

DISSERTATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A LIFESONG OR SWANSONG FOR THE
UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATION:
A HOLISTIC CRITICAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A LIFESONG OR SWANSONG FOR THE
UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATION:
A HOLISTIC CRITICAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Holistic critical theory seeks to explicate class, ethnicity, and gender issues. This perspective will be used to explore justice and inequities that face the underrepresented population at All Peoples Community College, a fictitious college. The underrepresented population in this community college context included: the poor; first-generation; those who experienced the foster-care system; Asian-, African-, and Native American; and Hispanic students; and finally welfare-mother students with children and is referred to as the Other. Holistic critical theory not only includes the rational values of Critical Theory, but also a the values of spirituality, and interculturalism. Spirituality has a significant influence in the discourse in adult learning theories and higher education and is define secularly (non-religiously) with three components: To know oneself; To develop an ethic of care; and to know the Other. Interculturalism is defined by Deardorff's (2005) work using intercultural experts to define intercultural competence. She found 44 key elements concentrating primarily on communication and behaviors of a person functioning in an intercultural context. Nussbaum (1997) used the term interculturalism to extend the principals of diversity and multiculturalism. She defined interculturalism as a comparative searching that recognizes the common human needs across cultures and of dissonance and critical dialogue within

cultures. I extend this a bit to allow the possibility to be transformed by culturally different Others. Interculturalism is transformative and is accomplished by having profound conversations, which imply deep listening, seeking profound understanding, and encouraging internal and potentially external changes based upon new knowledge.

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PROLOGUE

The purpose of this prologue is to make explicit how I as a researcher view the world, which in turn, will impact how I conduct research. I am no different from most people who are nearly six decades old. I have developed many informal theories about life and possess a finite number of assumptions that will most emphatically influence my research. I would like to clarify and expose this reality to my readers. The assumptions, biases, and subjectivities detailed in the following paragraphs influence my life and will influence my relationship with participants as well as my interpretations.

I assume that quality schooling for all is a necessary condition for ongoing participatory democracy. I also assume that democracy is under threat when inequalities and divisions in society continue and escalate (Osborne, 1996). I assume that nearly all teachers are concerned about their students and would do their utmost to maximize their learning (Osborne, 1996). Teachers like myself are constrained in many ways that are outside of our control, for example, “class size, work intensification, societal expectations that although demanding are unclear, standardized tests, sponsored technicism rather than professionalism, and timetabling” (Osborne, 1996, p. 287). I have witnessed and experienced a discourse of despair due to these constraints. I consider that curriculum is politically constructed to serve the hegemony of White heterosexual males; I accept as fact, though not uncritically and with moral action to confront, White male privilege. I assume and witness racism, both individual actions that are actively and passively racist and institutional racism; that is, I accept as fact critical race theory and that the United States is not a classless society (Johnson, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner,

2006). I have come to see that curriculum includes not only the content and assessment, but also the social practices that take place in the classroom and hallways of educational institutions. I do not accept that curriculum is non-political or values-neutral. I witness how some students are not treated equitably based upon class, race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. I do not believe that all students have an equitable opportunity, and therefore, can do well in such an environment.

I see power used by stakeholders in educational institutions to survive, overcome, subdue, and dominate (Awasu, 1988). I believe in, and have pursued personal development of, spiritual authority as opposed to (titled) power that subdues and dominates. Combining this personal reality with the social reality that certain ethnic, class, and gender-based groups do better than others in education, I believe that power must be redistributed in society to incorporate the interests of these groups as well. I envision that this can be accomplished by the commitment to develop and apply servant leadership principles (Greenleaf, 1977) and spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003) by everyone, but especially those in power.

I will briefly define servant leadership and spiritual leadership theory before proceeding with further clarification of my assumptions. Servant leadership is defined as helping others to discover their inner spirit, earning and maintaining the trust of others, placing service before self-interest alone, and listening effectively (Greenleaf, 1997). Fry's (2003) list of the characteristics of spiritual leadership includes forgiveness, kindness, integrity, empathy/compassion, honesty, patience, courage, trust/loyalty, and humility. Fry defines spiritual leadership as "comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they

have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (2003, p. 695). I now return to clarifying my assumptions.

Ladson-Billings has written extensively concerning critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). I accept as true that in the United States, and specifically in the country’s education system, we have racism. Those who are the victims must not only learn the dominant cultural system, but also maintain their own natal, cultural competence. Teachers, the classroom leadership, and other administrators and staff, the hallway leadership, need to teach these students how to survive and overcome racism. All educational leadership must be sensitized to racism and how to resist and challenge the status quo (Osborne, 1996).

I believe that all persons, including me, possess or are even controlled by their subjectivities or blindnesses. These include personal, family, cultural, gender, generational, class, political, educational, philosophical/theological, and corporate blindnesses or subjectivities. I understand subjectivities as ways “of making sense of the world that emanate from our ethnic, gender, and class backgrounds (Osborne, 1996, p. 293). These subjectivities, I believe, can only be changed by having meaningful dialogues and profound relationships with others who are outside of our own subjectivities. These meaningful dialogues imply that not just passive conversations take place, but internalized changes take place for both. Hill (1991) noted the value of diversity and multiculturalism that recognized the need for “conversations of respect between diverse communities ... characterized by intellectual reciprocity” (p. 151). Nussbaum (1997) used the term interculturalism to extend the principals of diversity and multiculturalism. She defined interculturalism as a comparative searching that recognizes

the “common human needs across cultures and of dissonance and critical dialogue within cultures” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 260). I push this comparative searching a bit more. Not only do I inquire, compare, and search, but I also allow myself to be transformed by culturally different Others. Interculturalism is transformative and is accomplished by having profound conversations, which implies deep listening, seeking profound understanding, and encouraging internal and potentially external changes based upon new knowledge. The process, however, begins first with me. I must assume that the Other has something to teach me, that is, I become the student, making the Other the teacher.

I believe that people are precious not for what they possess in terms of wealth, beauty, and power, or what they might accomplish, but rather they are precious simply because they are alive. Each individual is automatically due recognition, respect, and love. I believe that people are not equal in terms of physical, mental, social, or psychological characteristics, but they are of equal worth. No one is more worthy than the next. Everyone is worthy of their one vote; whereas, no one is worthy of two votes. I believe that it is best to meet people on their own terms rather than my own. So, for example, in the classroom I will start with my students. I seek to know how they see themselves or how they have built their identity. I am a “warm demander” (Osborne, 1996, p. 296). I further believe that the strong should serve the weak, with definitions of strong and weak based upon context related, for example, to academic, fiscal, socio-economic, political, psychological, spiritual, or any other human measurement of difference. I further believe that an injustice occurs when one places or leaves another in servitude or an inferior position. I accept as the best practice a culturally relevant pedagogy based upon Collins’s four conceptions: “concrete experiences as a criterion for

inquiry, dialogue to assess knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and the ethic of personal accountability” (Collins as cited in Osborne, 1996, p. 305).

In the previous paragraphs I have described the assumptions, subjectivities, and biases that will influence and direct my research. I now proceed with the background of this research project.

INTRODUCTION

“I feel like a fly in a glass of white milk!” So stated one of my math students when discussing her education at a community college where the majority of students on her campus and the surrounding residential area were White and middle- to upper-class. We both understood what she meant: she felt like an ugly fly whose brown skin and cultural background was in stark contrast to the lily white sea of people. Another reality is that she is an attractive, bright, creative, non-traditional age student with three beautiful children and a loving husband. However, she felt her needs were invisible, and she was insignificant to the dominant culture that surrounded her. This dissertation is dedicated to students like her; those who are the Other, that is, not part of the dominant, White, upper-middle-class, US American culture, but who also desire to be included and participate as a full citizen. She had experienced freedom and full citizenship in her Central American birth-country until oppression forced her family to escape, legally immigrate to, and become a citizen of the United States. She is not alone, even though at times she keenly feels like she is. Besides ethnic immigrants, the Other also includes native-born US citizens who have never been fully embraced. I refer to African-American citizens, or the Blacks. I also include the poor, those who experienced foster-care, the Latinos/as of the United States, Native American citizens, and welfare mothers-with-children. These are the Other who are regularly not embraced or welcomed, and whose needs are invisible. In addition they carry the burden of significant, negative (deficit) stereotypes from the dominant culture (Davies, Safarik, & Banning, 2003; Milner, 2006).

CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The community college has been defined as “*any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree*” (emphasis authors, Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 5) and is generally an open-access higher education institution (Dougherty, 2001; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). The basis of its existence is credited to the general belief in the United States that every individual should have an opportunity to achieve her or his full potential including the potential of multiple chances for success (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). As such, the community college is often the first choice for a diverse population (Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996) and, in particular, the underrepresented population (Davies, Safarik, & Banning, 2003). Community colleges often pride themselves in their teaching abilities, emphasis on smaller class sizes, flexible schedule and format of classes, and support systems in place to further academic success. Whatever the students’ motivation and goals may be, community colleges advertize that they are there to serve those students’ goals without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, or economic class (Dougherty, 2001; Moore, 2006)

The community college in this study promotes itself as providing all students a fresh start, an opportunity for a degree or certificate, or just a chance to better or enrich a person’s life. The community college’s website emphasizes the reality that their students come from all walks of life, age groups, and educational/socio-economic backgrounds. Indeed, this community college, as other community colleges, is locally providing convenient access to higher education at the lowest cost (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Moore, 2006).

A comprehensive community college would serve the local area population by offering programs that balance the three traditional roles of transfer, vocational, and community education (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Community college researchers emphasize that these are competing realities; therefore, if the community college privileges one role over another, it will fail to meet the diverse needs of its students who are seeking opportunity and greater social mobility (Horvat, 2003; Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). Scholars have also noted that a comprehensive community college would need to wrestle with the reality that minority groups are over-represented in community colleges in order to properly serve this population. Community college leaders must recognize and deal with these realities on a daily basis to properly serve all constituents (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Davies et al., 2003; Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Critical Multicultural Perspective

A critical multicultural perspective challenges community college leaders' thinking that they are indeed serving all of the college's constituents (Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). This critical perspective states that community colleges too often perpetuate the privileges of White, upper-middle class students. Within the greater culture of community colleges the White heterosexual male is the most privileged and considered the dominant culture (Johnson, 2001). This privilege generally remains invisible to the dominant culture just as the different skill sets of the underrepresented population remain invisible.

What happens when a community college's administration, faculty, and other staff cannot recognize, appreciate, and use the different skill sets that the

underrepresented population brings to college? The answer is that the underrepresented population fails to survive and thrive in the community college (Rendón, 2002). Stage and Manning (as cited in Rhoads & Valadez, 1996), highlighted six weaknesses of the traditional approach to working with students. (1) The traditional administrator, faculty, and other staff expect the underrepresented population to change. (2) Those who are diverse among the administration, faculty, other staff, and students and already in the institution must be responsible for any new students of similar backgrounds (p.2). (3) The underrepresented population must adapt to the traditional, dominant culture. (4) The traditional approach expects to help only the identifiably diverse students. (5) Stage and Manning found the traditional approach failed to provide equitable educational opportunities to all students. (6) The traditional approach failed to educate those of the dominant culture about their culturally diverse colleagues (p. 13).

The failure of underrepresented students to survive and thrive in the community college is the problem or tension that the literature brings to this issue. Rhoads and Valadez (1996) characterized their critical multiculturalism perspective as one that “combines the conditions of cultural diversity with the emancipatory vision of a critical educational practice borrowing from feminism, postmodernism, and critical theory” (p. 9). They sought the transformation of higher education institutions, which are currently characterized by monolithic centers of power, to democratic centers that reflect existing diverse cultures and perspectives. It is from this critical theoretical perspective that this paper is written, with a refinement that I call *holistic critical theory*. This perspective includes not only the ideals of democratic institutions, the embracing of multiculturalism, and the values of emancipatory empowerment, but also the universal need of spirituality

and the transforming work of interculturalism. Holistic critical theory is situated within critical theory, critical multiculturalism, and feminism. Holistic critical theory pursues the vindication of the afflicted, the salvation of the children of the poor, and the crushing of oppressors as written millennia ago by King Solomon (Psalm 72:2-4 New American Standard Bible¹). Wherever there is oppression, in whatever form it may take, this critical perspective seeks to expose it and to holistically liberate people from it. Oppression within society could be related to class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and even also spiritual oppression. I will next provide one example from Horkheimer (1999) showing how exposure of oppression would work and how the dominant culture is blind, leaving until later a more careful explanation of holistic critical theory.

Horkheimer (1999), a critical theorist, believed that the dialectical method would make visible the insufficiencies and imperfections of ideologies, where ideology is a generalized perspective, or a popular theory of phenomena, that conceals or masks social contradictions on the behalf of a dominant class or group (as cited in Held, 1980). For example, the community college used in this study claimed that the college is cognizant of, open to, and able to address the diverse needs of all its students because of its quality teachers, administrators, and other support staff, but the reality was that the vast majority (83%) of its Black male students did not complete their first collegiate year, let alone complete a two-year degree or a certification. The community college leadership in this case failed to provide an equitable opportunity for its Black male students. This failure to

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provide an equitable opportunity is a form of oppression that takes place within a context that I will now address.

Privilege and the Dominant Culture

The dominant culture in the United States context is recognized as White upper-middle-class with the predominate power on the side of heterosexual males. This is true of the community in which the community college under study resides. Within this context White people tend to struggle to recognize that they have a “racialized existence and that their color, indeed, affords them privilege and opportunity” (Singleton & Linton, 2001, p. 56). An example of this privilege is that schools across the United States are generally designed to serve the needs of monolingual, White, middle-class students (Singleton & Linton, 2006). The community college under study is not an exception. Dominant cultures are known to have difficulty relinquishing control due to their assumption of superiority; this results in different, diverse cultures being devalued and measured through a deficit lens (Crossman, 2003; Davies et al., 2003). De Cieri et al. warned that ‘the patronization of paternalism’ is ever present (as cited in Crossman, 2003, p. 510). Crossman (2003) also noted that since the spiritual patronization and paternalistic mindset of the dominant culture are subtle, this mindset is difficult to change. Thus public education, including the community college under study, can place the blame for failure of their underrepresented students on the very shoulders of these students. Educational leadership can fault their poor homes, cultural handicaps, linguistic deficiencies, and deprived neighborhoods for any racial achievement gap (Davies et al., 2003; Singleton & Linton, 2001).

Simply put public “schools are not designed to educate students of color, and educators continue to lack the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to affirm racial diversity” (Singleton & Linton, 2001, p. 5). There is a need to critically examine the community college structures and normative culture that push underrepresented students out before their achieving sufficient cultural capital to exchange for what they originally desired (Davies et al., 2003). The fault is not only the responsibility of community college leadership, but is also potentially shared by those who do research.

A critical theory researcher seeks not only to expose the privilege of the dominant culture and the resulting contradiction(s), but also ultimately seeks to liberate the entire community from oppressive rituals—to liberate both the oppressor and the oppressed. However, White critical theory researchers are warned that “if a researcher’s experiences are consistent with the privileges and benefits of how the world works (i. e. the dominant culture), that researcher may find it difficult to engage in critical thinking about his or her situation, experiences, privileges and how his/her scholarship promotes, ensures and maintains the status quo” (Milner, 2006, p. 369). Milner expected that White researchers pay attention to privilege to avoid concluding and maintaining “privileged, uncritical perceptions” (p. 369). This challenged and forced me, a White middle-class heterosexual male critical theorist, to be self-reflexive. I continually ask myself, “How much do I ‘contribute to the pattern of scholarly isolation, disciplinary myopia, and lack of innovation in research designs that limits that transformative power’ of my own work?” (Davies et al., 2003, p. 856). I now turn to what the literature says about the Other, that is, those who are not included within the dominant culture.

Literature on the Other

The literature has referred to the Other by various names such as ethnic minority, at risk, at hope, linguistic minority, culturally different, linguistically disadvantaged, marginalized and normalized (Osborne, 1996); the abandoned poor (DiBiase, 2001; Richan, 1988); those who experienced foster-care (Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004); working poor, deserving poor (Shipler, 2005); underserved (while they are in college) (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004); academic proletariat, failure addicts (Moore, 2006); economically and educationally challenged [EEC] (Walpole, 2007); and underrepresented (Davies, 2003; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996).

I will use the terms EEC, Other, and underrepresented population interchangeably to represent the population under study in this paper. I do this because in the context under study the student population in which I am interested can be effectively described by these 3 terms. However, when I use the term EEC I will be emphasizing the socioeconomic class difference of the Other as compared to the dominant middle- and upper-class culture. When I use the term underrepresented population, I will be emphasizing the racial/ethnicity difference of the Other as compared to the dominant White culture. In some cases I will use the phrase “of color” because it is found in the literature and it, too, confronts the dominant White culture. When I use the term Other, I am emphasizing both socioeconomic and racial/ethnicity differences with that of the dominant culture. Thus the underrepresented in the community college under study are the poor, first-generation, those who experienced foster-care, Asian-, African-, Native-, and Latino/a-American students, and finally welfare-mother students with children. It is important to note that the *who* of the underrepresented population could change as the

context changes. Therefore, in some contexts, the White population could be the underrepresented population.

My literature review will focus on the issues, lifeworld, and needs of the following distinct categories of people: the poor, first-generation, those who experienced foster-care, Asian-, African-, Native-, and Latino/a-American students, and welfare-mother students with children. The literature reveals that the issues and needs of the underrepresented are not recognized and therefore are left unaddressed. The term “underserved” is used to describe this phenomenon as I mentioned above (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004).

Due to the legal requirements placed upon K-12 education a great deal of literature focuses on this education level. There is also significant research on higher education in 4-year research institutions. Davies, Safarik, and Banning (2003) examined 65 of 491 articles published by *Community College Journal of Research and Practice (CCJRP)*, one of three primary journals that examine community colleges. These 65 articles addressed the underrepresented population between 1990 and 2000. There is research on the underrepresented population in community college (see meta-study Davies et al., 2003), but the use of critical theory as a methodology is not common. I searched *CCJRP* using only the word underrepresented. Of 43 studies found there were 10 quantitative studies, 4 descriptive statistics, 7 practice or essay, 1 mixed method, 4 reports, 3 qualitative surveys, 7 meta-studies, 2 case studies, 1 phenomenological study, 1 bibliography, and 1 book review. There were no critical theory studies, but there was a critical multicultural study and also a feminist study from 1997 to 2006 in the *CCJRP*. Research on the underrepresented population is well studied, but not community college

structure, dominant ideology, and the lifeworld of the underrepresented population.

Holistic critical theory research is in order for the community college and specifically a study that examines community college structure, dominant ideology, and influences on the lifeworld of the underrepresented population. This brings me now to the purpose of the study and my research questions.

Statement of Purpose

As stated above holistic critical theory research is needed to examine community college structure, dominant ideology, and influences on the lifeworld of the underrepresented population. Brookfield (2005) proposed two elements by which critical theory could reframe adult learning theory and thus impact postsecondary education, specifically community colleges. First, he wrote that critical theory would expect an adult “to understand how the reproduction of blatantly unequal structures based on massive economic disparity is accepted as the natural order of things by adults within successive generations” (p. 30). The second element is that critical theory should be used to critically reflect on the assumptions made in adult learning, that is, critical thinking. My study is most directly related to the first element, and I will focus on this.

Brookfield (2005) noted that critical theory seeks to understand and then challenge the perpetual reproduction of social, political, and economic domination. To understand this reproduction one must research the ways that dominant ideologies educate adults to accept the current order when it is not in their best interest. So, for example, an underrepresented community college student needs to understand how the curriculum, pedagogy (delivery of the curriculum), and the outcomes of curriculum perpetuate his or her own domination. An underrepresented adult learner could ask,

“How do the current curriculum, pedagogy, and outcomes perpetuate my own social, political, or economic domination that is not in my best interest?” After achieving such insight the student must challenge the domination and work to reframe these social constructs. Similar questions could be asked by the underrepresented population to understand and then challenge the administrative structures, bureaucratic rationality, and ideological forces that exist in the community college.

Purpose has two meanings within this study. Here I will describe the purpose of my study, that is, I will describe my intended aim. The second meaning of purpose is considered in the Research Design section.

