-cultural theory. The participants of this study, all Latino, are an ethnic minority and a language minority at their school. Achievement gap research suggests that both of these subgroups are not achieving academically at levels comparable to their non-minority peers, specifically in the areas of reading and mathematics. The participants in my study are also struggling in these areas as well. However, through providing an outlet for their voices to be heard, this study was able to uncover exactly why these students felt that they were not performing well academically. Under the umbrella of CRT, culturally responsive teaching is an important tool for teachers to embrace in their teaching styles and methods when teaching students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Culturally responsive teaching includes a culturally diverse knowledge base, creating culturally relevant curricula, the demonstration of cultural caring and a sense of community, harnessing cross-cultural communications, and effective use of cultural based knowledge in classroom instruction (Gay, 2000). Furthermore, within CRT

research, evidence suggests that Latino students have better academic outcomes in environments that support the essential elements of culturally responsive teaching (Garcia & Chun, 2016). The participants in this study did not suggest that culturally responsive teaching was occurring in their classes. On the contrary, the data from this study shows that teachers were not involved in these practices. The data also indicates that the lack of these types of practices contributed to the participants' perceptions of why they felt barriers to their academic performance exist. Instructional practices such as cooperative learning, affirming the value of and utilizing Spanish instruction, and recognizing students' cultural integrity all contribute to Latino students' overall academic achievement (Garcia & Chun, 2016).

While overall teacher instruction played a significant role in the participants' perceptions, teacher-student interactions affected students in various ways, from decreasing their motivation to negatively influencing the students' own affect about school. Students perceive the treatment and interaction of teachers of high performing students and low performing students to be different, wherein high performing students receive more support and positive reinforcements, and lower performing students receive less support and negative attitudes from their teachers (Babad, 1990). This differential treatment among racially and ethnically diverse students often leads to limited educational opportunities for minority students and can create a negative classroom environment (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Additionally, Tyler and Boelter (2008) found that students' perceptions of these types of negative interactions shaped their behavior and emotional engagement in the classroom. In alignment with my participants'

responses, the lack of connectedness and positive relationships and interactions in the classroom ultimately related to how motivated students were to be active learners in the classroom. This unfavorable treatment of minority students in the classroom relates to critical race theory.

According to Garcia and Chun (2016), U.S. public schools promote Eurocentric values and practices that differ from those of the ethnically and culturally diverse student population. Huerta's (2011) study found that bilingual Latino students and parents perceive effective teachers as those who show they care about students, understand students' home situations, and recognize their struggles as bilingual learners. In addition, Huerta found that the students in her study perceived an effective teacher is one who demonstrates taking the time to talk to students and listen to them, and is capable of explaining content material in a way that the students could comprehend (2011). Valenzuela's (1999) study on Mexican American youth in U.S. high schools describes effective teachers as those who display care and respect towards their students and maintain a social relationship with students. This view of education is one of both academic preparation and social and moral responsibility to students (Valenzuela, 1999). The participants in this study consistently referred to a lack of caring from their teachers and unwillingness by teachers to create bonds with these students in an effort to display any affection towards them.

In relation to students' perceptions of their teachers' interactions with them and how negatively perceived interactions often deter students from learning, is the concept of student self-efficacy. My third theme explored how students' personal attributes

related to their academic performance. Attribution theory suggests that students often

attribute their success or failures to luck, task difficulty, effort, or innate ability (Weiner,

1972). Low-achieveing students often attribute their failures to a lack of intelligence or to

the difficulty of the task (Weiner, 1972). Teachers play an important role in redirecting or

influencing how students attribute their successes and failures. The literature often refers

to these traits as self-efficacy, which encompasses students' motivation, perseverance,

and resilience in their academic settings (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli,

1996). This research also suggests that self-efficacy influences academic performance.

Furthermore, students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations also influence students'

self-efficacy by either making them feel capable and motivated or by making students

feel inefficient and discouraged (Tyler & Boetler, 2008).

