Preface

I am completing this book in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The global spread of this terrifying virus has upended our lives and our education systems on an unprecedented scale. As US public schools have scrambled to switch to remote learning virtually overnight without prior teacher training or adequate infrastructure, serving the needs of already marginalized students remotely in a time of crisis has proven to be a nearly impossible task. Thus, a common refrain is that this pandemic has laid bare the already existing inequities in education in the United States; that vulnerable populations such as English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. It is true that education in the United States has never been equal at the best of times. If this pandemic has shone a spotlight on the existing inequities, that is at least one positive outcome of these trying times. But glimpsing existing inequities at a time when the whole education system is experiencing a crisis is not the same as understanding the underlying mechanism of these inequities. In my mind, there is nothing inherently more 'vulnerable' about ELs than any other students: it is the education system that is making them vulnerable by treating them as 'lesser than', and stripping them of opportunities to learn. I hope that the lasting contribution of this book is that it exposes how even under much more favorable conditions – no pandemic, a booming economy and the first African American president in the history of the nation – ELs were still excluded from arguably the most consequential educational opportunity: access to postsecondary education. This exclusion is systemic and institutional: it is not just a matter of uncaring or incompetent teachers or resource-deprived schools. Even when teachers are caring and well qualified, and schools are reasonably well resourced, ELs are systematically eliminated from rigorous academic preparation and the information

necessary to continue further education after high school. This book is my current best articulation of why and how this inequity takes place.

Acknowledgements

This is my third single-authored book, and you would think that by now I would have figured out how to write a book more efficiently. Evidently, I have not as this book took just as long to complete as the first two. During the long process of fits and starts, hiatuses and feverish trances of intensive writing as if there were no tomorrow, many people have helped me, and I am grateful for their kindness, brilliance and generosity.

First of all, I am eternally grateful to the Brighton High School educators and students who participated in the study. In the book, I may come across as highly critical of the school, but I have never lost sight of the fact that without their willingness to open up the school for my investigation, none of what I wrote in this book could have been documented. Brighton educators were remarkably generous in granting me access: I could more or less observe any classes, speak with any faculty and staff members and obtain any documents that I requested. For that I am deeply thankful. Special thanks go to Mr Woznyj, who expressed great enthusiasm when I first approached him about the project. He was the kind of educator who believed that any involvement in a research project is an enrichment experience for his students, and he took the time to understand the goals of my project and helped me recruit student participants and access other educators at the school.

The seven ELs in this study – and an eighth one, Sam, who is not included in this study but was part of the original project – were my joys, wonders and frustrations during the three years of data collection. It was a real privilege to witness this critical phase of their transition to adulthood, and I always marveled at how wise and resilient they were sometimes and how still so young and clueless they were at other times. It would be presumptuous of me to assume that I captured everything there was to know about their access to postsecondary education; I am sure that there were many layers that I did not unpeel. But I am thankful for what they shared with me.

My friends and colleagues at Temple University offered the encouragement and advice I needed to sustain a longitudinal study such as this one. I am particularly grateful to Jim Byrnes for underscoring the importance of intentionally designing a rigorous study from the onset in a way that meets the standards of the highest-level journals in one's field; and to

Michael Smith, for allowing me to pop by his office when I was bursting to share the latest discoveries from my fieldwork. Elvis Wagner and Jill Swavely were (and are) two trusted friends with whom I had numerous hallway conversations about the progress of this study. Christine Woyshner was (and is) always a sympathetic listener who understands the plight of a book writer in a college that prioritizes journal articles. My doctoral students, Mark Emerick, Sarah Grosik and Brooke Hoffman, assisted with various aspects of this project with the fresh energy and enthusiasm of novice researchers.

Colleagues in my field have been generous in giving me listening ears, helping hands and constructive feedback that stretched my thinking. Two colleagues to whom I am particularly indebted are Amanda Kibler and Rebecca Callahan. They read the entire book manuscript and pointed out some of my blind spots. The book is in much better shape because of their thoughtful feedback. Many thanks also to Betsy Rymes for introducing me to Mr Woznyj; to Paul K. Matsuda for the opportunity to present early findings from this study as a plenary speaker at the 2015 American Association for Applied Linguistics Conference; to Bonny Norton, Linda Harklau, Stephanie Vandrick and Christine Casanave for being amazing long-term mentors and showing me different models of how to be strong women and brilliant scholars in the field of applied linguistics. Further thanks to Manka Varghese for starting this line of work with me back at the University of Washington around 2007; to Wayne Wright for encouraging me to submit this book to Multilingual Matters and for late night journal-editor jokes; and to Su Motha for our annual conference breakfast conversations about book writing, qualitative research and lots of gossip to laugh about.

I moved to Boston University in the middle of writing this book, and the relocation from Pennsylvania to Massachusetts has provided insights into how different states approach EL education differently. Chris Leider, Marnie Reed and Mary Hughes, all members of the TESOL program, have helped me get acclimated to Boston, giving me a sense of home. Doctoral student Nick David copy-edited the whole manuscript, eliminating verbiage, suggesting more precise words and gently pointing out places where I was making no sense. I am grateful for his thoughtful edits.

I am 100% certain that this book would not have happened without the support of Sara Kangas, former-doctoral-student-turned-best-writing-buddy-ever. At one point, I was seriously considering washing my hands of this book, focusing on writing a series of journal articles instead. But Sara told me that she enjoyed reading more 'narrative-y' accounts of my EL participants' experiences, whose details tend to get

omitted in journal articles because of word limits. I was able to complete this book only because I had an immediate reader in Sara, *and* I had to produce something every two weeks for our meetings. She read every single chapter about five times – she could probably recite the whole book at this point. Thank you, Sara, for your infinite patience and abundant encouragement.

My academic sisters, Sheela Athreya, Jiyeon Kang and Jennifer Granick, cheered and pushed and celebrated mini-progress all summer long, and gave me the energy that I needed to cross the finish line with this book. Thank goodness for their love and complete acceptance of who I am.

My husband, Toby, and my son, Kenji, have patiently put up with my obsession with writing, but then again have always reminded me that there is more to life than writing – like, baking! Toby once opined, 'I can't eat your writing, but I can eat your cookies!' and that just about summarizes the relationship these two men have with my writing. As of publication, Kenji is a senior in high school, and it has been eye-opening to go through college planning with him as a parent (e.g. 'What do you mean you will start prepping for the SAT the night before the test?') while writing about these seven students' college planning. On a number of occasions, I have consulted Kenji about what it is like to be a high school student in the United States, to the point he observed, 'Mom, I'm like a key informant in your study'. I herein gladly acknowledge his contribution.

This book incorporated elements from the following published journal articles:

- Kanno, Y. (2018) Non-college-bound English learners as the underserved third: How students graduate from high school neither college- nor career-ready. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 23 (4), 336–358. © 2018 Taylor & Francis. Republished with permission.
- Kanno, Y. (2018) High-performing English learners' limited access to four-year college. *Teachers College Record* 120 (4), 1–46. © 2018 Teachers College, Columbia University. Republished with permission.
- Kanno, Y. and Kangas, S.E.N. (2014) 'I'm not going to be, like, for the AP: English language learners' limited access to advanced college-preparatory courses in high school. *American Educational Research Journal* 51 (5), 848–878. © 2014 Sage. Republished with permission.