The purpose of my study is to critically examine a community college’s structures, ideologies, and how the underrepresented population develops the necessary forms of reasoning to challenge this domination and oppression. There will be multiple results from this research—those that impact me personally, the community college and the greater community, scholarship, and the underrepresented population. I propose the following expected results listed in the same order as described above.

I will be transformed by the people in this study—the underrepresented population—and this might be the most significant result. I expect to learn how I have perpetuated and contributed to acts of oppression as a faculty member in a community college. I will then be able to cease my oppression of Others, challenge the existing order, and change what I do in the classroom. I can be reconciled to those whom I have harmed and then reframe that relationship to be freeing and fulfilling for both. My false ideologies can be exposed as a lie and be reworked to include the different Other. This result will be demonstrated by a completed dissertation in addition to internal changes

described above that will result in my modeling a more caring and loving classroom environment.

Second, every community college administrator, faculty member, and staff will have an opportunity to be transformed as well. They, too, can learn their culpability in the perpetuation of domination and oppression. This is a step in building a democratic organization that is a lifesong for all of its students. No longer will the community college experience be the swansong for the underrepresented. False ideologies will be exposed and replaced with a new theory of difference where difference is embrace and validated. This result will be demonstrated by: changes in perceptions, attitudes, and actions of administrators, faculty, and staff; changes in the structures of power and domination that are more democratic and inclusive as opposed to authoritarian and hierarchical; and the destruction of false ideologies, replaced with ideologies that are connected with the Other—people who are different. The community college always resides in a community. The community as a whole will have an opportunity to understand and challenge the existing social, political, and economic domination of its citizens. Then differences, including sexual orientation (a controversial issue of the community under study), can be embraced and different people be validated. This result will be demonstrated by a magazine article that the local populace could read.

I have already noted the lack of critical theory research within the community college context. The third intended result, impacting scholarship, is the publication of a holistic critical theory dissertation as well as an article in a journal such as the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. This medium would share my research results with the scholarship community and community college leadership.

Finally there should be an emancipatory effect for the underrepresented population. They will be validated—genuinely welcomed in their community college (Rendón, 2002). Their personhood will be respected and appropriately cared for instead of experiencing marginalization. The community college should finally become the lifesong that has been promised to them since the community college conception (Moore, 2006).

This study is not just theoretical exercise, but an idea can change a community and be placed into practice. This is participatory-emancipatory research seeking emancipatory results—social justice, where the researcher and the researched mutually participate and change. This result could be demonstrated by changes in me, the community college, the greater community, scholarship, and the underrepresented population. They will tell me the changes they experience. Such is the purpose and passion of this study, which now brings me to the focus of the inquiry: the research questions.

Research Questions: The Focus of the Inquiry

I have stated that the purpose of my study is to critically examine community college structures, ideologies, and how the underrepresented population develops the necessary forms of reasoning to challenge this domination and oppression (Brookfield, 2005). I also have stated that this is a participatory-emancipatory research seeking emancipatory results—social justice. Therefore, to do this research, I must ask emancipatory research questions. Within this quest I must ask questions related to difference, privilege, and power, all of which show up in the community college structural system and its (false) ideological beliefs that have been socially constructed by

administrators, faculty, and staff (Held, 1980). This structural system and associated ideologies are then experienced by the underrepresented student (Brookfield, 2005). I want to know how successful, underrepresented students experienced this. For the purpose of this study I define a successful, underrepresented student to be any student who is identified as underrepresented in the local context, and is a current student in, or a graduate of, the community college who maintained a C average. My first research question and its associated sub-question follow.

First Research Question

The first research question has to do with experience—the experiences of successful underrepresented population dealing with the community college structural system which is made up of programs, policies, and rules including the people using and following the various policies and rules. The sub-question concentrates on experiences that limited, or prevented access for, the underrepresented population.

How is the structural system, which was set up by administrators, faculty, and staff, experienced by successful, underrepresented students?

How did the structural system limit or grant access to underrepresented students?

Second Research Question

The second research question has to do with reasoning—the thinking of successful underrepresented students who must deal with (false) ideologies within the community college. The second research question and associated sub-questions follow.

How did successful, underrepresented students learn forms of reasoning that challenged dominant ideology as conducted by administrators, faculty, and staff?

How did they question social forms that ideology justifies? How did they question cultural forms that ideology justifies? How did they question political forms that ideology justifies?

Third Research Question

The third question builds on the second question and expands the first. This third question, with its sub-questions, has to do with lifeworld (Habermas, 1984, 1987).

How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of capitalist ethics?

How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of market forces? How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of bureaucratic rationality?

Fourth Research Question

The next research question has to do with care, that is, caring about another person and the issues that she or he faces, an aspect of spirituality (Fry, 2003; Rendón, 2002). The purpose of this question is to explore the depth of care that administrators, faculty, and staff demonstrate towards successful underrepresented students. This question examines whether these students were warmly welcomed, felt that they belonged in the community college, and experienced membership of the community college.

How have, or have not, administrators, faculty, and staff demonstrated appropriate care, (that is, addressing the felt and real needs) for the successful, underrepresented students in the hallways and classrooms of a community college?

Summary

I have defined and listed the main research questions that will provide the focus of my critical theory study. I have demonstrated how they are connected to critical theory and therefore are appropriate for critical research. I also have shown that these research questions are related directly to the background of the problem and a specific problem or, in this case, a contradiction. Every researcher also uses specialized terms that are related to their study. I will now present a few definitions that will be used in my dissertation that will offer an understanding of how I am using critical theory. After this abbreviated dictionary I will proceed with the potential delimitations or limitations of this study.

Definitions

Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2007) noted the “systematic language” that is specific to the field of research and provides a high order of precision (p. 128). System language is not the same as common language. In research the words chosen must have the same meaning to the writer and the reader. Locke et al. recommended: that (a) when the current systematic language is adequate, do not invent a new word; (b) present definitions early on in the proposal/dissertation; (c) avoid the use of a word in common language when it already is used as systematic language within the same document; (d) clarify the use of a systematic language term when it is first used in the proposal/dissertation if its use is either more limited or expanded; (e) choose with great care a common language term to use as systematic language; and finally, (f) provide an unambiguous definition for the use of the word, or, as Roberts (2004) stated: define it operationally.

Bureaucratic Rationality. I use the term *bureaucratic rationality* to describe a way of thinking and decision-making that is derived from capitalist ethics and approved by market forces. Thus bureaucratic rationality is often the way that administrators, faculty, or staff think and make decisions that harm other administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Bureaucratic rationality is actually a human power derived from the structural system conceived by capitalists and based upon capitalist ethics and market forces. I would agree with Rendón (2005) that the six agreements (discussed under Capitalist Ethics) must be re-examined, taking into account the reality that the United States is a capitalist society and higher education within this society must consider this in conducting its affairs.

Capitalist Ethics. *Capitalist ethics* are ethics that are espoused and inspired by capitalism. In higher education these ethics provide the general rules of conduct for the administration, faculty, staff, and students. I would say that they are generally not explicit, but implicit. I believe that Rendón's (2005) agreements proscribe and normalize conduct in higher education. Rendón wrote of six privileged agreements that are present in the academic culture of the academy in the United States. These privileged agreements are to "privilege mental knowing" (p. 81), "separation" (p. 86), "competition" (p. 88), "perfection" (p.89), "monoculturalism" (p. 91), and "work addiction" (p. 93). I would consider these agreements to carry hegemonic authority in higher education and constitute a type of elemental power constructed by humans.

Care. I define the term *care* to be the inner values and attitudes that enable sight, the ability to see visible needs and sense invisible needs, and the corresponding decisions, responses, and actions of people that comprise a particular institution. Care could be

understood as how the lifeworlds of individuals intersect and are lived out, that is, where the lack of resources in one individual is addressed by the resources of another. In an education institution *care* can be demonstrated by administrators, faculty, staff, and students to address the needs of others. Rendón (1994) would have the lifeworlds of the education institution's attentive faculty lived out by demonstrating "genuine concern for teaching students," being "personable and approachable toward students," treating students equitably, structuring learning experiences so that students discover their own ability to learn, and working individually with those students who needed extra help (p. 40).

I would define a *caring institutional culture* as one having at least the skills, values, and attitudes that are described in Rendón's (1994) validation theory; Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee's (2002) emotional intelligence (EQ); Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory; and Zohar and Marshall's (2000) spiritual intelligence (SQ).

Communication Action. For Habermas (1984, 1987) the basic principle that helps societies integrate is communication action. *Communication action* is the process of institutional members being committed to dialogue in order to achieve understanding. If understanding is not achieved through dialogue, then it is possible that a pragmatic solution could be negotiated. The process of dialogue assumes that each person has a voice and that the voice is respected, heard, and considered; it is the foundation for a democratic institution.

When communication action becomes increasingly dysfunctional, or disabled, then, according to Habermas (1984, 1987), it has been colonized. The result of this colonization is crisis, that is, social institutions are no longer legitimate. Legitimation

means that citizens believe that their social institutions, including the state, are just, benevolent, serve or function in their best interest, and are deserving of their support, loyalty, and adherence. To summarize Habermas's concern is how the communication action has become colonized, and then how that colonization undermines legitimacy in various social institutions. Participatory democracy, which is based upon the equal rights of individuals and led by reasoned dialogue, is society's best hope for integration.

Emancipatory Aims. Emancipatory aims "raise awareness, foster self-understanding and self-determination, and create opportunities to engage in social action and seek social justice" (Schram, 2006, p. 32). Schram (2006) noted several authors, such as, Brantlinger, Lather, and Marshall and Rossman, whose research emphasized action, advocacy, or empowerment that promote Emancipatory aims.

Ideology and False Ideology. Shank (2006) defined ideology as an organized set of beliefs that guide social action and are generally lived out implicitly rather than articulated explicitly. Ideology is fundamental to critical theory and to critical social science research. According to Habermas (1984, 1987) ideologies are considered neutral and everyone has them. The problem begins with false ideologies that create false consciousness, that is, a person, or a group, cannot see how their beliefs impact others. This false understanding will also cause individuals to act in ways that are contradictory to their self-interest (Shank, 2006).

Leadership, classroom: Classroom leadership is the instructor of a classroom who is guiding the learning experiences by selecting pedagogical methods, curriculum, and learning environment.

Leadership, hallway: Hallway leadership includes the administrators and administrative staff who influence and direct the structural system found in the hallways, administrative offices, and other environments outside of the classroom.

Lifeworld. For Habermas (1984, 1987), lifeworld includes all the skills, values, and attitudes set within an attentive individual's environment. Individuals jointly build institutions based upon the union of these skills, values, and attitudes; this is seen in an institution's programs, policies, and rules. Examples of institutions could be a particular family, business, or an educational organization. I agree with Habermas that individuals inevitably define their environments, coordinate their activities, and create a measure of harmony while constructing both individual and institutional identities. Habermas further asserts that ideally this should be accomplished by communicative interaction, but it could be realized pragmatically through negotiation. My concern, or perhaps even disagreement, is that these programs, policies, and rules must never become the final "say" for any and all situations. They must never become, as it were, a god. Dialogue between the conflicting or concerned parties must be practiced and valued over any rule. These elemental programs, policies, and rules must not become a power unto themselves, but rather a guideline for individual members. They must not be evoked in order to avoid a dialogue or to make an easy decision. I have found that avoiding a difficult situation never produces a permanent, healthy, and integrated solution. Humans are too complex to rely on fallible rules that fallible people have developed. There are no short-cuts to understanding; individuals must at times proceed through a difficult process of dialogue and listening.

Market Forces. A force is a strength, energy, or power that can cause a change. A market force then is a power of the market place to exert strength, energy, or power to cause a change. A market force is derived from, or is the result of, capitalist ethics (Brookfield, 2005). I will focus on how market forces can and do impose changes in higher education, specifically within a community college. A market force is a type of human power and can, and often does, carry hegemonic authority where the victims of this power feel that they cannot resist or change the reality of the power.

Praxis. Freire (1970) described praxis to be the merger of reflection and action or the translation of an idea into a moment of action. Therefore, he considered a theory, an idea, to be critical to the extent that human emancipation is sought, a moment of action. Praxis requires both reflection and action.

Privilege. McIntosh describes privilege this way: “privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do” (as cited in Johnson, 2001, p. 23).

Reciprocity. Reciprocity is the mutual giving between a researcher and a participant. The participant gives information concerning the topic of interest to the researcher. The researcher gives to the participant by providing a report of findings; providing limited therapeutic counseling; or offering some other benefit (Corbin & Morse, 2003). It is also possible that the researcher may provide information that may emancipate the participant; reveal, for example, a false ideology, thus making available freedom from a false consciousness; and/or expose the potential opportunity that the participant could pursue which otherwise would have been missed.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is the call “for self-reflection, indeed, critical self-reflection and self-knowledge, and a willingness to consider how who one is affects what one is able to observe, hear, and understand in the field and as an observer and analyst” (Patton, 2002, p. 299).

Structural System. The net result of the process of individuals constructing programs, policies, and rules is the institution’s structural system (Brookfield, 2005). The structural system also includes the people using and following the various policies and rules, as well as their job descriptions and associated hierarchies. All of this is understood to be the institutional culture and identity. Invariably some individuals are privileged within a structural system, while some are not. When the structural system is recognized as causing harm or destroying some of the members, then the elemental power of the structural system has ceased to be legitimate and must be reconstructed.

Delimitations

Locke et al. (2007) defined delimitations of a study to mean “the limits inherent in the use of a particular construct or population” (p. 16). I have delimited my study to the underrepresented population as found in the context, the community college and its surrounding community. In this study the population under study includes the poor, first-generation, experienced foster-care, Asian-, African-, and Native American, and Hispanic students, welfare-mother students with children, and anyone else marginalized, for example, some international students attending the community college. I will further delimit my study by not studying those oppressed due to sexual orientation or the physically disabled, limiting the study to class, gender (male or female), and race/ethnicity issues.

Roberts (2004) expanded on the list of delimitations to include the time of study, selected aspects of the problem, and selected criteria of the study. In my study the time is delimited to the fall 2008 to spring 2009, and the selected aspects of the problem are the vision, career, and fields of study limitations placed upon, and the marginalization experienced by, the underrepresented population. The limitations and marginalization on the underrepresented population was performed by the administration, faculty, staff, and other students of the community college under. The selected criteria are not only the population described above, but also the methodology chosen—holistic critical theory. The boundary then is defined by the population, the geographical location of the community college and its surrounding community, the time frame, and aspects and criteria described above. These are the delimitations of my study. Limitations will be found in chapter 5.

To summarize the issues related to delimitations, it is my responsibility to recognize, understand, and report any constraints related to my study and how I will consider them as I formulate my research study. I will now describe a significant delimitation that forms my research—my conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework: Orientational

I understand conceptual framework and the theoretical grounding of phenomena to be studied, to mean a theoretical tradition. Patton (2002) listed 16 different traditions and stressed that this was not an exhaustive list. He asserted that there was no consensus on how to classify qualitative research.

The significance of these different traditions and the lack of consensus is that it is possible that research that was conducted from a different framework “will not be readily

interpretable by or meaningful” to the reader (Patton, 2002, p. 134). Therefore, it is important to explicitly state one’s conceptual framework. From all the possible frameworks, I selected the orientation framework and specifically critical theory. I accomplished this in the process of answering the six questions posed by Patton (2002). The six questions according to Patton are: What do I believe is the nature of reality? How do I know what I know? How should I study the world? What is worth knowing? What questions should I ask? How do I engage in inquiry? Ultimately my decision was based upon what I as a researcher wanted to accomplish and which set of assumptions I substantially shared (Patton, 2002). I will now provide an abbreviated explanation in the same order listed above.

First I accept the existence of multiple realities which are inevitably socially constructed. The second answer is found in my Prologue. The third answer is that I must study my world in a particular historical materialistic context. Next, I concluded that what matters most is freedom for the individual and democratic processes to be unhindered by domination and oppression. Fifth, the subjects that critical theory examines are important to me, that is, structure, dominant ideology, and the lifeworld. This perspective examines difference, privilege, and power and offers the tools to see (false) ideological beliefs. As I stated previously a critical theory researcher seeks not only to expose the privilege of the dominant culture and the resulting contradiction(s), but ultimately seeks to liberate the entire community.

Finally I am internally pressed to connect with the Subject (Freire, 1970), that is, the Other—the underrepresented population. I must expose privilege and false ideology

of the dominant culture and the resulting contradictions. Critical theory is my theoretical concept and methodology.

Summary

I have addressed several issues of the research design, that is, the background of the problem; a problem or, in this case, a contradiction; the selection and fit of the theoretical perspective; purpose of the research project; the research question(s); any assumptions related to the researcher; definitions of specialized terms; delimitations; and conceptual framework. I have also connected each of these issues together and have shown how they mutually support each other to ensure the trustworthiness, validity, and quality of the research design.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Frameworks

Socio-economic status (SES) significantly influences one's participation in higher education, yet social class is difficult to recognize, let alone define (Walpole, 2007). In order to inspire, motivate, and serve the lowest SES students, practitioners must understand what these students face to effectively recruit, retain, and finally graduate them. Furthermore, practitioners must also act on the information provided by researchers and policymakers (Walpole, 2007). In this literature review I will examine five frameworks and models that are used to investigate social class: status attainment theory, human capital theory, financial nexus model, Bourdieuan theory, and critical race theory. Social class also comprises four definitional categories: socioeconomic status, parental income, parent education, and parent occupation. I will review these definitions as well as discuss positions held by the dominant group.

Population

There are several terms used to describe or name the Other, for example, ethnic minority, at risk, at hope, linguistic minority, culturally different, linguistically disadvantaged, marginalized and normalized (Osborne, 1996); the abandoned poor (DiBiase, 2001; Richan, 1988); working poor, deserving poor (Shipler, 2005); underserved (while they are in college) (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004); academic proletariat, failure addicts (Moore, 2006); economically and educationally challenged (Walpole, 2007); and underrepresented (Davies, 2003; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). The Other, or underrepresented population, in the community college under study

are the poor, first-generation, former foster children, Asian-, African-, Native, and Hispanic American students, and finally welfare-mother students with children. To holistically address, understand, and effectively communicate the concerns and needs of these students, Walpole (2007) suggested an umbrella term, economically and educationally challenged (EEC), which includes all research on this population. Her observation was that “this collective group of EEC students faces similar kinds of experiences and levels of involvement while enrolled, and has similar outcomes after college” (Walpole, 2007, p. 15).

As I mentioned in Chapter 1 I will use the terms *EEC* and *underrepresented* interchangeably to represent the population under study in this paper. In some cases I will use the phrase *of color* because it is found in the literature and because it confronts the dominant White culture as well. I also use the term *Other* to emphasize both socioeconomic and racial/ethnicity differences as compared to the dominant White culture.

In describing this population who are at risk in many ways, Siu (1996) avoided the idea that focused exclusively on socioeconomic and cultural characteristics. She was concerned that its use would potentially blame students for their shortcomings. Instead Siu recommended a more ecological view by highlighting instead the failures of the system and the inequity of access. With this in mind I will also examine in this literature review the real and felt needs of the EEC population. I do this so that practitioners, the classroom and hallway leadership, will have sensitivity to, and knowledge about, EEC students in order to achieve higher retention and graduation rates.

I will first describe the five frameworks that examine social class followed by the four definitional categories of social class. I will then paint a picture of EEC students as a whole and proceed to address issues peculiar to the poor, first-generation, former foster children, Asian-, African-, Native, and Hispanic American students, and finally students who are welfare mothers with children.

Frameworks and Models, Definitional Categories, and Dominant Views

The literature noted five frameworks and models that are used to investigate social class: status attainment theory, human capital theory, financial nexus model, Bourdieuan Theory, and Critical Race Theory (CRT). An examination of the historical basis of these frameworks and models concerning social class is beyond the scope of this study, but I do want to note the connection to my methodology, critical theory. Marx defined social class in economic terms related to the means of production (Held, 1980). Weber (1958) expanded on this economic definition to include patterns of consumption and lifestyles. Thus Weber saw the various socio-economic classes as “communities with concrete signals of membership eligibility, such as location of residence, family history, and choice of marriage partners” (as cited in Walpole, 2007, p. 8). This stratification formed the basis of excluding different classes and individuals, or simply the basis of exclusivity. As you will read in Chapter 3, Marx and Weber formed a significant base for further studies by the Frankfurt School into issues of class, but not solely on economics. In this literature review I will include numerous variables that are operationalized by parental educational level, occupational status, income, zip codes, and computers in the home, which reflects Weber’s influence.