While the participants in this study never directly suggested that their self-

efficacy related to their interactions with their teachers, the comments explaining why

they felt lazy or forgetful suggest that a relationship does exist between self-efficacy and

teachers' influence. On the other hand, the participants reporting of being distracted

related often to external factors such as family and friends. This might be related to the

Immigrant Paradox, which suggests that first generation immigrant students outperform

their native counterparts (LTELs) because later generations are exposed to more

American peers who tend to have less value on education and are less influenced by

parental influence (Crosnoe & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2005). In Olsen's *Made in America* and

in Valenzuela's *Subtractive Schooling*, both researchers found similar attitudes among

native-born ELs. They found that these students often had negative attitudes towards

school, such as reporting that school was not important, or that they did not care about school, or had other external issues they were facing that distracted them from performing well academically. In sum, this study supported all three themes throughout the literature; additionally, they are connected to the essential theoretical framework for this study: achievement gap, critical race theory, and socio-cultural theory. By allowing students' voices to be heard, I created counter-narrative that echoes the challenges of Latino, LTEL, high school students' struggles with teachers and how generational attitudes have affected their perceptions of the barriers they face in school.

Summary of Findings

By listening to the students' voices and experiences with struggles they face in school, I was able to create a partial counter-narrative to achievement gaps that EL researchers claim to be the main issues LTELs continue to find challenging in school. Viewed from a critical framework, teachers play a very pivotal role in motivating and supporting struggling students through purposeful instruction and meaningful relationships with their students. This study was able to shed light on the perspectives of LTELs, who are not often given a voice, to explain with their own words why they felt they had difficulty in school. By coding the data using In Vivo codes and Values coding, as well as comparing data to research in the field, I was able to conclude that three emergent themes were prevalent in this study.

The first theme related to teacher instruction. The participants articulated how their current instruction was teacher-centered and did not meet the needs of ELs in terms of direct language instruction and multiple opportunities for practice. The second theme

captured the importance these participants placed on positive teacher-student interactions. On a micro level, the participants felt defeated with negative comments and lack of attention they received from their teachers. On a macro level, the participants expressed how they felt no connectedness let alone relationship with their teachers. This has created a cycle of frustration amongst the participants leading them to lack motivation to be successful in school. The third and final theme reflects how the participants view themselves as responsible for their academic challenges. Their views of themselves range from being personality traits they deem to influence negatively their learning, such as laziness, to attributes related to external circumstances, such as being distracted at school because of problems at home.

Chapter Five

Overview of the Problem

As previously stated in Chapter 1, LTELs have become the majority of the EL population in the United States. Their academic performance lags behind other minority groups in the United States and a significant achievement gap exists. With the EL population on the rise, it is crucial to better understand why certain groups of students are struggling. Research on program evaluations to improve LTELs' performance or studies done on teachers' experiences with LTELs is limited to those respective perspectives. As a marginalized group, LTELs have a right to have their voices heard and opportunity for their narratives to be shared. Their perspectives add an additional, valuable piece to the puzzle of the ways policy makers and schools can better meet the needs of these students.

Limitations and Generalizability of Findings

Limitations. This study is not without limitations. The strongest limitation to this study is the number of participants who were involved in the study. The number of participants often varies in qualitative research depending on the research question or research design of the study. It is possible that with more participants even more data would have yielded additional findings.

Another limitation of the study is that the primary focus of the study was on student perspectives and did not include the perspectives of other educational stakeholders such as administrators and teachers. The seminal works of Olsen (1997) and Valenzuela (1999) on similar students encompassed multiple perspectives, including

students, teachers, administrators, and the researchers' own observations. I intended for this study to focus only on students' perspectives; however, including others' perspectives might have included additional findings.

Lastly, the participants in this study came from similar ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. All participants were Latino/Latina and identified some fluency in Spanish. While their responses were consistent with much of the research related to Latino students and their perceptions of their academic success in school, a more diverse group of participants might have reflected a wider variety of perspectives. LTELs in the U.S. are not exclusively Latino students, and perhaps including voices from other LTEL ethnicities would have provided additional insight into the perceptions of why these students struggle. I was not able to access these students because of the demographics of the EL population at my school, North Shore High School, the research venue.

Generalizability. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research on many levels; most noteworthy is the concept of generalizability of the results of the study to the broader population. In this qualitative study, I studied a specific group of students at a specific location to understand better the broad problem of LTELs' academic success at a micro level. Therefore, the primary concern of the study was, as Maxwell describes (2013), "not with generalization, but with developing an adequate description, interpretation, and explanation of this case" (pg. 79). Additionally, Maxwell suggests that generalization is divisible into two separate distinctions: internal and external generalizability (2013). Internal generalizability focuses on the generalizability of the findings within a specific group while external generalizability refers to how findings

from a study can be generalized beyond that specific study (Maxwell, 2013). For this study, the prior group would be LTELs at North Shore High School, whereas the latter group would be LTELs in the United States. Therefore, I can attest that the findings from this study were generalizable to the participants of the study; however, I cannot claim that the findings are generalizable to LTELs outside of this particular setting.