Because the first three frameworks, status attainment theory, human capital theory, and financial nexus model, all use quantitative methods for research, I will not employ them in this qualitative study. I will however briefly describe them. Status attainment theory examines the life-long processes that allow low-SES individuals to achieve upward social mobility. Human capital theory and the financial nexus model use an economic lens to study stratification of education and class. In contrast, I will exploit the logic and schemes of the last two frameworks, Bourdieuan and Critical Race Theories, which have guided qualitative social class research. Both frameworks share the concepts of structure, which has to do with economic forces, families, and schools, and agency, which has to do with personal choices. Separately and together these concepts impact outcomes for the theories.

Bourdieuan Theory

Inherent to this framework is the principle that educational institutions' structures reproduce social class, making this sociological theory important to higher education research (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Walpole, 2007). The original theory emphasized that cultural capital was a resource to obtain scarce rewards that could be monopolized by the dominant class (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). The term is also used to denote highbrow aesthetic culture and as a means to distinguish among forms of knowledge, for example, technical skills. Within this framework are recognized several types of capital - economic, social, and cultural - and historically qualitative inquiry ethnography is used (as opposed to quantitative methodologies used in the first three frameworks). Cultural capital is passed on to children by their parents in the form of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are re-invested for social profits (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). As viewed

from the Bourdieuan framework, the process of accumulating and exchanging capital was foundational to educational decisions made by the underrepresented. Education enabled a person to accumulate capital, which then could be converted for additional educational or occupational gains (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Bourdieuian Theory employs both structuring mechanism and individual agency to understand educational outcomes (Walpole, 2007). Within this framework individuals are viewed as “status strivers who strategically improvise to attain desired social and economic goods” (p. 23). This improvisation is normalized by habitus, that is, the total social class environment comprising perceptions, opportunities, and possible or appropriate responses towards any given situation. In this way habitus, or agency, works together with social structures to shape educational outcomes. Thus, due to the enduring nature of habitus, low-SES students tend to maintain lower academic aspirations, use inappropriate strategies to attain desired social gains, or resist adopting a new habitus (Walpole, 2007). This form of resistance is self-defeating, resulting in the perpetuation of a lower social position. The decisions to resist are made unconsciously; decisions are made because they feel comfortable or normal, with the basis of these decisions rooted in social class and social status (Walpole, 2007). There are studies that show low-SES students can realize upward mobility because of exposure to different habitus or values in a collegiate environment (Harker, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Horvat (2003) emphasized that Bourdieuan researchers should use all four of Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs—habitus, capital, field, and practice—not just a select term such as cultural capital. She insisted that this framework can thus be effective in understanding social interaction and the social world.

Habitus. As previously stated, habitus is the total social class environment comprising perceptions, opportunities, and possible or appropriate responses towards any given situation. Habitus, or agency, and prevailing social structures shape educational outcomes. Habitus has an enduring nature, but it is also transposable (Walpole, 2007). Bourdieu wrote that habitus can be viewed “as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which ... functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (as cited in Horvat, 2003, ¶22). Social interaction then is subconsciously guided by habitus, that is, the appropriated and internalized societal rules for a particular field. Habitus guides and shapes what a person values, and thus desires, such as capital.

Capital. This is the term that is most familiar to U.S. audiences. Bourdieu recognized several forms of capital: economic capital, which is related to money and other resources that have monetary value; social capital, which comprises an individual’s social connections or networks or, as Bourdieu wrote, “collectivity-owned capital” (as cited in Horvat, 2003, ¶29); and finally there is cultural capital. This is classified into three states: embodied, which is the person’s internal character and temperament; objectified, which includes the tangible things such as books, instruments, and computers that are seen and institutionalized (Horvat, 2003); and the institutionalized state which in an academic environment would be degrees or various credentials. Habitus and capital are tied together within a particular context, or field.

Field. According to Bourdieu, field relates to the “rules of the game” (as cited in Horvat, 2003, ¶31). Horvat distinguished the term field from the U.S.-American term domain. Using the analogy of a game, field is an arrangement of socially competing

relationships based upon their own rules. Horvat emphasized that field can be analyzed independently of individuals and that cultural capital does not have the same value across fields. Thus, the value of capital is dependent upon a specific field and the habitus of individuals who are using the capital.

Practice. The three concepts of habitus, capital, and field come together formulaically in the term practice as “[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice” (as cited in Horvat, 2003, ¶31). Hence, habitus interacts with capital within a particular field of interaction, resulting in practice. Practice is the action of an individual who is guided by his/her habitus to exchange capital within a field for a desired end.

Miscellaneous Bourdieuan Terms. Three additional Bourdieuan terms that I wish to define are symbolic power, generating distinction, and domination. Symbolic power occurs when the dominated misrecognize domination and accept without questioning the natural order of things (Horvat, 2003). By not recognizing their domination, the dominated continue to practice their habitus thereby perpetuating the domination. Generating distinction means that the social enterprise separates, or distinguishes, individuals from one another. Bourdieu stated that “the dominant culture ... contributes to the legitimation of the established order by establishing distinctions (hierarchies) and legitimating these distinctions” (as cited in Horvat, 2003, ¶19). Domination is significant to Bourdieu. Horvat clarified that since the dominant culture generates distinctions, they are also able to define the distances of various subcultures from themselves. By this the dominant group defines the hierarchy of their social world.

In summary, the Bourdieuan Theory assumes that educational institutions’ structures reproduce social class. It further assumes that cultural capital is a resource to

obtain scarce rewards that can be monopolized by the dominant class. The theory's use is a good fit for qualitative inquiry, and resonates with higher education issues, in which education enables a person to accumulate capital that can be converted for additional educational or occupational gains. Bourdieuan Theory employs both structuring mechanism and individual agency to understand educational outcomes. Finally this theory recognizes domination and how the dominated could perpetuate their domination.

Critical Race Theory

The last of the five frameworks or models of socio-economic status is Critical Race Theory. CRT is rooted in the civil rights movement (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Walpole, 2007). Some scholars feel that race was not sufficiently addressed by educational research (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), particularly not in the Bourdieuan Theory (Yosso, 2005). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) established CRT based on the legal agenda of the civil rights movement, in order to highlight the underrepresented population's experiences in higher education. Walpole (2007) wrote that CRT also influenced her concept of EEC students.

Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) summarized six themes that unified and defined the CRT movement: (a) racism is endemic to American life; (b) CRT challenges the neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy of the dominant legal claims; (c) CRT demands a contextual/historical analysis of the law and assumes racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage; (d) CRT is resolute on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and the communities of origin in analyzing law and society; (e) CRT is

interdisciplinary; and (f) CRT works toward eliminating racial oppression and all forms of oppression.

The impact of CRT on education is significant because it has provided understanding of the underrepresented population's educational experiences, especially in higher education (Walpole, 2007). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that race was under-theorized in educational research because: "(1) race continues to be significant in the United States; (2) U.S. society is based on property rights rather than human rights; and (3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity" (p. 48). This idea of property rights was extended into education, for example, through curriculum where curriculum represented "intellectual property" (p. 54). Thus more affluent communities distinguished, separated, and stratified themselves from the non-White and poor communities by undergirding intellectual property with the "'real' property ... of science labs, computers, and other state-of-the-art technologies, [and] appropriately certified and prepared teachers" (p. 54). A major emphasis of CRT is the recognition of protecting the property of Whiteness and White privilege (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

CRT is an analytical tool used to understand educational and societal inequities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT can be used to reveal: the lived experienced of "raced" people (p. 48); the ideology of the dominant culture; hegemonic forces; exclusion and hierarchy of educational and social structures and practices; White privilege and domination; symbolic and structural barriers; subversion of civil right laws within an educational context; attacks on identity of people of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995); and that whiteness has been naturalized (Roediger, 1991). The CRT framework

recognizes the resistance to the hegemony of middle- and upper-middle-class White culture as a positive force in the educational outcomes of the underrepresented (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). In summary, “CRT is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact ... social structures, practices and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70).

CRT and Latina/o Critical Race Theory, or LatCrit, share five fundamental themes that inform the “basic perspective, research methods, and pedagogy of a CRT and LatCrit framework in education” (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 312). These themes are: the centrality of race and racism that also intersect with other forms of domination; challenging the dominant ideology; the pursuit of social justice that is transformational; recognizing the importance of Students of Colors’ experiential knowledge as “legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education”; and an interdisciplinary perspective that “challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods” (p. 314).

The 2000 U.S. Census reported that approximately 13 percent (35.3 million) of the U.S. population self-identified as Latinas/os. This represents the largest underrepresented racial/ethnic group in the United States (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). The five largest Latina/o subgroups were Chicanas/os, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Salvadorans. Solorzano et al. examined the racialized structures, policies, and practices that impact Latinas/os’ educational attainment and

academic progress They found that community colleges are the college of choice for the majority of Latina/o students largely because these students were unprepared for 4-year colleges, the educational costs were lower at community colleges, and these 2-year institutions provide needed remediation. Sólorzano et al. noted, however, that Latinas/os are more likely not to complete a baccalaureate degree when beginning their college experience in community colleges. The reason for this failure to transfer often results from “institutional structures that fail to support their academic needs and professional goals and aspirations” (Sólorzano et al., 2005, p. 282).

As noted earlier, CRT is an analytical tool that can be used to understand educational and societal inequities and to create a more just and equitable learning space. Sólorzano and Bernal (2001) stated that the LatCrit framework can also be used to examine ineffective educational practices. LatCrit is “concerned with a progressive sense of a coalitional Latina/Latino pan-ethnicity and addresses issues ... such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality” as well as antiradicalization and antiradicalism (p. 311). LatCrit encourages resistance and disputes the assumption that certain traditional skills and knowledge are essential to society and must be taught to everyone regardless of individual ability, need, and interest.

Sólorzano and Bernal (2001) focused on historical and current Latina/o resistance, which they described in a four-quadrant plane (see Figure 1). These authors defined four types of student resistance: reactionary behaviors which occur when a student lacks both a critique of the oppressive conditions and the motivation to seek social justice; self-defeating resistance, which is demonstrated when the student may have some critique of oppressive social conditions but is not motivated to seek social justice; conformist

resistance, which is displayed when a student is motivated for social justice but lacks a social critique; and transformative resistance, which is accomplished when a student pursues social justice and has a critique of the social oppression. Sólorzano and Bernal concluded that the greatest opportunity for change is accomplished through transformational resistance. It should be noted that the arrows represent a continuum of critique of social oppression and motivation for social justice (Sólorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 318).

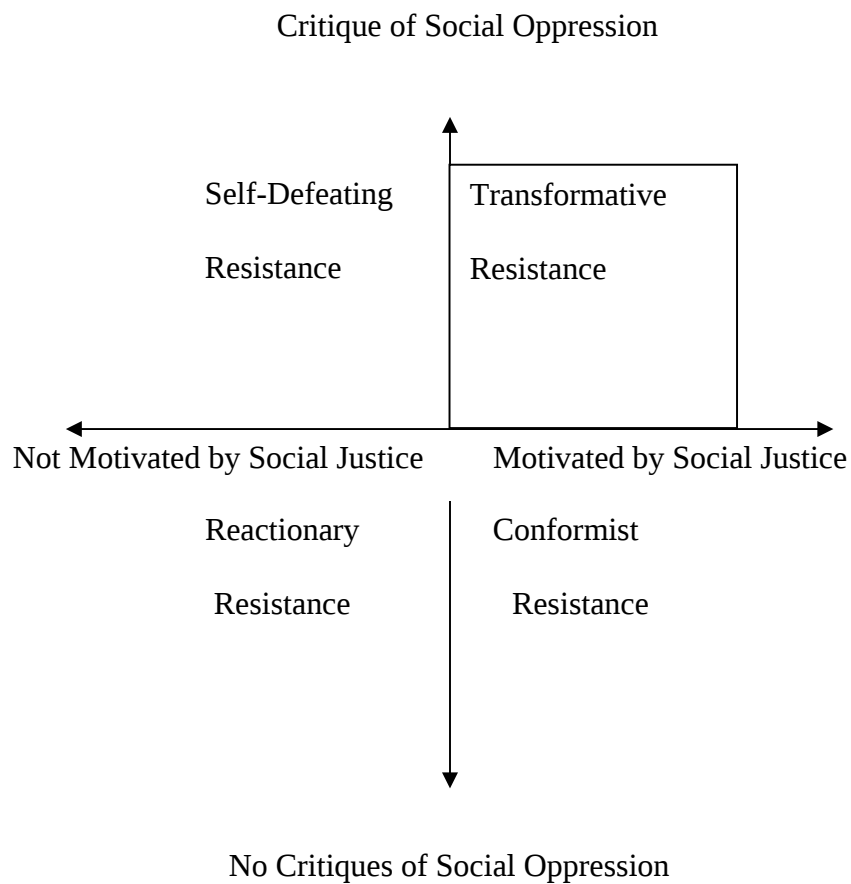


Figure 1. Defining the Concept of Resistance

Summary of Theories

I have discussed five frameworks and models that investigate social class: status attainment theory, human capital theory, financial nexus model, Bourdieuan Theory, and Critical Race Theory. The first three frameworks use quantitative methods for research, whereas both Bourdieuan and Critical Race Theories use qualitative methodology. All five theories and models examine both structural and individual agency factors to varying degrees.

Inherent to Bourdieuan Theory is the principle that educational institutions' structures reproduce social class. Originally the idea emphasized how cultural capital was a resource to obtain scarce rewards that could be monopolized by the dominant class. Cultural capital is passed on to children by their parents in the form of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are re-invested at some point for social profits. This process of accumulating and exchanging capital was foundational to educational decisions made by the underrepresented. From this foundation Bourdieuan theorists found low-SES students did realize upward mobility due to exposure to different habitus or values while in a collegiate environment.

Critical Race Theory was rooted in the civil rights movement in order to highlight the underrepresented population's experiences in higher education. It has been argued that race has been under-theorized in educational research because: issues of race continue to be significant in the United States; the U.S. legal system was based upon property rights as opposed to human rights; and the combination of race and property provides an analytical tool to examine educational and social inequities. Educational

inequity is found when more affluent communities distinguish, separate, and stratify themselves from the non-White and poor communities by undergirding intellectual property with the real property of science labs, computers, and other state-of-the-art technologies. A social inequity is recognized by the protection of the property of Whiteness and White privilege. There are several themes that unify and define the CRT movement: racism is endemic to American life; CRT challenges the neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy of the dominant legal claims; CRT demands a contextual/historical analysis of the law and assumes racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage; CRT is resolute on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and the communities of origin in analyzing law and society; CRT is interdisciplinary; and CRT works toward eliminating racial oppression and all forms of oppression. Finally the impact of CRT on education is significant because it has provided understanding of the underrepresented population's educational experiences, especially in higher education. This theoretical tool can be used to reveal: the lived experienced of raced people; the ideology of the dominant culture; hegemonic forces; exclusion and hierarchy of educational and social structures and practices; White privilege and domination; symbolic and structural barriers; subversion of civil right laws within an educational context; attacks on identity of people of color; and that Whiteness has been naturalized.

Latina/Latino Critical Race Theory is an analytical tool to examine ineffective educational practices as well. LatCrit focuses on the pan-ethnicity of Latinas/os and is concerned with a variety of issues they face, such as language, immigration, culture, and identity. This theoretical lens also addresses antisubordination and antiessentialism,

encouraging resistance and disputing the assumption that certain traditional skills and knowledge are essential to society and must be taught to everyone regardless of individual ability, need, and interest.

Definitional Categories of Social Class

Social class is significant to higher education because of its impact on college access and admissions, as well as collegiate experiences and outcomes. Its historical roots are found in the work of Marx (Bottomore & Rubel, 1970) and Weber (Gerth & Mills, 1958). Marx defined social class in terms of the individual's relationship to production; Weber defined social class in terms of consumption and lifestyles.

Social class comprises four definitional categories: socioeconomic status, parental income, parent education, and parent occupation (Walpole, 2007). Walpole (2007) noted several studies in higher education using the term SES, but its definition was not consistent across these studies, hampering "a holistic appreciation of the roles of parental education, occupation, income, or SES in higher education research" (p. 8). It is beyond the purpose of this paper to sort out the confusion surrounding social class, but I wish to include its impact on higher education.

Socioeconomic Status. Socioeconomic status (SES) is defined variously based upon a combination of, or a subset of, parental education, parental income, and parental occupational status (Walpole, 2007). Walpole wrote that researchers used the term SES, but operationalized it differently. For example, she noted one SES measure that was a composite of parental education and parental occupational status, while another used "parents' occupation, items in the home, and family income" (Walpole, 2007, p. 10). Yet another definition used a composite of the father's socio-economic

index, parents' educational attainment, and cultural resources such as magazine and newspaper subscriptions and library card membership. Walpole further observed that Paulsen and St. John criticized the use of the terms SES since "it fails to adequately account for the complex nature of how social status, income, and education level synthesize to explain education outcomes" (as cited in Walpole, 2007, p. 11).

Parental income. *As a component of SES, parental income is defined in a variety of ways. Paulsen and St. John used the previously referenced financial nexus model and four income categories to examine students' choice of and persistence in college, avoiding the use of SES altogether (as cited in Walpole, 2007). Low-income students reported family incomes of less than or equal to \$11,000; lower-middle-income students were between \$11,000 and \$30,000; middle-income students were \$30,000 to \$60,000; and high-income was \$60,000 or above. Walpole also described the use of parental income by other researchers, but in this case there were simply low, middle, and top income groups, and these groups were approximately equal in percentages. In still another case, Walpole presented a detailed definition of social class by parental income in a ten-point scale ranging from less than \$18,000 to above \$100,000. Family wealth was also considered in conjunction with parental income to provide analytical insights.*

Parental education. *Walpole (2007) wrote that parental education was used both singularly, and in conjunction with SES, to define SES. From parental income comes the concept of first-generation students, a category defined in one study as students whose parents' education was not above a high school diploma; in another study, however, she defined a first-generation student as a student who did not have a parent or guardian with a bachelor's degree.*

Parental occupation. Parental occupation is used by researchers to define SES either independently or as a component in their definition (Walpole, 2007); research that examines parental occupations is most often focused on working-class students. As in the prior definitions of social class using socioeconomic status, parental income, and parent education, researchers operationalized the parent occupation variable differently.

In summary there is no single unified definition of social class, but rather fragmented and disputed definitions. Walpole (2007) suggested that the net effect on higher education is that research on low-SES, low-income, first-generation, and working-class students is conducted in “de facto silos, each often isolated from the others, even though the students in each category often face similar challenges in their access to and completion of college” (p. 14). She did not advocate for a single definition, but she did propose that research be positioned within a broader context, suggesting the term economically and educationally challenged (EEC) to describe these students. She observed that the “EEC student faces similar obstacles in gaining access to college, reports similar kinds of experiences and levels of involvement while enrolled, and has similar outcomes after college” (Walpole, 2007, p. 15). She further insisted that these students deal with challenges and often have lower success rates than those who do not face similar challenges. This reality is not because “they lack ability, motivation, or are somehow deficient [but rather] these students must cope with structure and a system that defines merit in ways that do not privilege them” (p. 15). Though I have chosen to use the term underrepresented in this paper, this study can be situated within Walpole’s definition of EEC. I will leave it up to the reader to determine if this study is transferable to their particular interest and context.

Positions Held by the Dominant Group

The dominant culture tends to view the Other with a deficit lens, further building structures and systems that privilege the dominant culture. Singham (1998) summarized different views held by the dominant group into a liberal, socioeconomic model, a conservative, sociopathological model, and a genetic model. Each of these models is touched with controversy. Singleton and Linton (2006) offered a fourth view that is less controversial but would place requirements on the dominant group to embrace the underrepresented population. Singleton and Linton's focus was on race and education, while the focus of this study is the class, race/ethnicity, and higher education of the underrepresented population.

Singham (1998) claimed that the liberal interpretation assumed "educational disparities [were] caused by socioeconomic disparities" (p. 10). He believed that support for this perspective comes from a high, but not absolute, correlation between educational achievement and economic status. Thus he concluded that since African-Americans lag behind Whites in income and wealth, the educational achievement gap must be caused by socioeconomic disparities (Singham, 1998). Accordingly, it could be argued that if socioeconomic disparities are removed the educational disparities will also disappear. As Singleton and Linton (2006) pointed out, however, the educational gap still exists when socioeconomic variables are controlled.

The sociopathological model argues that since the civil rights movement removed legal barriers to Black advancement, "various social pathologies within the Black community (lumped under the euphemism 'Black culture' must be at fault" for the educational achievement gap (Singham, 1998, p. 10). Those who hold this deficit view

generally describe the Black culture as having “unstable families; poor parenting skills; lack of drive and ambition; negative peer pressure and poor choice of role models; high levels of teenage pregnancies, drugs, and crime; and lack of parental involvement in their children’s education” (p. 10). This conservative interpretation assumes that failure to thrive educationally is a personal problem that must be dealt with personally and that the structures within educational systems are not at fault. Another assumption of this model noted by Singham is a belief that statistics for Whites are taken as the normal, that is, White is the standard, and therefore if Blacks would act White, that is, “adopt the values, behavior, attitudes, and mannerisms of white people ... blacks will perform as well as whites” (p. 11). Baldwin captured the presumption of this position by writing “White Americans find it as difficult as white people elsewhere do to divest themselves of the notion that they are in possession of some intrinsic value that black people need or want” (as cited in Singham, 1998, p. 11). This model further assumes that rejecting White behavior provides a perverse pleasure for Blacks.

The genetic model is based upon Herrnstein and Murray’s *The Bell Curve*, which concluded that the “educational disparity is a fact of nature, the result of long-term evolutionary selection that has resulted in Blacks’ simply not having the genetic smarts to compete equally with Whites” (according to Singham, 1998, p. 10). As Singham noted, there is little evidence to support that Black students are somehow inferior to White students; there is no “insurmountable barrier to [Blacks] ever achieving academic equality” (p. 11).

In the fourth view Singleton and Linton (2006) recommended a new strategy that “encourages educators to engage in difficult self-assessment and to take responsibility for

what they can control: the quality of their relationships with colleagues, students, and their families, both in the classroom and throughout the school community” (p. 5).

Singleton and Linton believed that the racial achievement gap exists and persists because schools are not designed “to educate students of color, and educators continue to lack the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to affirm racial diversity” (p. 5). Their method is to conduct courageous conversations about race within the educational institution addressing the impact of race on student achievement; their book is a field guide to achieving this equity as well as excellence for all students.

Similarly Singham (1998) recommended a strategy that would achieve equity and excellence for all students. Singham’s strategy challenged the dominant method of developmental education that is boring for students, uses a passive learning model, and requires students to memorize facts that are unrelated to their interests and immediate goals. This traditional method lacks the delivery methods to develop critical thinking skills and to provide intrinsic rewards that come from solving “complex and challenging problems” (Singham, 1998, p. 14). Singham concluded his strategy by stating that “the educational achievement gap is not an artifact. It is real and has serious social, economic, and political consequences. Its roots lie in complex and historically rooted ethnic relationships and characteristics. But the situation is by no means hopeless” (p. 15).

In summary, there exist different views of SES that are maintained by the dominant group, which can be summarized into three models: a socioeconomic model, a sociopathological model, and the genetic model. Each of these models engenders controversial debates. Singleton and Linton (2006) offered a fourth view that is less controversial, but would place requirements of change on the dominant group to embrace

the underrepresented population. Singham (1998), too, offered a view that required changes to educational institutions and curriculum delivery that would impact all students across socioeconomic classes and racial/ethnicities. Required changes to U.S.-American educational systems are imperative not only for the underrepresented population, but also for all students, in order to achieve academic excellence and equity.

A General Description of the EEC Student

In the context of the community college under study, the underrepresented population can be described as students who are poor, first-generation, former foster children, Asian-, African-, Native, and Hispanic Americans, and welfare-mothers with children. I will now consider the real and felt needs, lifeworld, and other issues that face the underrepresented population based upon class, ethnic, and gender descriptors.

The term that captures all of these underrepresented students is economically and educationally challenged (EEC) (Walpole, 2007). Walpole (2007) insisted that these students deal with challenges and often have lower success rates than those who do not face similar challenges. This reality is not because “they lack ability, motivation, or are somehow deficient [but rather] these students must cope with structure and a system that defines merit in ways that do not privilege them” (p. 15). As stated earlier the net effect upon higher education is that low-SES, low-income, first-generation, and working-class students have problems gaining access and completion of college (Walpole, 2007). There are also differences between these groups that must be understood and appropriately addressed by educators, the hallway and classroom leadership. For this reason I will now consider what the literature has to say specifically about the lifeworld, the issues and

needs, and the dominant deficit view of the poor, first-generation, former foster children, Asian-, African-, Native, and Hispanic Americans, and welfare mothers with children.

Poor Underrepresented Students

As previously discussed, the Bourdieu framework employed both structuring mechanism and individual agency to understand educational outcomes (Walpole, 2007). The Bourdieu framework viewed “individuals as status strivers who strategically improvise to attain desired social and economic goods” (p. 23). This improvisation was normalized by habitus, that is, the total social class environment comprising perceptions, opportunities, and possible and appropriate responses towards any given situation. In this way, habitus, or agency, works together with social structures to shape educational outcomes. Thus, due to the enduring nature of habitus, low-SES students tend to maintain lower academic aspirations, use inappropriate strategies to attain desired social gains, or resist adopting a new habitus (Walpole, 2007). This form of resistance is self-defeating, resulting in the perpetuation of a lower social position. The decisions to resist are made unconsciously, that is, decisions are made because they feel comfortable or normal with the basis of these decisions rooted in social class and social status (Walpole, 2007).

Cultural capital, as I wrote earlier, can be embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (Horvat, 2003). The embodied state is the person’s internal character and temperament. The objectified state involves tangible things such as books, instruments, and computers that are seen. Last is the institutionalized state which, in an academic environment, would be degrees or various credentials. It is here (the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital) that the poor underrepresented populations’ issues and needs must be met by educators. A vision of possibility and the

opportunity for attainment must be provided to the poor in order that their cultural capital in all three forms and their habitus be changed. It is also here that the dominant culture generates distinctions that separate them from the lowest-SES (Horvat, 2003). This, too, must be addressed when the educators are members of the dominant culture.

First-generation Underrepresented Students

It is generally understood that the definition of first-generation student is any college student who is the first in his or her family to attend college or any postsecondary institution (Ayala & Striplen, 2002; Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Hsiao, 1992; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Striplin, 1999; Walpole, 2007). However, the U.S. Department of Education TRIO program defines a first-generation student as one whose parents do not have a bachelor's degree, but could have some postsecondary education (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Ayala and Stiplin (2002) wrote that "first-generation students represent a unique group with distinct goals, motivations and constraints" (p. 57). Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) noted that first-generation students were: typically not White, but rather a minority; more likely to be female; more likely to be non-traditional age, married, and have children; working full-time while in college; less academically prepared; and more likely to receive financial aid, grants, and loans than non-first-generation students. They also had lower family incomes and attended public 2-year institutions.

As defined earlier, the lifeworld is all the skills, values, and attitudes that are within an attentive individual's environment. It is important to understand the lifeworld of first-generation students especially as it relates to family issues, their motivation to

attend a postsecondary institution, issues related to their secondary education experience, and the dominant deficit view of these students.

Since first-generation students are the first in their families to experience college, these students receive less help in the application process from their families (Choy, 2001; Striplin, 1999; Vargas, 2004). Oftentimes “first-generation students may encounter a cultural conflict between home and college community” (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004, p. 4). When first-generation students are discouraged by their family, they can experience alienation, doubt their academic and motivational abilities, and even consider that they are not college material. In order to achieve a bachelor’s degree, they must overcome these personal challenges which are not common to all collegiate students (Striplin, 1999; Tym et al., 2004). Choy (2001) found that “as parents’ education increases, so does students’ likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary education” (Choy, 2001, p. 9). Tym et al. (2004) noted that first-generation students face challenges peculiar to them, that is, facing “conflicting obligations, false expectations, and lack of preparation or support” (p. 5). The authors wrote that first-generation students may not be able to create a designated place or time to study at home and may even be criticized for investing too much time in school rather than the family. Too often parents, siblings, and friends who have no college experience of their own lack understanding and hence cannot provide support for first-generation students. Tym et al. observed that the obstacles are so great for first-generation students that they are twice as likely to leave before their second year, compared to those students whose parents had a bachelor’s degree.

The motivation for first-generation students to attend college is to improve their social, fiscal, and job-related standing (Tym et al., 2004). In other words they are seeking upward mobility. Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) summarized the motivation of these students into two categories: professional/financial achievement and personal aspirations. Their research showed that the four most highly ranked professional/financial goals were to be successful in their work, finding steady work, to be financially well off, and to be a recognized authority in a particular field. The greatest personal aspirations of first-generation students were giving their children greater opportunities, having leisure time to explore their personal interests, having children, and living close to family.

When comparing incomes, 42 percent of dependent first-generation students were from the lowest quartile (less than \$25,000/year), compared to 22 percent of those whose parents had some college experience and 18 percent of those whose parents had a bachelor's degree (Tym et al., 2004). When comparing first-generation to non-first-generation students, Tym et al. (2004) found that cost-related issues were more important for first-generation students (36 percent vs. 25 percent) during the selection process for a particular college. Another important factor was the proximity of school to home. First-generation students considered the option of living at home more critical than did other students (56 percent vs. 35 percent). First-generation students expressed the need to be able to work while attending school more often than other groups (53 percent vs. 36 percent). Other characteristics of first-generation students included a troubling disconnect between home and school cultures that limited "the effects of classroom learning as underserved students see few connections to their world" (Tym et al., 2004, p. 7), and the fact that first-generation students who attended community colleges typically enrolled

part-time and had significant work and family responsibilities in addition to their school obligations (p. 8).

First-generation students' secondary education experience also impacted their lifeworld. Thayer (2000) noted that these students enter college lacking academic preparation and do not receive additional help from their secondary schools. Vargas noted that they lack specific "college knowledge" to navigate career choices (as cited in Tym et al., 2004, p. 3). Due to poor advising in both secondary and postsecondary institutions, many first-generation students find themselves placed in vocational, technical, and/or remedial programs that impede transferring to a 4-year degree institution (Striplin, 1999). These students clearly "are at a distinct disadvantage in gaining access to postsecondary education" (Chen, 2005, p. iii). George (2003) wrote that the actual primary and secondary education experiences for first-generation students are quite different from the ideal, so that instead of "high expectations and conviction that all students can and should achieve, many of our schools perpetuate deeply rooted cultural beliefs that actually create barriers to student access and success in postsecondary education" (p. 2). Chen (2005) found that these students had a distinct disadvantage in obtaining opportunities in higher education.

Ayala and Striplin (2002) observed the practice of higher education institutions to mainstream various unique student populations, such as first-generation students, due to fiscal expediency. These authors recommended "creatively addressing the needs of unique student populations without mainstreaming" (p. 58). Gullatt and Jan (2003) described colleges generally as "alien places for educationally and economically disadvantaged students" (p. 15). George (2003) reiterated that U.S. academic institutions

replicate the economic structures and maintain the status quo. He accounted for these barriers as flowing from the culture that exists in the United States, that is, “white middle class values, belief systems and expectations” (George, 2003, p. 5). This culture, she claimed, blames the victim for not trying hard enough or being sufficiently flexible to adjust to the White, dominant culture’s values and expectations. She used the term “hidden curriculum” that emanates from this White, dominant culture of the teachers. George maintained that these deeply rooted cultural biases create barriers that first-generation students must struggle daily to overcome. This deficit model provides teachers the justification to have low expectations for and demand less academically and behaviorally from students based upon socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and gender. Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) wrote that not only do first-generation students face the standard upheaval of social and academic adaptations that face all college-bound students, but that they must also face cultural adaptations. Integration and cultural transformations are critical for first-generation students, but “poor academic preparation, family responsibilities, and full-time work ... can pose severe challenges to a student’s ability to integrate into postsecondary life” (p. 2). Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin found that “first-generation students composed more of the student body at public 2-year institutions than either public 4-year or private not-for-profit 4-year institutions (51 percent versus 30 percent and 25 percent)” (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, p. 14). Thus, it is a moral imperative that community colleges address first-generation students’ issues and needs in order to rightly justify their statements that they serve the academic aspirations of the whole community (George, 2003).

In summary first-generation students face daunting obstacles on the path to a bachelor's degree. These students face additional difficulties that non-first-generation students do not face. They generally lack financial, moral, and emotional support due to the lack of their families' knowledge, expertise, and wisdom concerning the collegiate experience. Besides lacking this knowledge capital, oftentimes first-generation students face conflicting obligations and loyalties to their families and challenging questions from their families and peer group friends. This disconnect is a primary explanation for why so many first-generation students do not persevere to their sophomore year of college. In addition, first-generation students' lifeworlds are attacked by the dominant deficit view that places blame on the very students who are seeking to survive.

Former Foster-Care Students

Former foster-care students are those students who have experienced court ordered out-of-home care, whether this care was provided by a relative, in a foster-home, or in a group home (Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004). The lifeworld of these students has much in common with the other underrepresented population. The majority of these students "have always come from poor, minority families" with African-Americans being over-represented (Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004, p. 917). According to a 2001 report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services there were a half million children in foster-care in 1999; "39% were African American, 17% were Latino, and 2% were Native American" (as cited in Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004, p. 917). This is in stark contrast to the percentages of these minorities in the general population, that is, 12.9 percent are African-American, 12.5 percent Latino, and 1.5 percent Native American or Alaskan Natives. In their critical research of the four placement settings— "treatment foster care,

group homes, residential treatment centers, and inpatient psychiatric care units” —James et al. (2006) cited a 2005 report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that nearly 300,000 children enter the foster care system every year (p. 197). In some cases these four placement options are used to address the children's emotional and behavioral disorders. Many children, however, are placed in foster care for their own safety and health concerns; they are innocent victims of abuse, addictions, or threat of violence against them.

The lifeworld for students who have experienced foster care is in stark contrast to that of the dominant culture. Child welfare data has shown that “African-American children and youth are significantly more likely to be removed from their homes than their White counterparts when abuse or neglect is found; and, once removed, stay in out-of-home placements far longer—in some states two to three times longer” (Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004, p. 917). The impact of abuse or neglect on children is profound. Zetlin and Weinberg (2004) further stated that foster-care students have more academic and behavioral trouble in school and higher rates of absenteeism and disciplinary referrals than the general population. They further noted a tendency in these students toward weaker cognitive abilities, lower academic attainment, and lower scores on standardized tests in reading and mathematics.

The aspects of values and attitudes in the lifeworld of former foster-care students also challenge their academic chances. Zetlin and Weinberg (2004) noted their behavioral problems in schools “ranging from aggressive, demanding, immature and attention seeking behaviors to withdrawn, anxious and over-compliant behaviors” (p. 918). They also stated that foster-care children are “one of the most educationally vulnerable

populations of students” (Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004, p. 917). Zetlin, Weinberg, and Kimm (2004) noted that three-fourths of this population are below grade level and more than one-half have been retained at least a grade. Zetlin et al. (2004) observed “that without intervention, most of these young people will not complete high school and are at great risk for becoming part of the public assistance and criminal justice systems” (p. 422). These authors further remarked that foster-care students are twice as likely to leave high school without a diploma. When this population experiences placement instability, it results not only in multiple school transfers but also in the increased likelihood of failure to accumulate enough high school credits. Walters (2005) reported as an example one former foster-care student who changed high schools eight times because his foster-home changed; this student changed homes 71 times before the age of 18.

The impact of providing services and support for higher education of former foster-care students is significant. Allen, Robbins, Casillas, and Oh (2008) researched the academic performance, motivation, and social connectedness on third-year retention, transfer, and dropout behavior. Though their research did not specifically target former foster-care students, their conclusions have something for all postsecondary schools to consider. Allen et al. (2008) concurred that the first-year performance is the best predictor of persistence; social connectedness and college commitment also had direct effects on staying. They emphasized that “first-generation and economically disadvantaged students are more likely to leave postsecondary education” (Allen et al., 2008, p. 661). They concluded that social connectedness with peers and faculty and the development of a sense of belonging are critical for performance, retention, and graduation. They advocated for those students with weak academic history, low

motivation, or who were socially isolated, recommending that the schools of higher education develop intervention programs in their student support offices. They believed that tutoring and supplemental instruction would lower the dropout rate.

Finally, it is important to note that former foster-care students intersect with each of the descriptive types of EEC students, that is, the poor, first-generation, Asian-, African-, Native-, and Hispanic Americans, and welfare mothers with children. These descriptive types are not distinct and neatly separable, and the students do share a great deal in common in their experiences, needs, and habitus as Walpole (2007) pointed out.

Asian-American Underrepresented Students

The term Asian-American represents neither a race nor an ethnic group, but rather is a term used by the dominant society as a common designation (Siu, 1996). Asian-Americans are found in all 50 states with the Chinese being the largest group, followed by Filipino, Japanese, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, and Hmong (Siu, 1996). Siu (1996) noted several cultural values that are shared among all Asian-Americans: “emphasis on educational achievement, shame as a behavioral influence, respect for authority, high regard for the elderly, the centrality of family relationships and responsibilities, self-control and restraint in emotional expression, group orientation, middle position virtue, and filial piety” (p. 15). However, Siu was quick to note vast differences in language, religion, and family structures despite these commonalities. He also noted that Asian values are not static, but change through contact with other cultures (p. 36).

Siu (1996) reported that 30 percent of the National Advanced Placement Scholars were Asian/Pacific Americans in 1995, thus providing additional “proof” of the high

academic achievement of Asian-American students in the minds of the dominant American public (p. 7). Yet during the 1994-1995 school year, Siu further reported that 27 percent of all dropouts in a school district (San Francisco Unified School District) were Asian-Americans. Most education literature concentrates on the first statistic, that is, of Asian-American high achievement, which supports this “model minority” stereotype. By all accounts, Japanese-American and Asian-Indian-American students are not educationally at risk. However, this is not the case for other Asian sub-groups when considering EEC students as being in danger of dropping out or leaving school without adequate skills (Siu, 1996). Siu noted that the amalgamation of all Asian subgroups together diminishes the high achievement of the Chinese and Vietnamese students while hiding a sizable percentage of Cambodian and Laotian students who are economically and educationally challenged.

Asian-American students are more likely than other minority groups to live in intact two-parent families (Carter, 2002). Typically Asian-American parents hold high education expectations, though they are not known to spend more time than other parents with their children doing homework. Carter (2002) recognized that children of two-parent families are more likely to score higher academically, participate in extracurricular activities, and not fail educationally when fathers are more involved than when fathers are less involved. Therefore, there appears to be less stress, in general, on Asian-American students until one digs deeper.

There are numerous secondary educational experiences that influence Asian-American students’ skills, values, and attitudes. For example, Siu (1996) noted that dropout is a specific event, as opposed to being at risk of failing school. Using Seattle

Public Schools' definition of at-risk as scoring below the 50th percentile on the California Achievement Test, nearly 40 percent of Asian-Pacific-American high school students met the definition in 1986-87 (Siu, 1996). In comparison, 18 percent of Whites and 41 percent of Hispanics were at risk. Trueba, Cheng, and Ima noted 12 characteristics associated with educational risk: interrupted schooling; disrupted family support; traumatic experience; extended time in a refugee camp; ill health; lack of previous schooling; deficient prior educational experience; poor participation in class; minimal supervision at home (or possibly no parents); poor progress in English; lack of extracurricular activities at school; and poor guidance and counseling in career goals (as cited in Siu, 1996). Though students from Southeast Asia have shown remarkable resiliency, studies have also shown a prevalence of learning problems among them, and further indicate that Laotian students are the least likely Asian-Americans to complete high school. Two groups of Southeast-Asian-American students are considered even more at risk: unaccompanied minors and Amerasians. Siu cited several researchers who described the lived reality for some of these children: placement in foster homes; demonstration of varied psychosocial problems, such as hyperactivity, depression, restlessness, survivor guilt, and grief; and a higher risk of suicide (Siu, 1996).