Implications for Practice

Most of the findings from this study revolved around LTELs' perceptions of their teachers. Teachers were often cited, for multiple reasons, as influencing these participants' academic successes or challenges they faced at school. Youngs and Youngs (2001) suggest that mainstream content teachers' attitudes towards ELs in general can be predicted by several indicators, such as their professional development opportunities, their general experiences, their personal attributes, how much training these teachers have received in EL strategies and techniques, and prior experience with teaching ELs (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Another study suggests that professional development opportunities for mainstream content teachers are one of the main contributing factors to these teachers' attitudes towards ELs (Reeves, 2006). From a professional standpoint, the growing number of ELs in US schools warrants continued professional learning opportunities on best practices and strategies for teaching ELs for all teachers. Olsen (2012) recommends that these professional opportunities extend past those of general techniques that can be used to teach all ELs, but specific staff development needs to be implemented that address the unique needs of LTELs, such as direct literacy instruction

across the curricula. Calderón and Minaya-Rowe (2011) also stress the importance of direct vocabulary instruction for LTELs by *all* teachers in *all* content areas.

As I previously mentioned, all the teachers at North Shore high school were trained on general EL strategies and techniques, including direct literacy and vocabulary instruction. However, as Reeves (2006) warns, mainstream teachers who receive EL training do not necessarily believe these techniques to be necessary in their instruction. Furthermore, some experienced mainstream teachers do not believe in the need for differentiated instruction for ELs, and that teaching for non-ELs is not different from teaching for ELs (Reeves, 2006). Based on the findings from this study, I think it is extremely important for teachers of LTELs not only to have been trained in EL strategies and techniques, but also to consistently implement those strategies and techniques in the classroom. All learners, including ELs, can benefit from teachers slowing down speech, breaking down text and content into chunks, repeating directions, providing deeper instruction of vocabulary, and creating opportunities for student-centered activities.

Coupled with the increased implementation of beneficial instructional practices geared towards ELs, an examination of teachers' disposition towards ELs in the classroom is equally important. The participants in this study shared both the instructional challenges they faced and the negative interactions they encountered with their teachers as perceived challenges to their academic achievement. According to Helm (2007), teacher training paired with proper teaching dispositions have an important impact on student learning. There are many significant indicators of proper teacher disposition, a few significant ones include: a love of children, respect for all children, and

the ability to see potential in all students (Woolfolk, 2004). Teachers need to display these characterisitcs while interacting with their students and it is the responsibility of administration to ensure that the teachers under their supervision foster these characterisitics. Additionally, this study suggests that teacher education programs should not only focus on teaching methods and instructional practices, but potential candidates should also possess and display dispositions of empathy and caring.

In addition to ongoing professional development opportunities for mainstream teachers, early education of techniques for teaching ELs needs to be introduced in teacher education programs throughout the state. Currently, only teacher candidates who are focusing on English Language Development instruction are required to take classes on EL methodology. However, with the increasing EL population in this state, it would be beneficial to all candidates in all teacher education programs to have mandatory courses in EL methodology, multicultural education, or strategies to teach culturally and linguistically diverse populations. States with large EL populations such as Florida and California require all teacher candidates to receive dual certifications: one in a content area and one in ESL. The numbers of ELs in this state continue to increase yearly, especially after the placement of thousands of unaccompanied minors of the last couple of years. Teachers with dual certifications would be better equipped to meet the needs of a growing, diverse student population.

Implications for Research

A plethora of research exists on Latino students in school and specifically the perceptions Latino students have of school and the areas they find challenging. This

study adds to this research by focusing on another specific subgroup of Latinos, LTELs. These students are doubly tracked based on their race/ethnicity as well as their English language proficiency. By specifically focusing on these students, it is clear that they share perspectives with other Latino students in terms of what they believe to be contributing to their academic challenges. On the other hand, these students also share similar perspectives of ELs as an entire group, which consist of immigrant and nonimmigrant students. The intersectionality between racial and linguistic minority status is prevalent in this study. However, more research is still needed to gain a deeper understanding of how this intersectionality plays a role in the academic achievement of these students. The participants in this study were at the high school level and had experienced several years of schooling prior to my interactions with them. Most of the participants claimed to be high performing, engaged students during elementary and middle school, but began facing challenges their freshman year of high school. My study only focused on their current progress in school, and because of the nature of the study, I was not able to look at past events that might have shed additional insight into the struggles these students face. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed to study LTELs upon entering school and that follow them through high school focusing on various patterns of academic performance and contributing factors to this performance.

This study reflects on the concept of humanizing pedagogy. Humanizing pedagogy often refers to funds of knowledge, an extension of sociocultural theories, in which teachers provide opportunities for students to extend their knowledge and learning by facilitating their cultural and linguistic strengths (Huerta, 2011). The participants in

this study referred often to the absence of these pedagogical beliefs among their teachers and a longing for the responsive instruction based on these beliefs to be implemented in the classroom to facilitate their learning. This study suggests that these participants, Latino LTELs, are aware of the pedagogical beliefs that support them best as learners, and that the absence of these beliefs directly impacts their ability to be successful in the classroom. Studies exist on how humanizing pedagogy affects the perceptions of teacher effectiveness, specifically among Latino students; this study offers a insight into how Latino LTELs perceive humanizing pedagogy and its contribution to their academic success. However, further research on specific implications for how a humanizing pedagogy affects these learners is needed.

Conclusion

As a teacher of ELs for over ten years, I have been able to observe a shift among the type of ELs in my classroom, from immigrant ELs to LTELs, and the unique needs of these students piqued my interest in this overlooked EL population. By studying seminal works of second-generation Latino youth in US schools and examining how ELs are underperforming compared to their white, non-ELs peers, I wanted to examine how LTELs fit into this pattern. While LTELs share many characteristics of marginalized, minority students in the U.S., they also have unique language needs that are similar and different from the immigrant EL population as a whole. An achievement gap exists between ELs and non-ELs nationally and, specifically related to my school, an achievement gap exists between LTELs and immigrant ELs, and LTELs and non-ELs. A plethora of research is extant on how researchers, administrators, teachers, and parents

perceive the causes of LTELs struggle in school; however, I wanted to provide an

opportunity for these students to create a counter-narrative to these prevailing perceptions

of why they they struggle in school.

After interviewing students and providing opportunities for them to express what

they perceive contributes to their academic challenges, I was able to conclude that my

participant LTELs at North Shore High School perceive their struggles in school may be

due to r numerous reasons. Several cited examples included their teachers not

implementing instructional supports to facilitate students' learning, a lack of positive

teacher-student relationships impacting students' motivation, and students believing they

have certain characteristics such as forgetfulness or distractedness that affect their ability

to be successful in the classroom.

The literature of critical race theory and sociocultural theory reflects the findings

of this study. The concepts of teachers' roles and responsibilities to provide a caring,

positive, and appropriate learning environment for ethnic and linguistic minorities prevail

throughout research in this field. Whether teachers implement culturally responsive

teaching or embody a humanizing pedagogy, teachers play a significant role in the

participants' perceptions of their own academic struggles.

The implications of the findings of this study include the need for teachers to

receive ongoing professional development opportunities, specifically in teaching LTELs.

Additionally, teachers need specialized training on how LTELs differ from the immigrant

population and need even more direct academic language support, such as direct

vocabulary instruction and explicit literacy instruction in all content areas. Furthermore,

teachers should demonstrate their learning from these professional development opportunities in the classroom and should be monitored by administration to ensure that these instructional practices are being implemented. Lastly, teacher education programs across the state need to include requirements such as ESL methodology classes for all teacher candidates, not only those pursuing a career in ESL instruction.

Further research is still needed to investigate how LTELs perceptions of academic challenges shift as they transition from elementary school into secondary school , and a longitudinal study documenting this change could provide insight into how secondary teachers can better support LTELs in high school. Additional study of how a humanizing pedagogy at the high school level impacts LTELs performance is also warranted to explain better how this teaching philosophy influences students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as reflected in their academic achievement. Most importantly, this study suggests the importance of including students' voices in the research and for future researchers and educational stakeholders to account for students' perspectives in further understanding the issues of academic success for LTELs.

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9590

DATE:	February 4, 2016
TO:	Marjorie Hall Haley, PhD
FROM:	George Mason University IRB
Project Title:	[857232-1] Long-Term English Learners' Perceptions of Academic Challenges
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	February 4, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE:	February 3, 2017
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited review category #5 & 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA). Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the ORIA.