As with other ethnic groups, parental expectations and family priorities of Asian-American students have a profound impact (Siu, 1996). Nearly all immigrants, including Asians, realize that education is the key to offset their disadvantage in a new country and the main source of hope for the next generation. Many immigrants expect their children to go on to college and earn excellent grades. Nearly all parents want their children to graduate high school. However, studies of low-income Chinese immigrants in New York

City showed that some parents did not emphasize education due to financial stress (Siu, 1996). In these families, older students were urged to quit school and obtain full-time employment when their grades were not exceptional. Besides parenting skills, intra-family relationships and communication are essential in understanding the students who might be EEC. When family relationships fail, not only does frustration occur, but the potential for defiance and a developing sense of the lack of support also occur, which often affects students' motivation. Siu (1996) noted that in extreme cases, students sought peer support from gangs.

Siu noted the educational system's limited definition of parental participation that ignores how Asian-American parents support schools in a variety of ways. For example, to enhance their children's performance Asian-American families will read report cards; ask their children about school; purchase required equipment; reduce household chores; use proverbs and folk stories to motivate their children; establish study times; schedule children's free time; teach reading, writing, and arithmetic before their children enter kindergarten; assist their children with homework; and create additional homework when none comes from school. These practices are not just from economically advantaged Asian-American families, but all of the socioeconomic classes. In general, Asian parents have a basic trust and respect for teachers. This is not true for all individual families; there are exceptions to every rule. Taken as a whole, Asian-American students are doing well and carry the "whiz kid" stereotype. When viewed with a finer microscope, one can find the cracks and "see" the EEC students. The model minority is a myth in the United States and care should be taken lest many disadvantaged children, regardless of their

ethnicity, be left further behind. This stereotype can be considered a risk factor when it serves other purposes than respect.

In summary it is a myth that Asian-American students are “whiz kids” and the use of the term by the dominant culture of Asian-Americans as the “model minority” is abusive (Siu, 1996, p. 39). It is abusive when it: ignores underemployment; is used to deny appropriate services to needy Asian-Americans; coerces some Asian-Americans to fit the model; promotes anti-Asian stance; and shames other Americans who are economically and educationally challenged (Sui, 1996). This people group is too diverse and complex for such a simple classification but rather requires a deeper look and careful analysis to reveal their genuine need and the responsibility of the government to address that educational need.

African-American Underrepresented Students

The U.S. Census Bureau (2000 Census of Population) defined African-American as any person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa or who self-described their race as Black, Negro, Afro American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian. In the intersection of U.S. history with its African-American population there have been rare moments when this population has been welcomed or embraced (Leiding, 2006; Roediger, 1991). In his provocative book concerning racism and other contradictions in U.S.-American community colleges, Moore (2006) wrote that “Whites have no idea how much time persons of color spend trying to make them feel comfortable” (p. ix). He continued to note that throughout history the “negative attributes about them are restated,” emphasizing that African-American communities are “tangles of pathology” (p. ix). He underscored that “nowhere in the lives of the [African-American] students is their

humanity identified” (p. ix). The following extended quote from Moore emphasizes his perspective on the experiences of Black community college students.

Most community college teachers do not make comments about nonwhite students in terms of their spirituality and compassion, their tolerance and open mindedness, and their willingness to forgive again and again. They neither mention any sense of morality and ethics that the students may demonstrate nor articulate any aesthetic appreciations that they observe in the students. There is no indication that they recognize any honesty and integrity among them. Most of all, they never speak about the delicate balance they work out to keep their lives tolerable, or about the causes they fight for and the sense of wonder and eloquence that some of them bring to many of the things they touch, or about their sense of humor. In short, all of the substance about who the students are and what makes them as human as their critics is missing from their commentary; it is as though the students are devoid of any inner qualities. More often than one might suspect, the words of their critics are without pathos; but their words are assertive—rejecting the possibility of misinterpretation or human error. As one listens and observes educators attempt to characterize them, it is not difficult to conclude that so many of the older ones stopped caring about students at risk long ago and most of the younger ones, those of the so-called generation X, never started to care in the first place. (Moore, 2006, p. 158-159)

As is the case of all underrepresented populations, not only their lifeworld must be examined, but also the lifeworld of the dominant culture that directly impacts the lived experiences of the underrepresented population. I will address the African-American’s lifeworld by considering the following topics: how the dominant culture views African-Americans; the impact of segregation; the influence of structural factors and peer environments; the impact of both African-American mothers and fathers; and finally a financial nexus examination of African-American students’ persistence.

As noted before in the sections preceding the underrepresented populations, there are three views held by the dominant population. Singham (1998) described them as: the liberal view which concludes that since African-Americans lag behind Whites in income and wealth, the educational achievement gap must be caused by socioeconomic

disparities; the sociopathological model, a deficit view, that claims that the Black culture is generally described as having “unstable families; poor parenting skills; lack of drive and ambition; negative peer pressure and poor choice of role models; high levels of teenage pregnancies, drugs, and crime; and lack of parental involvement in their children’s education” (p. 10); and finally the genetic model, which assumes that after the long-term evolutionary processes Blacks cannot and do not have the genetic intelligence to compete equally with Whites.

Singleton and Linton (2006) offered a counter, and hence, not a dominant view suggesting that in order “to arrive at a deeper and more useful understanding of the racial achievement gap, educators need to stop placing blame on the places and people beyond their control” (p. 4). They advocated for a new strategy that would encourage educators “to engage in *difficult self-assessment* and to *take responsibility* for what they can control: the quality of their relationships with colleagues, students, and their families, both in the classroom and throughout the school community” (emphasis added) (p. 5). Singleton and Linton’s view expects educators from the dominant culture along with those from minority cultures to conduct courageous conversations about race instead of remaining silent about race/ethnicity. I will call this view the intercultural-spiritual view that transcends racial/ethnic, cultural, religious, and other misologic divisions. In describing interculturalism, Nussbaum (1997) wrote that it “connotes the sort of comparative searching ... [which] should prominently include the recognition of common human needs across cultures and of dissonance and critical dialogue within cultures” (p. 260). Nussbaum further noted that an interculturalist rejects the idea that only insiders of a peculiar group have the ability to understand the perspective of that group, stating that

“Knowledge is frequently enhanced by an awareness of difference” and can be achieved through profound and intense conversations (p. 260). Hill (1991), coming from a multiculturalist perspective, noted how intellectual reciprocity characterizes “conversations of respect between diverse communities” and how respect is not possible “if one does not believe that the views of the diverse other are grounded in reality” (Hill, 1991, p. 151). I will expand later specifically upon the spirituality component of this counter view. In summary this intercultural-spiritual view is a pro-active, systematic, and intellectually reciprocal approach that involves profound and intense conversations about race/ethnicity, seeking to transcend racial/ethnic, cultural, religious, and other misologic divisions.

One such division experienced by African-Americans is segregation, which is a direct result of the lifeworld of the dominant culture (Charles, Dinwiddie, and Massey, 2004). Charles et al. (2004) concluded that “racial segregation is a structural feature of U.S. society that has continuing power to undermine the academic achievement of students long after they have seemingly left segregated living behind” (p. 1353). They stated that African-American students experience higher levels of family stress than other students; they observed that these students respond by being more devoted to family issues, with the expected result that their health and grades suffer.

Charles et al. (2004) noted three competing theories concerning minority academic underachievement: the theory of capital deprivation where students lacked access to social, economic, cultural, and intellectual capital while growing up; the theory of oppositional culture “which argues that minorities reject academic achievement as a threat to black racial identity”; and the theory of stereotype threat “which posits that

minorities underperform academically because of an unconscious fear of living up to negative stereotypes about their group's intellectual abilities" (p. 1354). Their research revealed no support of the second theory but did find substantial evidence that supported capital deprivation and stereotype threat theories. They wrote that "those African-American students who had internalized the negative stereotype of intellectual inferiority were at higher risk of earning lower grades and failing courses" (p. 1355). They believed that extended exposure to stress not only had a negative impact upon students' cognitive development, for example, their memory, attention, and frustration levels, but also indirectly upon their social networks.

In short, segregation is an exogenous fact of [U.S.] American life that disproportionately exposes the friends and relatives of minority students to social problems, thereby increasing the odds that someone in their social network will experience a stressful life event. In this way, segregation, interacting with income inequality, produces higher rates of family stress, which undermines academic performance in several ways: by distracting students psychologically from their studies; by undermining their physical and emotional well-being; and by necessitating competing investments of time, money, and energy to attend to family issues. Through no fault of their own, minority students become ensnared in a web of relationships that undermine their academic performance on campus. (Charles et al., 2004, p. 1356)

Garcia and Bayer (2005) also observed the academic threat to minority students. Though their research focused primarily on Hispanic/Latino populations, they noted that the racial inequality in the structures of U.S. society impacted other minorities as well. These structures include both formal structures such as schools and government as well as informal class structures. Their research was based upon two complementary theories: the human capital theory that relies on individualism and structural discrimination theory, which assumes there exist "constraints and structural factors [which] are embedded in histories of disadvantage and can influence an individual's ability to achieve higher levels

of education” (p. 512). Bateman and Kennedy (1997) also examined the structural factors influencing African-American students.

When comparing the neighborhood and school influences, the home environment was found to be overwhelmingly more important (Bateman & Kennedy, 1997). The authors stressed that maternal care and paternal attitude toward education were of greater significance than social class and occupational level. For the male African-American student whose family was headed by a female, school was the greatest factor; that is, grades earned were significantly more important than the aspirations of parents. The authors did not explicate the role of schools for male African-American students, but they did encourage the early intervention by school- and community-based programs to intercede for this population. Bateman and Kennedy (1997) further noted that for all African-American students processing the search and choice stages of college requires support “from significant others, including parents, teachers, or counselors” (p. 245). This support includes information regarding entrance requirements, financial aid, living arrangements, and related costs. For those students who lack support for whatever reason and must rely on themselves, this would be a difficult phase to navigate. The authors noted that the logical location of support would be the schools, but research indicated that teachers and counselors contribute little influence over the process, “therefore, programs must extend beyond the local schools to utilize community support systems (that is, churches, boys’ and girls’ clubs) and other sectors of education, specifically colleges and universities” (Bateman & Kennedy, 1997, p. 246). The authors recommended that support interventions occur early and be multi-faceted to be effective, and recommended that higher education become and stay involved in the support of African-American

students. Charles et al. reported that due to interventions such as affirmative action, the percentage of non-white college students went from 16 percent in 1976 to 27 percent in 1996 (Charles, Dinwiddie, & Massey, 2004).

Charles et al. (2004) reported that African-American students felt their peer environments were more supportive of academic achievement than did White students. The authors also reported that “African-American students who had internalized the negative stereotype of intellectual inferiority were at higher risk of earning lower grades and failing courses” (p.1355). Charles et al. wrote that academic preparation was the strongest predictor of collegiate performance, but excellent preparation was conditioned by two factors: the degree of segregation experienced in childhood and socioeconomic status. As I stated earlier, African-American underrepresented students face a disproportionate burden of negative life experiences (Bateman & Kennedy, 1997). Charles et al. noted the same affect, that is, “segregation lowered academic performance by exposing African Americans to unusually high levels of social disorder and violence while growing up” (Charles et al., 2004, p.1355).

The emotional toll upon African-American students cannot be minimized. Charles et al. (2004) stated that 44 percent of students from segregated neighborhoods had to deal with a death in their social network during their first two years of college as compared to 36 percent of those from integrated neighborhoods and 30 percent of White students (p. 1360).

Professor Tim Davies (personal communication, October 7, 2005) of Colorado State University stated his observation that families of underrepresented students tend to take from their children rather than give to them. The research of Charles et al. (2004)

confirmed this observation, that is, while 3 percent of White students, 6 percent of Asians, and 11 percent of Latinos send money to their families, the percentages were much higher among African-American students. Of those African-American students from integrated neighborhoods, 16 percent sent money to a relative; those from segregated neighborhoods, 20 percent; and 23 percent from mixed neighborhoods sent money home (Charles et al., 2004, p. 1364). African-American students also visit home more often than students from other racial backgrounds. Charles et al. noted the price that African-American students pay: as family involvement increases and segregation rises, African-American students' physical and emotional health decreases (p. 1364). Charles et al. interpreted these findings to mean that segregation "appears to affect family involvement indirectly through the intervening variable of family stress: neighborhood racial isolation raises the number of negative events experienced within the family, which, in turn, causes respondents to devote more time and resources to family issues" (Charles et al., 2004, p. 1366).

Jennings (2004) offered a perspective that tempers these negative home pictures and, at the same time, destroyed a myth about African-Americans families. The author's research revealed that, contrary to popular view, African-Americans do not condone out-of-wedlock birth, that is, "Black families strongly discourage this behavior" (p. 116). The author wrote that "mothers saw adherence to mainstream education, marriage, and childbearing norms as crucial to their daughter's success" (Jennings, 2004, p. 116). Jennings noted that pregnancy destroyed the aspirations of lower- and middle-class mothers of pregnant daughters and instead, brought fears of poverty.

Halle and Le Menestrel (1999) studied the effect of fathers' roles and the level of involvement in their respective families. Recognizing socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural variations, along with existence of differences in family structures, the authors found that education attainment, income, and social class were linked to the fathers' involvement, that is, higher levels of the fathers' education was accompanied by greater accessibility and engagement with their children (p. 2). Halle and Le Menestrel's interpretation was that since fathers were able to provide economically, they were more likely to invest in their family and to be engaged in rearing their children, even if they lived apart. The authors noted a study where "extremely low-income African American fathers saw their main contributions to their children as being emotionally available to them, rather than providing their children with economic support" (Halle & Le Menestrel, 1999, p. 3). Halle and Le Menestrel also found that African-American fathers were less likely to read to their children than White fathers. The authors saw "fathers as economic providers, protectors, caregivers, and teachers" across different ethnicities and cultures (Halle & Le Menestrel, 1999, p. 3). Referring to the 1965 Moynihan Report, Garcia and Bayer (2005) noted that the absence of a child's father was destructive, especially to boys. This report noted the significance of this absent role model: the lack of economic resources and appropriate discipline and structure (p. 518). Garcia and Bayer noted that in families whose income was below poverty level, it was nearly twice as likely for children to be held back a grade level as compared to the economically advantaged student (p. 518); for both African-American and Hispanic students, this could lead to lower education quality or "disillusionment with the system all together" (p. 519).

The final aspect of African-American students' lifeworld that I will investigate concerns the use of the financial nexus model, which examines how financial choices made by African-American (and White) students influence their persistence in higher education. As noted earlier this framework provides insights into students' perceptions and how their realities shape their decisions and persistence related to higher education. I will focus on the financial nexus model which combines persistence research with college choice decisions. In this way, the framework has incorporated both structural and individual agency factors to explicate college choice, persistence, and financial matters. Berger assumed that students "with similar habitus would be likely to continue to make similar choices once they enter college. Hence, we expect students with similar levels of capital resources to make similar types of decisions and act in similar ways while in college" (as cited in St. John, Paulsen, & Carter, p. 547, 2005). Social interaction is subconsciously guided by habitus, that is, the appropriated and internalized societal rules for a particular field. Habitus guides and shapes what a person values, and thus desires, such as capital.

St. John, Paulsen, and Carter's (2005) research identified several patterns of African-American students. When compared to other ethnicities, African-American students: are more responsive to student aid; have high aspirations, but do not realize these aspirations; believe that college is not affordable, as compared to the general population (83 percent vs. 71 percent); and have different perceptions of college costs as compared to the White population. St. John et al. (2005) found other patterns in their research of African-American and White students. A larger percentage of African-American college students was female, having mothers with a high school education or

some college experience; they tended to be independent financially and came from predominantly low- and lower-middle-income families (p. 554). The authors also noted African-American students' lower academic grades, their greater desire to obtain a master's degree, and how financial aid and low tuition influenced the college choice of African-American students as compared with White students. St. John et al. (2005) wrote that "African Americans had higher grants and loans as well as lower tuition charges [which meant] they had greater financial need and could still only afford to attend less expensive colleges" (p. 556).

St. John et al. (2005) concluded that African-Americans' college choices were highly associated with tuition and financial aid and this, in turn, directly impacted their persistence in decision-making, that is, whether to continue, drop out, or work and study part-time. The authors noted that the majority patterns displayed by African-American students were similar to students from low-income families. St. John et al. also concluded that:

A substantial percentage of African Americans were from high earning families with high levels of education. Further, levels of parents' education, as well as students' aspirations, were associated with persistence for African Americans, indicating that those with cultural capital may have aspired to reproduce this capital in their families, albeit with mixed success. (St. John et al., 2005, p. 564)

In summary, African-American underrepresented students face demoralizing obstacles including being viewed with a deficit lens by the dominant culture; the dominant culture oftentimes does not recognize their humanity, spirituality, or moral and aesthetic qualities. A significant aspect of the lifeworld for many African-Americans is segregation with likely implications of experiencing concentrated poverty and related social problems. Perhaps the individuals most at risk of this category are the African-

American males, whose K-12 educational experience has been less than positive, especially those who have internalized the negative stereotype. For those African-American students who manage to begin college, many face the additional burden of fiscally supporting their parents and visiting home more often. They also have a higher expectation of experiencing trauma related to a death in their social network during their first two years in college as compared to their White counterparts (Charles et al., 2004).

Native American Underrepresented Students

Native American students have the highest dropout rate of all underrepresented groups, at 29.2 percent (Clarke, 1994, p. 7), with some estimates as high as 60 percent (p. 12). Clarke (1994) stated that in 1974 the dropout rate in Nome, Alaska was 90 percent, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 62 percent, and in some California locations, up to 70 percent (p. 13). Like most youth who drop out of education, Native American students who drop out tend to become a burden on society and are more likely to require public assistance. Clarke (1994) estimated that “the nation stands to lose \$71 billion in social security predicated on a 25% dropout rate” due to anticipated low earnings over the working career of these students (p. 7). The author noted that some research used failure to graduate high school as a predictor of adult criminal activity (p. 8). This potential to drop out is greater in the Native American population than any other minority group in the United States. Clarke summarized the issues that research has offered as an explanation for the lack of educational success by Native Americans. The explanations fall into four categories: (a) the cultural differences between the dominant White culture and that of the Native American; (b) the current social disorganization between various tribal groups and families; (c) the lack of self-esteem, that is, poor self-identity; and (d) low economic

status (p. 10). Clarke's research revealed that besides the widely recognized cultural deficits within the family, Native American students do poorly because of "racial bias, discrimination, and ambivalence on the part of teachers" within the academic structures (p. 10). In summary, Native Americans carry the greatest burden of all minority groups because they have the highest dropout rates (hence the lowest educational level), live in the worst housing, have the shortest life expectancy, and are the least nourished. Native Americans are the poorest of any minority group. However, since the social and economic impact of Native Americans upon the U.S. is negligible, little attention is provided by economists, educators, and politicians. Clarke (1994) stated that the federal government, who has responsibility for funding the education of Native Americans, has not made this a public issue (p. 14).

Eight factors related to Native American retention were identified by Hodgkinson in a 1988 national longitudinal study. The factors are: (a) grade retention with 29 percent of eighth grade students repeating a grade; (b) high expectations of dropping out, with 19 percent of eighth graders expecting to drop out of school before graduation; (c) poor attendance with 11 percent missing five or more days of school during a four-week period; (d) low academic aspirations with only 17 percent of eighth graders planning to enroll in college preparatory classes (as compared with 37 percent for Asian, 31 percent for Whites, 25 percent for African-Americans, and 22.5 percent for Hispanics); (e) high percentage of eighth graders living in single-parent homes (31 percent for Native Americans compared to 17 percent for White children); (f) limited English skills for 8.6 percent of eighth grade students; (g) poor examples provided by an older sibling (15 percent of these eighth graders had an older sibling who had already dropped out); and

(h) personal isolation, with 19 percent of Native American students being home alone for more than three hours a day (as cited in Clarke, 1994, p. 17).

According to qualitative, ethnographic research, in addition to the eight factors above Native American students face cultural differences, racial biases of White teachers, negative self-identity, drug abuse, and language barriers. The cross-cultural research compared Native American culture with the dominant American culture. This research attributed the poor academic success of Native American students to “white teachers who are unable or unwilling to pay attention to cultural background and values of American Indian students” (Clarke, 1994, p. 64). Clarke noted that the “educational goals of schools are fashioned toward competitive achievement orientation of the American middle class and the attainment of material wealth” (p. 17). This is contrary to the Native American culture where one might compete with one’s own past experiences, but not with others. This cultural disconnect is further revealed, for example, when Native American youth view drug control issues as the White man’s law, when Native American boys support loyalty to their peers rather than their White teachers, and when the Native American family values conflict with the school system values (the family being more permissive and indulgent with little stress on competitiveness). Clarke noted that the Native American family culture tends to foster failure in school rather than enhance success due to this cultural disconnect with the dominant culture (p. 45). Failure in school, cultural conflicts between family and school values, depressed economic conditions on the reservation, poor sibling models, and racial discrimination from teachers lead to poor self-esteem for the Native American youth.

Strand and Peacock (2003) also shared the concern for the general poor self-esteem of Native American students due to despair, disillusionment, alienation, powerlessness, and rejection. Their annotated bibliography focused on the resources available on the issue of resiliency. Strand and Peacock wrote that “Tradition and culture play an important role in overcoming the negative influences of oppression, abuse, poverty, violence, and discrimination in American Indian families, schools, and communities” (abstract). The authors proposed the use of traditional life-ways to defeat these negative influences, to foster resilience, and to build self-esteem. They observed that without a sense of self-worth Native American children are “vulnerable to a host of social, psychological, and learning problems” (p. 3). Strand and Peacock stated that development in four critical areas would foster resilience. These areas are spirituality, mental well being, emotional well being, and physical well being within the context of “caring relationships, positive and high expectations, opportunities to participate and contribute, teacher support, staff development, school-community supports, and teaching to students’ strengths” (Strand & Peacock, 2003, p. 2).

With higher resilience Native American youth will be able to resist peer pressure to participate in drug and alcohol abuse. Clarke (1994) noted that alcohol is the most abused substance among Native American youth. The author stated that “over 75 percent of deaths among the American Indian population are related to alcohol abuse” (p. 20). Clarke suggested that alcohol use was the result of their acculturation experiences. The author noted that generally the highest levels of abuse occurred among the adolescents who are acculturated and “identify with non-Indian values”, while the lowest levels of abuse among students are found among those who convey the adaptability to both Indian

and non-Indian values (p. 21). Clarke concluded that the factors that cause drug use and abuse in other minority groups caused high drug use in Native American youth; these factors included peer pressure, poverty, racism, family problems, and dysfunctional behaviors (p. 24).

A significant number of researchers support Clarke's (1994) perspective that it is crucial to develop mutual respect and trust between teachers and all students in general, but specifically Native American students (Alfred, 2002; English & Gillen, 2000; Merriam, 2001; Vella, 2002; Yorks & Kasl, 2002). These authors agreed that building connections with students promotes a healthy self-esteem, which produces a positive identity. In order to build these connections, educators must respect the learner and the learner's culture. Clarke and other scholars on Native American issues are not content with a success rate of 50 percent. Clarke provided 13 basic approaches to improve the statistical results in graduation, which can be summarized into three categories. First, the author recommended developing a positive school environment where students, students' families, and educators have mutual respect and trust that holistically develops students. Second, Clarke advocated for the careful monitoring of students' academic progress with planned remediation (for example, night classes and summer school) and support structures that enhance success. Finally, the author proposed the establishment of school, community, and peer reinforcement that addresses academic, emotional, social, and psychological needs. Since Native American culture is a major theme in explaining why Native American students are at risk, educators should incorporate this culture into the curriculum; the education must be a Native American education in order to reach these students. Clarke offered specific recommendations for increasing the retention rate and

nurturing the spirituality of Native American students, developing the local community economically, and nurturing a family relationship within the classroom setting. The author's recommendations are that: schools be restructured using three transitional phases enabling students to adjust to the academic environment and the understanding of themselves within the tribal context (p. 137); schools implement an employment process that screens out ill-prepared and culturally-biased teachers and administrators who subject students to psychological and physical abuse (p. 139); an "Adopt-a-Student" program be initiated among the faculty, elders, and community leaders to assure that each at-risk child has a non-exploitative relationship with at least one adult on a daily basis (p. 141); and non-traditional curricula, which also incorporates a strong dropout retrieval plan, be created that respects spirituality and Native American culture (p. 142).

Some researchers predict criminal behavior for those Native Americans who fail to graduate from high school. Though the reasons for this high dropout rate are complex, research has noted the contribution of the cultural differences between Native American culture and the dominant culture. This cultural dissonance has led to poor academic success, which contributes to negative self-identity, drug abuse, and a host of social problems for Native American dropouts. This cultural disconnect is further exacerbated by peer pressure, poverty, racism, family problems, and dysfunctional behaviors. Clearly the theme of Native American underrepresented students is a cultural theme, much more so than for African-American underrepresented students, but similar to the experience of Hispanic underrepresented students.

Hispanic Underrepresented Students

I will first address the overall demographics of underrepresented Hispanic students, followed by a closer look at what the term “Hispanic” means and implications on higher education. Tym et al., (2004) noted that Hispanic, Black, and White parents share something in common: about 9 out of 10 parents surveyed, across ethnic lines, expected their children to attend college. What was different was that Hispanic children are much less likely than White children to have a parent who attended college (p. 5; Garcia & Bayer, 2005; Jasinski, 2000; Valdivieso, 1990). Garcia and Bayer (2005) also noted that “Mexicans are significantly less likely than whites to complete at least a bachelor’s degree” (p. 526). These authors also found that Hispanic women are less likely than Hispanic men to earn a bachelor’s degree and they noted that the father’s occupation was a significant predictor for those who completed college. If a Hispanic student had a father whose occupation was a managerial or professional one, there was a 4 percent greater likelihood that that student would complete college (p. 528). The authors further reported the significance of understanding this underrepresented population. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing minority in the United States; the overall Hispanic population also represents diverse ethnic groups, each with unique heritages. It is projected that by 2050 Hispanics will represent one-fourth of the total United States population (Garcia & Bayer, 2005, p. 511).

Garcia and Bayer's (2005) research focused on particular distinct Latin@² ethnic groups, then compared their participation in higher education relative to Whites (p. 528). Jasinski (2000) also noted the importance of various Latin@ populations, along with socioeconomic factors, in understanding participation in postsecondary education. Valdivieso (1990) differentiated the Latin@ population into four distinct ethnic groups: (1) Mexican-American, (2) Puerto Ricans; (3) Cubans; and (4) Central and South Americans (p. 2). In comparison, Jasinski (2000) limited his research to Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, and then compared their participation in higher education to White non-Latin@ students (p. 277). All scholars noted the importance of differentiating the Latin@ population into distinct groups. As different as the groups are, they share "one common historical cultural characteristic, 'common language'" (Garcia & Bayer, 2005, p. 512).

Of these groups, Mexican-American students are the least likely to obtain a bachelor's degree due to individual, family, and high school background factors (Garcia & Bayer, 2005, p. 529). Garcia and Bayer further noticed that "... both foreign-born Mexicans and foreign-born Puerto Ricans were found to be less likely to graduate from high school" (p. 517). Jasinski (2000) expressed concern for this lack of educational attainment, because education is so strongly associated with economic status and is one of the factors linked to poverty in the Latin@ population (p. 277). Jasinski stressed

² The authors used the term "Latin@," copying some scholars in the Latino/a community who are beginning to incorporate "Latin@" replacing the awkward masculine/feminine slash ("Latino/a") in text. I will use this same term from this point forward.

focusing on policies to address economic circumstances, as opposed to language deficiencies or immigration status. The author generalized the explanations for the low educational attainment into two categories: sociocultural (blaming the individual or cultural deficiencies), and socioeconomic (blaming social structural conditions such as poverty) (p. 277). Jasinski preferred combining these two explanations to understand the low educational attainment, noting that attainment increased with each successive generation (p. 279). Jasinski observed the tendency of underrepresented students to drop out of school in order to support their family; children from poorer environments lack evidence of the benefits of education, so they drop out (p. 280). The author's research revealed that Cubans had a higher socioeconomic status and more educational resources than Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, which may account for their greater participation in higher education (p. 281). Again, family SES, educational resources, and aspirations for education were significant in predicting higher education for both Latin@ and White non-Latin@ students (Jasinski, 2000, p. 287). Jasinski noted one result: "none of the variables defined as sociocultural for this study were significant predictors of postsecondary education" (p. 277). The author projected that the sociocultural factor (English ability) played a greater role in determining high school graduation than in postsecondary education. Jasinski (2000) also noted that once socioeconomic factors were controlled, "White non-Hispanic students were less likely than Hispanic students to continue with their education beyond high school" (p. 288).

Garcia and Bayer (2005) viewed educational attainment as having to do with racial inequality, which is "... built into the 'structures' of society. (Garcia & Bayer, 2005, p. 513). The authors' concern was with the inequality of local opportunity in the

public school system. They believed that minority students are tracked into vocational directions, as opposed to college preparatory tracks (Garcia & Bayer, 2005, p. 514). The authors recognized the contributions of Catholic and other private schools that serve Latin@ students; generally these schools have greater resources available, which impacts the educational quality for students (p. 515). Garcia and Bayer (2005) emphasized the fact that parents with more education and income have the ability and inspiration to create additional educational resources for their children and to be a role model of what education can accomplish (p. 517).

Valdivieso (1990) considered the cultural changes to Mexican-Americans. Historically they were a rural and agricultural people, who have become quite urbanized over time. In fact, over 90 percent of Mexican-Americans live in metropolitan areas, making them the most urbanized U.S. population in general (p. 2). They are also the least-educated group among the major Latin@ groups and the general population of the United States (p. 3). The dropout rate of Mexican-American students is 40 percent or more. Valdivieso noted that due to this lack of education Mexican-Americans also have lower-status occupations than the general population of the United States (p. 4). Due to lower educational attainment and the associated lower income, Valdivieso saw the need for adult education and training for Mexican-American young adult dropouts. The author implied the potential cyclical future for many Mexican-Americans, stating that “These young parents often had unproductive experiences in schools, experiences that will be reflected in how they raise their children” and will be repeated in the next generation (Valdivieso, 1990, p. 4). The significance of this danger is amplified when one considers that 71 percent of this population is under the age of 35.

Valdivieso (1990) recommended several policies to address the unique needs of Mexican-American and other Latin@ students: (a) parents and schools should develop partnerships where both seek to understand the others' culture in order to advance the children's academic achievement; (b) school personnel should nurture an appreciation of and value for the culture and language of Mexican-Americans; (c) preschool programs for Mexican-American children should be expanded, since they are less likely to attend a preschool than non-Latin@s; and (d) American schools should be improved and restructured in general, but there should specifically be greater encouragement, guidance, and counseling for Mexican-American children as well as their parents, so that the children will remain and excel in school (p. 5).

Carter (2002) similarly distilled the research into twelve key findings: (a) parental involvement has positive effects on student outcomes throughout K-12 experience; (b) while parental involvement improves student outcomes, variations will be found according to family cultures, ethnicity, and SES; (c) parental involvement at home has more positive impact than involvement at school; (d) parental involvement is important throughout the K-12 experience, but especially as children reach adolescence; (e) family involvement in early childhood programs increases success in transitions to kindergarten and elementary school; (f) parental involvement with homework is beneficial, but some parents will need assistance in order for it to be effective; (g) a culturally diverse family's involvement may be different—nonetheless, these family practices must be respected and capitalized on; (h) when families are involved in their children's education, positive outcomes have been documented in both mathematics and literacy; (i) programs that are based upon “mutual respect and interdependence of the home, school, and community”

(McAfee as cited in Carter, 2002, p.4) are the most promising; (j) effective school programs must be individualized to be fitting for the students, parents, and community; (k) assisting parents in creating a learning environment at home that leads to their children's success is most effective; (l) teachers must be provided professional development to encourage parent/family involvement.

Tym et al. (2004) provided ten key components of successful academic programs: (a) high standards for program staff and students; (b) personalized attention for students; (c) positive adult role models; (d) facilitation for peer support; (e) integration of the program with K-12 schools; (f) strategic and intrusive interventions that start early; (g) long-term investments in students; (h) integration of students with school and society at large; (i) scholarship assistance; and (j) development of assessments that link results to interventions (p. 16).

The writings of Valdivieso (1990), Carter (2002), and Tym et al. (2004) share several common themes. There is agreement that: when parents, schools, and children genuinely and mutually respect and value each other, students achieve greater academic success; the authors, schools, and parents seek the best for the students; schools must pursue individualized attention for each student in order to encourage and increase the graduation rates for Latin@ children; early intrusive interventions (that are appropriate for each family) are necessary; respectful recognition of the role of parents and family is strategic; the integration of cultures, values, and community helps parents and schools realize the best for children; and finally, there is a sense of urgency in the voices of these scholars. Tym et al. noted that "Strategies that work for first-generation and low-income

students are likely to be successful for the general population as well. However, the reverse is not true” (Tym et al., 2004, p. 17).

While there is widespread consensus among all stakeholders that parental involvement is critical to the success of children, Carter (2002) discovered institutional and personal barriers for effective family-school partnerships (p. 8). Too often, according to Carter, school programs require parents to conform to school practice rather than educators accommodating the family. The author recommended parental involvement because it is a “protective factor” in neutralizing risk conditions that could lead to underachievement (p. 11). Carter reported that parents felt “empowered” when the school staff respected their opinions and concerns (p. 13). Carter further recommended that for all children, but especially those children whose parents lacked the skills necessary for partnership, a community-based mentoring program be developed (p. 14). The author insisted that the family and school not maintain the status quo, that is, “separate but equal,” but that the school become a family place where parents are welcomed and appreciated (p. 21). Carter (2002) encouraged educators to cultivate a deeper understanding of the Latin@ culture. Recognizing the differences in Latin@ subgroups, Carter nonetheless described this culture as having “... strong family ties, family loyalty, and a collective orientation supporting community life. Hispanics indicate a preference for warm, personalized styles of interaction, a relaxed sense of time, and an informal atmosphere for communication as a whole” (p. 22). As educators recognize and validate this cultural picture, they will engender a positive response from parents that will lead to greater academic success and resilience for underrepresented Latin@ students. Carter

added that resilient students succeed despite the trials of poverty, minority status, or language barriers.

In summary, all of the authors agreed on the diversity of the Latin@ population. Valdivieso (1990) and Jasinski (2000) differentiated the Latin@ students into four and three categories respectively. Valdivieso's list included Mexican-American, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans; Jasinski's list did not include the Central and South Americans as a separate group. Both of these authors insisted that one cannot understand the influences on Latin@ students without the aid of this differentiation. Cubans ranked highest in attending and graduating college and achieving the highest SES, while Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans ranked lowest in graduating from high school, and Mexican-Americans ranked the lowest in SES. Tym et al. noted that 9 out of 10 Latin@ students aspire to attend college, but that this did not happen for most Latin@ students.

The various authors defined underrepresented differently. Garcia and Bayer (2005) used socioeconomic factors and social structures that lead to inequities to achieve their understanding of postsecondary participation; they recognized the importance of English ability as well. Jasinski (2000) preferred a combined method of using individual, sociocultural, and socioeconomic to predict Latin@ and white non-Latin@ students' participation in higher education. Valdivieso's (1990) definition of underrepresented included the culturally deprived, socially disadvantaged, and a social system that created inequities. Tym et al. (2004) emphasized the influences of K-12, that is, K-12 needed to improve in several areas to address the needs of Latin@ students. Carter (2002) considered institutional and personal barriers that have major influences on whether

Latin@s participate in higher education. Garcia and Bayer, Jasinski (2000), Valdivieso, Carter, and Tym et al. all recognized the strategic importance of addressing the needs of this large population by the dominant culture since, as the fastest growing population of the United States, Latin@s are projected to represent one-fourth of the total population by 2050. These authors agreed that the mutual respect and appreciation between families and schools, the integration of cultures, values, and community, and individualized attention of students would increase retention and graduation rates. Furthermore, there was a sense of urgency in the voices of these scholars.

Welfare Mothers with Children

Welfare mothers with children occupy all racial subgroups of students such as Asian-, African-, Native, and Latin@ American that I have considered in this paper. The risk that these mothers face is significant to them and society at large. Women who never marry, and have children, are 10 times more likely to be on welfare rolls (Jennings, 2004, p. 122), thus perpetuating the poverty cycle (Hodgkinson, 2003). Jennings (2004) stated that for these women marriage does not automatically lead to a better life; their poverty, ethnicity, and gender shape their future potential. The author wrote that these young mothers-with-children were beset by family and school problems, felt adrift and lacked a positive identity, and had no vision of participating in society's valued roles (p. 123). However, Jennings (2004) discovered that having a child ignited these women's interest for additional training and education for several reasons. Welfare mothers with children saw the mother-role as a source of love, thus providing meaning and purpose; education was a means to provide for their children; and education and better employment would protect their children from the stigma of being born to a welfare mother. These mothers

also wanted to distance themselves from the negative, stereotyped welfare-mothers; they aspired to many middle-class goals, for example, a good job, home ownership, and the ability to support their families without financial concerns, and they wanted their children to attend college (p. 124).

Tiamiyu and Mitchell (2001) defined the phrase “feminization of poverty” as the tendency of the poorer populations found in the United States to be composed of women (p. 48). The authors found that 18 percent of father-only families were poor, while in comparison, 43 percent of mother-headed families were poor. Hodgkinson (2003) noted that two-parent families are not likely to be poor (8 percent), while “29% of white children and 52% of black and Hispanic children who live with a single mother are likely to be poor” (p. 5). Tiamiyu and Mitchell also noted that the United States, when ranked against other industrialized nations, has the highest percentage of children living in poverty because “the majority of them are living in mother-headed households” (p. 49; Hodgkinson, 2003, p. 2). Jennings (2004) wrote that while all women carry the significant portion of reproductive work such as childrearing, housework, and caregiving, low-income mothers accomplish this care under additional and significant stress. Historically single mothers have relied on extended family members and community mothers to help, but this is not the current case. Jennings noted that in today’s U.S. culture “mothers parent teenage daughters in social isolation as economic restructuring and cuts to the social safety net leave inner-city communities and poor extended families with little to offer in the way of support” (Jennings, 2004, p. 115). Hodgkinson (2003) placed more significance on the implications of young mothers with children when he wrote: “Having a teen mother almost guarantees that a child will be raised in poverty;

and, because the mother may not have finished high school, it is unlikely that she will read to her child, especially in infancy” (p. 2).

Tiamiyu and Mitchell (2001) studied the obstacles that women face in the process of becoming self-sufficient and how women endeavored to overcome these obstacles while on government aid. Welfare recipients who were already attending college were expected to work at least part-time while receiving their education and training and had only three years to finish their education program (Pandey, Zhan, Neely-Barnes, & Menon, 2000; Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001). Many people charged that these welfare mothers lacked the motivation to work and “had babies in order to obtain or stay on welfare” (Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001, p. 50). Rank’s (1987) quantitative study demonstrated a counter interpretation. The author’s research revealed that “poverty, rather than welfare, is perhaps the more likely factor influencing the observed change in family composition” (Rank, 1987, p. 19). In spite of this study, public opinion has maintained the myth, thus laws were passed that allowed welfare recipients only 10 hours per week towards educational plans (Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001). Tiamiyu and Mitchell provided a case in point using the state of Ohio. Ohio’s welfare caseload was down to the lowest level in nearly three decades, eliminating 407,000 recipients because Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) put them to work. The authors found that there was no legislation requiring Ohio to follow up on what happened to these welfare recipients, who may not have obtained “work that provides a livable income and health benefits” (2001, p. 50). The impact TANF had, and has, on women with children is even more significant, because they generally have either low-paying positions or work part-time. Even with full employment, women with children are generally employed in

female-dominated, low-wage jobs that provide an average income insufficient to raise the family out of poverty (p. 51). The dual realities of having employment and young children at home prevent mothers from attaining an education that could provide a better position, that is, higher wages and status (p. 53).