The anniversary date of this study is February 3, 2017. This project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. You may not collect date beyond this date without prior IRB approval. A continuing review form must be completed and submitted to the ORIA at least 30 days prior to the anniversary date or upon completion of this project. Prior to the anniversary date, the ORIA will send you a reminder regarding continuing review procedures.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Motsinger at 703-993-4208 or kmotsing@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

Consent Form

Long-Term English Learners' Perceptions of Academic Challenges

  INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
This research is being conducted to give students an opportunity to share the reasons why they feel they face challenges in school. If you agree to participate, your student will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher (Ms. Eqab) for approximately 45 minutes, participate in a focus group session with other students that will last approximately 45 minutes, and respond to two journal prompts. The journal prompts are to give the participants to an opportunity to respond to questions about the challenges they face in school in a reflective manner. Each journal response is anticipated to take 15 minutes to complete. All research will take place during your child's supplemental period from March-April 2016 and no direct instruction will be missed.
RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.
BENEFITS
There are no benefits to your child as a participant other than to further research in understanding why students feel they face academic challenges.
CONFIDENTIALITY
The data in this study will be confidential. Your student's name will not appear in the research or notes. Each student will be given a pseudonym and all notes will use the student's pseudonym. All data collected from the interviews, focus groups, and journal entries will be saved to Ms.Eqab's iPad and no one else will have access to this data. Although focus group participants will be asked to keep the contents of the discussion confidential, due to the nature of a focus group, the researcher cannot control what participants might say outside of the research setting. The interviews and focus groups will be audio-recorded on Ms. Eqab's iPad. She will listen to these recordings and transcribe them, and then she will delete all recordings. The journal responses may be hand written by your student and Ms. Eqab will save the responses and delete any original documents. Once again, your student's personal information will be hidden and your student will receive a pseudonym that will be used by Ms. Eqab.
PARTICIPATION
Your student's participation is voluntary, and he/she may withdraw from the study at any

time and for any reason. If your student decides not to participate or if he/she withdraws from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Sarah Eqab at George Mason University. She may be reached at XXX-XXX-XXXX for questions or to report a research-related problem. Your child may also reach the principal investigator Dr. Marjorie Hall Haley at XXX-XXX-XXXX if your child has further questions. Finally, your child may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Integrity & Assurance at XXX-XXX-XXXX if your child has questions or comments regarding their rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your child's participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to let my child participate in this study.

_____ I agree to audio taping my child's interview and focus group session.

_____ I do not agree to audio taping my child's interview and focus group session.

_____

Name

_____

Child's Printed Name

_____

Date of Signature

Assent Form

Long-Term English Learners' Perceptions of Academic Challenges

ASSENT FORM

My name is Sarah Eqab and I am teacher here at Stonewall Jackson HS but I am also a researcher from George Mason University. I want to talk to you about a research study I am doing. In our study, we want to learn more about how you feel about the reasons why you think you face challenges in school. Your parents have already agreed that you may take part in the study, so feel free to talk with them about it before you decide whether you want to join the study.

What will happen to me in the study?
We would like you to participate because we think that sharing what you have to feel is really important to understanding why you might have challenges at school. A lot of times students aren't given an opportunity to share how they feel about certain topics and this would be one of these opportunities for you. If you would like to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with me which will last for about 45 minutes, a focus group session with some of your classmates which last about 45 minutes, and respond to two journal prompts which will take about 15 each to complete. The interviews and focus group sessions will take place during your supplemental period, and you can also respond to the journal prompts during your supplemental periods as well. I will give you once journal prompt after the interview to complete and one journal prompt after the focus group to complete. You will have around 2 weeks to complete them once they have been given to you. You can respond with however much or little you choose.

What are the risks?
There are no risks to you and participating in this research will not affect your grades.

What are the benefits?
There are known benefits to you.

Will anyone know that I am in the study? (Confidentiality)

You will be asked to participate in an interview, focus group session, and respond to two prompts. In the interview and focus group sessions I will audio-record the sessions. Then I will listen to the recordings and type what I hear, once I am done, I will delete those files so no one can get them. I will not use your name on any of the files or in my notes or in my final report. I will give you a "fake" name that only I will know so that no one reading the research will know who you are.

What if I do not want to participate or decide later to withdraw?
Being in this study is voluntary. You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to or you can stop being in the study at any time.

Will I receive anything for being in the study?
You will not receive anything for being in this study.

Who can I talk to about this study?
If you have questions about the study or have any problems, you can talk to you parents, or call the PI at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you have questions about the study but want to talk to someone else who is not a part of the study, you can call the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance at George Mason University at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Your signature below means that you have read the above information about the study, have had a chance to ask questions to help you understand what you will do in this study, and you are willing to be in the study. Your signature also means that you have been told that you can change your mind later if you want to.

_____

Child's Name (printed) and Signature

_____

 Date

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Biography

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