Jennings' (2004) research sought to understand how women on welfare with children negotiated the "culture-of-poverty discourse and the imagery that this discourse spawns" (abstract). Jennings researched two different groups of young mothers: one group of 18 to 23 years olds were attending high school through a community-based program and the other group of early to mid 20s were attending either a local two-year or research university. The author discovered that these women develop identities that countered the dominant images of lazy, bad mothers and noted that "restructuring the shift of fiscal responsibility from the federal to the state and local level ... and deep cuts to the social safety net has deeply impacted working class and poor communities" (Jennings, 2004, p. 114). Jennings (2004) noted that low-income African-American women value marriage just as White women do, but the shrinking pool of fiscally stable men makes marriage unlikely as an option to escape welfare and poverty (p. 114; Rank, 1987, p. 18). Jennings concluded that poor education, which leads to occupational opportunities that hold women with children below poverty levels, along with anti-affirmative action policies and job discrimination are the strongest factors in welfare dependency (2004, p. 114).

Pandey et al. (2000) noted that the result of these changes in welfare philosophy was a drop in college enrollment of poor women (p. 110). These changes included: transformation from a welfare system into a work-based system; creation of time limits;

addition of a work requirement; eligibility moved from the federal level to the state or local level(p. 116); and time spent on postsecondary education limited to 12 months of vocational training (p. 117). The three year time limit change forced women to search for quick employment and limited their ability to complete their educational goals (p. 116; Jennings, 2004, p. 118). Lee and Mortenson (2004) documented the gap of participation between the lowest and highest economic groups and this gap has remained (p. 4; Paulsen & Smart, 2001, p. 442). The authors concluded that the achievements, not just aspirations, will be limited for low-income students if they can only participate in two-year colleges or for-profit institutions. This limitation defies a generalized public goal for all students to participate in postsecondary education. The authors discovered that nearly half of all college-qualified, low-income students are prevented from attending four-year schools due to financial barriers (p. 7). The significance of this education participation gap is that it creates the wage gap problem. Pandey's et al. research revealed that for educated workers the labor market outcomes improved, while the outcomes for the less educated have declined, keeping welfare recipients below the federal poverty line. To further compound the problem, the number of low-skilled jobs is predicted by the U. S. Department of Labor to decline while the majority of jobs will require a postsecondary education (Pandey et al., 2000, p. 111). Besides the additional income, there are other benefits of postsecondary education. When children observe their mother attending college, their attitudes and values are changed. First, their aspirations of attending college increase, and research revealed that teenage daughters of educated mothers are less likely to give birth out-of-wedlock (p. 115).

Pandey et al. (2000) noted that historically only a small percentage of welfare-mothers-with-children have attended college, but when this was accomplished, they permanently exited poverty (Pandey et al., 2000, p. 109). These authors recognized the wage gap between those with college degrees and those without. Since the labor market has generally improved for the educated workers while the market for the less educated has declined, higher education has become an important goal for welfare mothers to achieve. As low-paying jobs will not lift welfare-mothers-with-children above the poverty line and the income gap between men and women still exists, higher education becomes even more important for welfare mothers (p. 112). According to Pandey et al. (2000) women with a college degree were able to match the earnings of men with a high school degree, that is, women's annual average income was \$26,841. Pandey et al. noted two key support services to aid welfare-mothers-with-children in realizing their aspirations: childcare and transportation. Pandey et al. observed as well the unemployment rates based upon years of education. For 9-11 years the unemployment rate was 56.9 percent; for those with high school degrees it was 30.4 percent; and for those with a bachelor's degree, it was 16.9 percent (p. 113).

Pandey et al. (2000) identified individual, family, and societal benefits for the education investment of welfare-mothers-with-children. The private returns for women were direct and several; for example, women experienced higher income, self-reliance, self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment. For the children of these mothers, Pandey et al. noted that they were healthier and better educated; children whose mother had finished a degree had developed their own aspirations of college. The public return to society was likewise significant. Children of educated mothers have "lower fertility rates, lower

infant mortality rate, lower maternal death, higher GNP growth, and improved use of health care services” (Pandey et al., 2000, p. 113). One final observation by Pandey et al. was that one to two years after college graduation 87 to 88 percent of welfare recipients had left welfare and had become financially independent (p. 118).

In summary welfare-mothers-with-children occupy all racial subgroups of students, such as Asian-, African-, Native, or Latin@ American. The risk that these mothers face is significant to them and society at large. Women who never marry, and have children, are 10 times more likely to be on welfare rolls, thus perpetuating the poverty cycle. For these women marriage does not automatically lead to a better life; their poverty, ethnicity, and gender shape their future potential. These young mothers-with-children were typically beset by family and school problems when they were teenagers. They felt adrift and lacked a positive identity, and they had no vision of participating in society’s valued roles. Their pregnancy, and the resulting birth, ignited their interest for additional training and education. They saw the mother-role as a source of love, thus providing meaning and purpose; education was a means to provide for their children; and education and better employment would protect their children from the stigma of being born to a welfare mother. Contrary to the dominant culture’s point of view that these young mothers are lazy, they wanted to distance themselves from the negative, stereotyped welfare-mothers. They aspired to many middle-class goals, for example, a good job, home ownership, and the ability to support their families without financial concerns, and wanted their children to attend college (Jennings, 2004).

The various authors used multiple definitions to identify underrepresented students who are welfare-mothers-with-children. Since these students have no racial

limitations, they were identified in broad terms, for example, culturally deprived or socially disadvantaged, educationally deprived, and the general underrepresented definition. All the authors expressed their concern over the impact of TANF and other philosophical changes in the welfare system. The dual requirements of returning to the workforce and completing their educational plan were seen as a threat to the young mothers who feared that they could not complete their goals. A second theme was the need to challenge the dominant culture's view that these women were lazy and sought to have children in order to have welfare benefits. These scholars considered this to be a myth with potential political motivations.

Summary

Each category of underrepresented students was defined in multiple ways, different reasons were given as the cause of being underrepresented, there were diverse views of the dominant culture upon the underrepresented population, and distinct justifications were given by the various authors to consider each category distinct. Perhaps it was privately tempting for these scholars to "rank" which category was the neediest; I did not discern this, however, nor did I find this in the literature. I did perceive that there was an appropriate sense of urgency; the authors felt keenly that now is the time to address the needs of underrepresented students if, indeed, the bondage of poverty can be broken. The difficulties facing underrepresented students are the poverty of their families, a disproportionate burden of difficult life experiences, challenging or unsafe living environments, and the lack of value and aspiration for, and knowledge of, higher education. Welfare mothers with children face additional obstacles due to changes in the welfare system requiring work and time limits, besides the existing wage gaps with men.

These are the issues that face underrepresented students. Typically middle- and upper-class traditional-aged students do not experience the same impediments to a college education that brings hope for breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving educational and career goals.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

I describe in this chapter my *raison d'être* for selecting a qualitative research paradigm and then, specifically, a holistic critical theory methodology over other methodologies. I demonstrate how critical theory exposes domination while simultaneously seeking the liberation of the oppressed, the importance of praxis to my research, and how my research questions are intimately connected to critical theory.

Qualitative Paradigm

My initial choice was “a systematic set of beliefs, together with their accompanying methods” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 15), that is, my paradigm. I selected a qualitative paradigm because of its values, which include the following: (a) each person is unique and deserves respect; (b) the foundation of social interactions between a researcher and a participant should be equity, fairness, and mutual respect; (c) change processes should be negotiated and mutually understood—not imposed, forced, or required—and be people-centered such that attention is on the unique needs and interests of real people; (d) unilateral action is avoided; (e) the process of how things are done is equally as important as the outcome that is sought; (f) a researcher will first learn about the participants and the participants’ reality, requiring the researcher’s personal involvement; (g) emotions and feelings are part of a healthy human experience; (h) the researcher is nonjudgmental and not controlling of participants, but rather accepts, supports, and empowers participants to make their own decisions and live as they choose; (i) an individual and his or her community must be understood contextually and holistically; and (j) openness, transparency, and integrity are critical characteristics of

communication that shares information, demonstrating mutual respect and the value of openness (Patton, 2002).

A qualitative paradigm was my choice for several reasons beyond its basic assumptions. In the use of this paradigm I gain understanding of the social world through direct personal experience in the natural setting as opposed to a sterile laboratory environment. A qualitative researcher gains persuasiveness through physical proximity and/or extended time with participants by shared experience, empathy, and confidentiality (Patton, 2002). Since a qualitative researcher is immersed in the everyday, natural setting of the participant, the researcher is required to “let go of control” and “go with the flow” as the inquiry emerges (Schram, 2006, p. 8). The quality and depth of researcher-participant relationship continuously shifts and influences the final results of the inquiry. In other words, the researcher affects the relationship and what comes from the relationship, by how the researcher listens, observes, reacts, responds, and reflects with the participant (Pamphilon, 1999; Patton, 2002; Schram, 2006). Schram (2006) forewarned the qualitative researcher concerning “getting nosy,” that is, the very choice of questions during the interview directs the agenda of the topics and issues that will be discussed (p. 8). He further warned qualitative researchers to be sensitive to the context and attentive to the particulars. Finally, qualitative research is basically interpretive and a selective process. Schram (2006) admonished, “Experiences do not speak for themselves” (p. 11). He stated that researchers are engaged “in an active process of interpretation” where some issues are important, others are noted but ignored as not significant, and still others are missing altogether (p. 11).

In summary, a qualitative research paradigm fit the needs of my research and my own philosophical values and position. I now explain why critical theory was selected rather than other qualitative methodologies before proceeding with my research design.

Critical Theory Methodology

Because my research questions are social, political, and economic in nature, critical theory was the methodology of choice (Brookfield, 2005). As I previously stated the issues that critical theory (CT) examines—structure, dominant ideology, and lifeworld—are important to me and match my research questions. CT examines difference, privilege, and power and offers the tools to see (false) ideological beliefs. It seeks to expose the privilege of the dominant culture and reveal the resulting contradiction(s), ultimately seeking to liberate the entire community.

Because CT aims to explain and transform *all* the circumstances that enslave human beings, broader critical theories such as critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and LatCrit (Sólorzano & Bernal, 2001) have been developed. These theories have emerged in connection with many social movements that identify varied dimensions of domination in modern societies. In both the broad and the narrow senses, however, critical theory provides the descriptive and normative basis for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all its forms.

Research Design

Creswell (1998) defined research design as “the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing the narrative, not simply the methods, such as data collection, analysis, and report writing” (p. 3). Patton (2002) described research design more extensively beginning with clarity about the purpose. The purpose that I pursued

initially placed me between basic research that contributes to knowledge and theory and applied research that illuminates a concern in society (Patton, 2002). However, I had two additional expectations: to cause a change and to intimately include the participants in the process of gaining knowledge. This desired change is better delineated by the word praxis. Praxis, the merging of reflection and action or the translation of an idea into a moment of action, is critical to the extent that human emancipation is sought (Freire, 1970). These two expectations placed me towards action research on research continuum (Patton, 2002).

In summary the research questions guided my study towards multi-purposed participatory-emancipatory research where I contribute to knowledge and theory, illuminate a societal concern, and through praxis achieve emancipation. Critical theory satisfied and was compatible with this research purpose. This decision was significant because this foundation impacted the rest of the design that includes sampling and participants, researcher-participant relationship, interview process, risks and benefits of interview, reciprocity, stakeholder reporting, ethics and ethical procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness. The next sections will cover these topics in that order.

Sampling, Participants, and Document

For the purpose of this study the population was limited to the following underrepresented population: a student who receives Pell Grant funds; a first-generation student; a student who experienced the foster-care system; Asian-, African-, Native-, Latin@-American whose race, ethnicity, class, and/or gender (being male or female) caused marginalization; and finally, welfare-mother students with children. This study

further delimited the population under study to those who currently remain in higher education, or who have graduated, and have maintained at least a 2.0 grade point average.

I purposefully selected participants using a criterion-based strategy (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Patton recommended that participants be information rich, that is, they have the knowledge and experience that the researcher requires for the study. I placed bulletin board announcements across the school campuses (see Appendix A for details). This resulted in 23 participants who voluntarily shared their stories.

Patton (2002) recommended that a researcher be open to opportunities to gather and analyze information from multiple perspectives. Being opportunistic could lead to deeper understanding. He expected the research design to emerge instead of remaining static. Patton encouraged the researcher to remain alert and be disciplined throughout the entire research process, but especially during the more routine middle phase of fieldwork. Being alert and disciplined could lead to a new line of questioning or a new approach of thinking that would require additional participants' input. This happened to me while discussing my dissertation topic with a fellow faculty member. She mentioned that the community college had conducted a diversity study several years ago. This diversity study became a data source to triangulate data analysis.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

In forming my holistic critical theory I needed to know where I should fit between *etic* and *emic*. The researcher-participant relationship is placed on a continuum from *etic* to *emic* (Creswell, 1998). *Etic* characterizes a more detached relationship where the researcher acts as an outsider viewing the subject and interpreting social phenomenon. Patton (2002) referred to this as “the ethnographer’s perspective, the *etic*, or outsider’s,

view” (p. 84). *Emic*, on the other hand, is characterized by a researcher becoming more one with the subject and experiencing the social phenomenon. Patton described this as “capturing and being true to the perspective of those studied ... or the insider’s perspective” (p. 84). Researchers place themselves on this continuum based upon their personal philosophy (for example postmodern, postcolonial, or other position) or the needs and purpose of the study. I selected the *emic* approach in my research-participant relationship.

Milner (2006) stated that researchers should not adopt a “researcher detachment [lens] when conducting research with African-Americans because too much is at stake when this occurs” (p. 368). He wrote this in the context of introducing his racial, cultural, and spiritual engagement for researchers and research participants within empowering research. Milner placed his reflective model of racial, cultural, and spiritual engagement alongside critical theory, critical race theory, and other emancipatory research theories to understand injustice, racism, and inequity. I was thankful for this recommendation since a detachment (*etic*) suit does not wear well on me. *Emic* refers to the behavior and beliefs that are meaningful to the participant and *etic* is the researcher account of the behavior or belief system. Milner (2006) wrote that researchers who are studying African-Americans should position themselves on the *emic* side.

Shank (2006) developed a list of observer types that he claimed was not exhaustive or exclusive. His purpose was to encourage researchers to reflect on who they are and how they observe. He wanted new researchers to integrate other observational types so that they could combine different observer types into their own. As Shank noted that no one fits only one category, but probably a combination, I ascertained that I was a

combination of at least the “embracer” (p. 24), “categorizer” (p. 25), and “reflector” (p. 28). I live, work, and study as an embracer. As a natural categorizer I have long observed people, created categories to sort my observations, and enjoy creating new categories based upon meeting new people in new contexts. I love learning about individuals not for cold scientific facts, but because people are precious to me. Finally I am a reflecter who learns from others in order to learn about myself. I am an abstract individual who processes experiences concretely.

Shank (2006) not only advised being aware of one’s natural observation category and incorporating the strengths of other categories, but also being aware of and thus avoiding the weaknesses of each category. With this in mind I was cognizant of choices made during observations and possible omissions during the write up. I did not concern myself with Shank’s concern for the “ideological categorizer,” the researcher who forces observations into perceived categories (p. 26). If anything I was concerned with being too reckless as an observer, perhaps creating too many categories to account for subtle differences. Finally the weakness of the reflecter is the tendency towards self-absorption or narcissism. I relied on my family, friends, participants, and committee to correct me if I had such a tendency.

Personally I am found where the attributes of trust, care, emotion, and friendship are in line with the general tenets of the ethic of care and the perspectives of many feminists (Shank, 2006). There are power differentials in every relationship including those between a researcher and participants (Patton, 2002). My researcher-participant relationships were both equal and asymmetrical where at times I had greater power and at other times the participant did. As an individual I live fluctuating between weaker and

stronger positions, but never fixed or absolute; I am not strong in every context just as I am not weak in every context. I followed this approach with each participant. I was not offended if the participant believed that she or he was superior to me. I followed a course of humility where I was willing to be known for my true (authentic) self, both weak and strong depending on the context.

My researcher-participant relationships were enhanced by emancipatory interests. My goals were not only to collect data, analyze the data, and share the initial write-up with a participant for member checking, but I also sought to increase the participants' consciousness and ability to free themselves wherever they experience oppression (Patton, 2002). There was a continuous emancipatory aspect in our relationship (Milner, 2006). I was uncomfortable, however, using people for a means to an end; therefore, I conducted multiple "gut checks" concerning this.

Interview Process

Interviewing is one of the primary data collection methods employed by qualitative researchers. The purpose of interviewing is to obtain information rich data to analyze and "to allow [researchers] to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

I used Creswell's (1998) 7-steps of interviewing supplemented with ideas from other authors. My sampling method has been previously described. I attempted one focus group interview, which produced some results, but my inexperience and lack of appropriate peer assistant preparation rendered the process largely ineffective. Most of my interviews were semi-structured to unstructured one-to-one interviews that provided information rich data. I had developed an extensive interview guide to prepare myself for

a variety of different directions that the interview could take (Chase, 2002; Patton, 2002; Shank, 2006). Some qualitative researchers use the term open-ended (Fine, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard, Payne, Chajet, Perkins-Munn, & Torre, 2005), or broad, open-ended, and interconnected questioning to represent the type of interview that I used (Milner, 2006; Teranishi, 2002).

All interview sites were mutually agreed upon. I used libraries, private office spaces, and restaurants that afforded quiet places substantially free of distractions (Creswell, 1998). At the request of one, the participant's home was the selected site.

In summary my study's 23 interviews conducted over six months were a combination of population-specific; site-specific delimited to higher education context and specifically to a community college; the phenomenon of marginalization, oppression, and the impact of this on the participants' identity; and the phenomenon of limited life chances, overcoming victimization, and overcoming multi-cultural issues (the lack of sensitivity to the participants' culture) (Shank, 2006).

Risks and Benefits of Interviewing

I was aware of the risks and benefits of unstructured interview (Corbin & Morse, 2003). There are studies that expressed concern with the potential for emotional distress as the result of the interview process, but unstructured interviews should not be considered equivalent to biomedical research that has potential disabling and lethal risks (Corbin & Morse, 2003). I both encouraged and empowered my participants throughout the interview process; I included the option to stop the interview and leave the research project altogether. I was impressed with my participants who all seemed eager to share their stories even when their stories were difficult. I observed the participants' power

during the unstructured interviews. According to Corbin and Morse, participants' power was greatest and the most flexible during the unstructured interviews and significant in the semi-structured. Corbin and Morse concluded that researchers follow ethical conduct when they demonstrate appropriate respect and care for participants, seek reciprocity and provide intervention if necessary, and provide proper information throughout the whole interview. When interviewing includes the options to participate in or to discontinue the interview, participants "do control ... interviews through what they choose or not choose to reveal" (Corbin & Morse, 2003, p. 350).

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the mutual giving between a researcher and a participant, taking place when each gains something from the interview experience. The researcher gains information related to the research question and further professional knowledge. The participant gains information and empowerment through member checking—a report of findings, the ability to relieve "something off their chest" (Patton, 2002, p. 415), and the potential of limited therapeutic counseling; (Corbin & Morse, 2003). The researcher also may provide the participant information that may further emancipate the participant to achieve praxis by, for example, revealing a false ideology (thus making available freedom from a false consciousness) or exposing a course of action for a participant to transform his or her situation.

In addition acts of reciprocity bring benefits to society or a social institution like a community college. Participants could see their participation as a method to free other current and future students from marginalization. If so, these participants demonstrate resistance to the dominant culture by helping the researcher expose and confront

oppression to realize praxis. Corbin and Morse (2003) noted that “these benefits are not undervalued or overlooked by participants, who often consider the opportunity to participate in research as the opportunity to give back indirectly to society” (p. 349). Hutchinson, Wilson, and Wilson (1994) expanded upon the idea of reciprocity. They listed 7 possible benefits of the qualitative interview process. They stated that interviews served as a catharsis, provided self-acknowledgement and validation, contributed to a sense of purpose, increased self-awareness, granted a sense of empowerment, promoted healing, and gave voice to the voiceless and disenfranchised. This was also confirmed by Beck (2005).

Stakeholder Reporting

Reporting is a component of the research design and fulfills one purpose of a research project (Patton, 2002). The stakeholders directly related to this research project are my dissertation committee and the School of Education scholars, the participants, the community college under study, and various state-wide higher education leaders and policy-makers. These stakeholders represent different audiences that expect a report appropriate for their multifarious purposes. The dissertation committee and scholars require an academically rigorous report such as a dissertation and submission of a document to a peer reviewed journal. Reporting to the underrepresented population was accomplished through individualized member checking where participants received a report, requested to verify my analysis and interpretations, and were offered potential solutions for mutual emancipation of the underrepresented and dominant populations.

Reporting to the community college has been partially completed by preparing specialized reports, presenting at faculty meetings, and engaging in various ad hoc

discussions. After one such hallway discussion the community college leadership decided to raise funds through the school's foundation to cover the cost of child-care for welfare-mothers-with-children students.

Higher education leaders and policy-makers require a report that has relevance, clarity, and utility (Patton, 2002). This has been partially completed by my personal presentation of a specialized report to various state-wide faculty organizations. Other local, regional, and statewide reporting is being conducted or is planned.

Ethics and Ethical Procedures

Colorado State University has specific policies regarding human subjects as defined by its IRB. I submitted the appropriate H-100 form, supplied my consent form, recruitment letter, bulletin board announcement, and interview questions to receive authorization for my study. Consent was granted.

Creswell (1998), Patton (2002), and Sieber (1992) guided my decisions on how to treat the participants. Every participant in a one-to-one interview was informed of his or her right to withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, each participant knew the central purpose of the study, any and all procedures of data collection and analysis, and that they would be able to review my report before publishing. The participants' identities were protected and have remained confidential. They were informed of (and recognized) any known risks being associated with this research project and the expected or possible benefits of their participation. Finally, each participant signed and dated the appropriate IRB form.

Ethical procedures impacted everything about the research design, such as sampling, participants' issues, interview process, and analysis. Ethical issues are

important to the trustworthiness of every phase of research design, such as: philosophical perspective and methodology (Crotty, 2003; Schram, 2006); implementation, such as site selection, relationship with participants, protection of human rights, interview process, and reciprocity (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Schram, 2006; Shank, 2006); and reporting, such as member checking, privacy, and closure (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Schram, 2006).

Throughout my study I was cognizant of my responsibilities. I carefully selected appropriate participants, considered how to avoid negatively intruding upon the participants' well-being, and pursued an empathic relationship with them. I had an ethical obligation to maintain their confidentiality. This protection was accomplished in their signed consent form, the use of composite pseudonyms, and appropriate member checking. I sought additional participants' benefits as describe by Hutchinson et al. (1994), that is, the potential benefits of qualitative interviews: "catharsis, self-acknowledgment, sense of purpose, self-awareness, empowerment, healing, and providing a voice for the disenfranchised" (abstract).

Data Analysis

In this section I address several aspects of data analysis: fieldwork, thick description, analysis procedures, trustworthiness, and transferability and validity (Patton, 2002). Fieldwork produces the data that are analyzed to answer the research questions while the complete process determines whether the research is trustworthy, transferable, and valid. I will first describe my fieldwork to achieve academic rigor and integrity and second how I applied thick description. This is followed by two sections on data analysis that address historical foundations and a summary of Hatch's (2002) analysis procedures.

I then conclude focusing on trustworthiness, transferability and validity, and describing 4 structures that emerged through data analysis.

Fieldwork, Field Notes, and Reflexivity

Fieldwork is a critical component of qualitative research, a strategic ingredient of the research design, and is not accomplished by rigidly following a set of rules or precise procedures (Patton, 2002). Fieldwork is the act of the researcher living in the participants' real world and "getting close enough to the people and circumstances there to capture what is happening" (Patton, 2002, p. 48). I previously have addressed several aspects of qualitative research: theoretical perspective, methodology, my biases, researcher-participant relationship, and triangulation methods. I now proceed with capturing participants' voices, using field notes, and practicing reflexivity in all aspects of fieldwork.

I purposefully sought to quote participants using their own language and voice to capture their higher education experience and context, the community college (see chapter 4). Since my study included participatory and emancipatory goals as well, I purposed to "unveil the interwoven complexities and fundament patterns ... [found in] social life" (Patton, 2002, p. 274). Thus it behooves me to understand my participants and then translate their words so that others from the dominant culture will understand. This is addressed in chapter 5.

I wrote field notes as my intuition led me with ideas, feelings, questions, and explanations. I took great care with, and paid attention to, each experience. My participant relationships exhibited trust and care while concurrently remembering the purpose of the study, that is, I maintained the ability to be analytical (Patton, 2002). I also

recognized my need to draw wisdom from participants, but I always kept in mind that their perspective was selective (Patton, 2002).

I regularly practiced reflexivity to achieve a study that was academically rigorous, full of integrity, and trustworthy. Finally I observed a guideline for the researcher to “separate description from interpretation and judgment” (Patton, 2002, p. 331). I concede that my personal involvement could yield a selective perception. Other researchers could have conceived other perceptions, selected other quotes, and developed other interpretations. Therefore I hold with some healthy skepticism the interpretations and conclusions of this study.

Thick Description

Patton (2002) wrote that “thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting” (p. 437). In chapter 4 I offer my readers the opportunity to live the contradictory community college experiences that my participants lived, through many detailed, rich quotations. I further offer my readers a prospect to understand and then challenge various administrative structures, bureaucratic (ir)rationality, and ideological forces that exist in their own community colleges. My readers then can understand the phenomenon and draw interpretations concerning meanings and significance to their own contexts (Patton, 2002).

Historical Foundations

In my reality it is fair to state that data analysis began for me *before* I decided to begin my doctoral program. First, months before taking the proposal class, I had decided Critical Theory (CT) was the methodology of choice. I knew intuitively that this choice was important. It had to match who I was as a person; it had to satisfy my values, needs,

and character. My choice had to be in agreement with my personality at that moment. More importantly my choice had to answer the questions that I was both intuitively sensing and witnessing in my daily academic life. CT provided me the tools to understand what I was sensing and witnessing; it provided me the tools to analyze the stories that I was told. Secondly, from the time I decided on CT I carried with me Hatch's (2002) warning that my analysis must be grounded in data, not based upon my personal biases, interpretations, assumptions, and on anecdotal experiences.

I conducted data analysis throughout the research study. For me the analysis more directly began with the development of the research questions, purpose statement, and the study's background. How I posed the research questions, purpose statement, and the study's background both limited and delimited the study and how it was analyzed. The literature review influenced my analysis as I considered how the dominant population's structures and ideology impacted the underrepresented population. Through the literature I learned about the underrepresented populations' lifeworld even before the first interview was conducted.

Data Analysis Procedure

After I completed the data collection along with some preliminary analysis and note taking, the major task of analysis faced me. I used Hatch's (2002) 8-step procedure for CT analysis. I followed his procedure in this manner: I read the data set to capture the big picture; wrote a self-reflexive statement to expose my ideological assumptions (see Appendix B); coded the data related to my assumptions (deductive) and coded inductively as new codes emerged; considered how codes were supported or not; wrote

up analytical memos and notes about possible generalizations; verified my understanding through member checking; and wrote up summaries that supported my generalizations.

Trustworthiness

Initially I searched the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, to verify my understanding of the word *trustworthy*.

Main Entry: **Trustworthy**

Part of speech: *adjective*

Worthy of trust or confidence; reliable.

Trustworthy is described as deserving one's confidence, or dependable, reliable, honest, and faithful. In this context, I pursued my research project in such a way that it could be described as unfalse, unperfidious, untreachorous, incorruptible, and inviolable.

I used these descriptors to evaluate my qualitative research as trustworthy. I accomplished this by being candid regarding my biases, presuppositions, and interpretations (Kilbourn, 2006) and by developing a coherent research design. Criteria for judging quality in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba emphasized "*trustworthiness* and *authenticity* by being balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities" (emphasis author's) (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 575). For my critical theory research to be considered holistically trustworthy it would have to be authentic, confirmable, credible, dependable, and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My research was believable initially from the participants' perspective. This was accomplished through member checks when I verified with the participants their understanding of what

they had said (Patton, 2002). I used a member checking process extensively all through my research by verifying my interpretations, seeking participants' own definitions of terms used, and discussing empowerment ideas to seek social justice.

Qualitative research is holistically trustworthy if it is coherent, that is, all of the composing parts are clear and fit together so that the "document has integrity" (Kilbourn, 2006, p. 42). With this in mind, I believe that the following parts are coherent: the background of the problem; my problem or tension of the phenomena; the selection and fit of the theoretical perspective; the purpose of the research project; the research question(s); any assumptions related to the theoretical perspective, the researcher's reality, or the fundamental paradigm and definitions of specialized terms; and delimitations and limitations.

Transferability and Validity

After any research has been completed an obvious question is asked: Are there generalizations that can be applied beyond this limited case (Patton, 2002)? As noted above the criteria for judging qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability in qualitative research is the idea that the results of one context are applicable to another.

I believe that this study is transferable and valid because of three principles: proximal similarity, that is, there are similar settings, populations, outcomes, and times; empirical interpolation and extrapolation, that is, specify the range of persons, settings, treatments, outcomes, and times where the findings hold; and explanation, that is, the

breaking down of critical component parts and processes in order to isolate the essential ones (Patton, 2002).

The understanding of transferability and validity remain problematic across theoretical stances and will depend upon the theoretical stance that a qualitative inquiry researcher takes. I have pursued the orientational qualitative perspective (Patton, 2002). This is the perspective of my study, and I now relate how transferability and validity were achieved.

I have achieved transferability and validity from my orientational qualitative perspective because, as cited in Patton (2002), there was “a sense of connectedness and equality between the researcher and the researched” (p. 129); my feminist perspective unequivocally recognized and valued alternate ways of knowing, such as emotion, intuition, and experience; the methods that I used spur conscience-raising and induce researcher reflexivity; and finally the knowledge I gained was used to promote praxis (Patton, 2002).

Whatever conceptual framework a researcher subsumes, what is and who is important always takes place within a particular time in history, specific culture, and political position (Patton, 2002). Race/ethnicity is an important lens to examine who is dominant and who is dominated. Thus race/ethnicity is another orientation perspective that influences the understanding of transferability and validity. My critical theory orientation is concerned with injustices and the subjugation of people. It is both a philosophical perspective and methodology, and it is “aimed at confirmation and elucidation rather than discovery” (Patton, 2002, p. 131). As a holistic critical theorist I

sought to explicate specific patterns of class, race, and gender (male or female) in a particular time and place (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002).

This social phenomenon of oppression is explicated not only by analyzing a particular time and place, but also by analyzing its historical development (Crotty, 2003; Theodorson & Theodorson, 1969). Thus generalization across time and place is problematic, but this is not only true for the orientation perspective. Patton (2002) wrote that qualitative researchers using any methodology should move past processes described by objective, subjective, trustworthy, neutral, and authentic, and instead describe [the processes] and what [the researchers] bring to them and how [the researchers] reflected on them, and then let the reader be persuaded, or not, by the intellectual and methodological rigor, meaningfulness, value, and utility of the result (p. 576).

I conclude this section on transferability and validity with three concerns that every inquiry should address (Patton, 2002). First is the use of rigorous methods while doing fieldwork to produce information rich data which in turn are systematically analyzed. My data collection procedures are defined in three sections titled: Research Design; Sampling, Participants, and Document; and Interview Process. Hatch (2002) carefully described the analytic steps necessary to ground critical theory in the data.

The second concern is related to the credibility of the researcher, that is, his or her personal training, experience, track record, status, and “presentation of self” (Patton, 2002, p. 584). I have described in the research design the process and procedures to enhance the credibility of the research design; refer to four sections titled: Prologue, Ethics and Ethical Procedures, Trustworthiness, Transferability and Validity, and Appendix A.

The final concern is the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). Credibility of the qualitative findings is dependent upon the degree that qualitative research generally, and critical theory specifically, is valued. In the end I must let the reader decide whether to be persuaded, based upon my intellectually and methodologically rigorous processes and the meaningfulness, value, and utility of my findings.

Emerging Structures

After my choice of a doctoral program and research foundational issues, I developed and considered broad ideas from the individual interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I developed these broad ideas intuitively and recursively; they emerged or unfolded as I struggled with the mass of data and the myriad codes. The whole process of organizing the data was anything but chronological and deductive. After much consideration and reflexivity on my part, these ideas were named *structures* and were categorized into *structural system*, *dominant ideology*, *lifeworld*, and *care*. I selected these structures to represent the major ideas in individual participant's stories and also to compare ideas across all participants. Not only did I use my research questions as a reference tool during each interview, but I also used them throughout my analysis. I followed Patton's (2002) near absolute rule: "Do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study" (p. 433). In the end I used critical incidents and key issues that I uncovered in the interviews and my interview questions to organize and report the data (Patton, 2002). Through member checking I verified my interpretations with my participants. These structures were full of meaning and significance for me and my participants, and I trust

will communicate with my audience. These structures will be defined in chapter 4 in the section titled Structures Defined. I recognize that by privileging these structures I have simultaneously neglected other ideas and interpretations. Another researcher could very likely privilege a different set of ideas.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Statue of Liberty

CHAPTER 4 – THE UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATION’S STORIES

Introduction

After each interview I eagerly anticipated retelling the participant’s story. The purpose of this chapter is to privilege participants’ voices that historically have been ignored or minimized within community college systems (Rhoads & Valdez, 1996). Each one was an amazing individual who overcame many obstacles to enter college and then struggled to achieve her or his dreams while in college (Walpole, 2007). I attributed this rapport to my passion for social justice, care for them as individuals, and a strong desire to learn from them. I know that my growing knowledge of the issues facing the underrepresented population sensitized me and improved my listening skills (Chase, 2002). These issues are numerous, reflecting the complexity of the human situation. I had diligently prepared myself by reading different authors regarding these complex key issues (see Chapter 2).

It was not difficult developing rapport with every participant. I attributed this to my passion for social justice, care for the participants as individuals, and a strong desire to learn from each one. I know that my growing knowledge of the issues facing the underrepresented population sensitized me and improved my listening skills (Chase, 2002). During the face-to-face interviews I realized how my investment in myriad of readings helped me to connect and understand what they were sharing. The truism that I learned became real: *they do not care what you know until they know that you care*. Immersion in the issues that face the underrepresented population definitely enhanced my data collection process. I believe that the participants recognized my sensitivity to their

affective, economic, social, and/or political issues, and that led to greater freedom in their sharing.

The Pseudonyms

In my study I had 23 participants who represented a diverse group yet had similar experiences in life, especially concerning their higher education experience (Walpole, 2007). I wanted to maintain their confidentiality (Creswell, 1998), desired to show them respect and care (Patton, 2002)), and personally yearned to demonstrate my appreciation. I struggled with how to accomplish this over several months and decided that my pseudonyms would be the place to start. I settled on Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani. Jason was selected because one of my participants has a personal connection to it, while Brandon was selected to show respect to a former student who fit the profile but was not a participant. The remaining names come from my family. I thought that this would demonstrate respect and care to my participants while concurrently recognizing the diverse makeup of my own family. Indeed, several of my children fit the profile of the underrepresented population based upon their ethnicity. Finally, this selection of pseudonyms and the fact that each name represented multiple people would add another layer of confidentiality for the participants. I will now describe more carefully who these names represent.

Jason will represent White students from the lowest economic class who are at the same time first-generation students. Brandon will represent the intertwined reality of many African-Americans who also have Native-American ancestry, are poor, first-generation, and have significant military influence whether individually or as a member of a military family. Juan will represent Latino students, that is, both US born Latinos and

those who may have emigrated from Spanish-speaking countries and are labeled Hispanic by the dominant culture. Desari will symbolize Latina and Native-American students, who are at times poor, first-generation, and/or welfare mothers-with-children. Stephanie will represent the blend of African-American and Native-American, as well the mix of classes, that is, poor and upper-middle class. Krista, on the other hand, will represent the profile of White females who experienced foster-care, and/or are welfare-mothers-with-children. Noelani with her Hawaiian name will represent female students who are Asian-American, Pacific Island-American, who are often first-generation, and possess significant cultural differences from the dominant culture.

The Four Structures

I will now establish how this study uses these four structures as described in the chapter 3 section titled Emerging Structures. These definitions will follow in order as listed: structural system, dominant ideology, lifeworld, and care. After these definitions I will proceed in order of the composite individuals, Jason, Brandon, Juan, Krista, Desári, Stephanie, and Noelani using the same four structures. Note that I have removed all names used of other individuals referenced by the participants. For ease of reading, however, I have used two names, Drs. Blair and Louise Bentley. These two professors encouraged me in my critical thinking while in college and encouraged everyone to be anti-racists and inclusive. I honor them here by using their names to represent those instructors at the community college under study who share the same values. I have also used a pseudonym for the community college; it will be named All Peoples Community College (APCC).

Structures Defined

As defined earlier the net result of the process of individuals constructing programs, policies, and rules is the institution's *structural system*. The structural system also includes the people using and following the various policies and rules, as well as their job descriptions and associated hierarchies. All of this is understood to be the institution's culture and identity.

The *dominant ideology* is an organized set of beliefs that guide social action and are generally lived out implicitly rather than articulated explicitly by the dominant culture. The dominant ideology becomes a problem when it creates a false consciousness for the dominant culture, for example, when the dominant group cannot see what is really true about Others (in this study the underrepresented population). This false consciousness causes a member of the dominant group to be unaware of how his or her beliefs impact others. This false understanding will also cause individuals to act in ways that are contradictory to their self-interest (Shank, 2006).

Lifeworld is all the skills, values, and attitudes set within an attentive individual's environment (Habermas, 1984, 1987).

I previously defined *care* as the inner values and attitudes that enable sight, the ability to see visible needs and sense invisible needs, and the corresponding decisions, responses, and actions of people that comprise a particular institution. Care could be understood as how the lifeworlds of individuals intersect and are lived out, that is, where the lack of resources in one individual is addressed by the resources of another. In an educational institution *care* can be demonstrated by administrators, faculty, staff, and students to address the needs of others. Rendón (1994) would have the lifeworlds of the

educational institution's attentive faculty lived out by demonstrating "genuine concern for teaching students," being "personable and approachable toward students," treating students equitably, structuring learning experiences so that students discover their own ability to learn, and working individually with those students who needed extra help (p. 40).

Jason

Jason is the composite of three White male students who are from the lowest economic class as defined by the Federal government and also the first in their families to attend college. Jason was on his way to perpetuate his family's economic status when outside forces—a family member, his faith, and mentors at APCC—encourage him to attend college. He stated of the family member: "[he] is like a very good influence on me ... and he definitely encourages me and he pushes me to be, you know, a better person." When I asked Jason to introduce himself to me he stated his age, marital and family status, then "I'm [a] Christian" followed by his completed education experience. In an unrecorded discussion he shared the significance of his faith. When Jason spoke of the influence of one of his mentors he shared: "Dr. Blair Bentley has always made the time, to make it available and I really appreciate that."

The individuals who comprise Jason share a common interest in their studies with their pursuit of mathematics and sciences with the desire to pursue either a medical or engineering career. Their spiritual faith is another mutual thread as they all attended the same church. Broken homes were also a common denominator that caused educational disruptions and motivational turmoil during their early years. They are different,

however, in that two are traditional age without military influence, but the third is a non-traditional student with several years of military service.

Here is Jason's story using the Bourdieuan theory as a penetrating lens to examine how Jason experienced the four structures. I am adding an additional section to account for exceptions of one of Jason's composites. The exceptions include the use of military analogies, being non-traditional age, his emotional military wounds, and his learning disabilities.

Structural System

In the following two quotes Jason speaks generally well of the faculty who comprise a significant part of the structural system, but also includes the policies, rules, job descriptions, and hierarchies of APCC. For Jason's professors their multitudinous administrative tasks are distracting and limiting issues that rob them of opportunities to be with students like Jason and to properly support them.

I've tried having discussions with other teachers and you know, they will take the time to talk to me, but they won't take extra time to help me out or if I have any other questions. And they won't go out of their way to do something. You know, to really help them succeed. And I feel that's what Dr. Bentley does.

I've never experienced any bad at all from anything and I feel like I've been treated in class like, very, ... just like everybody else that I can see around me. I feel like, you know, I am treated equal. You know in all my classes there's never been a situation where I have been treated unequal for ... for anything for that matter. Everything's always just been the same, and consistent.

And yet with Jason's positive experience with a faculty member, a mentor, not all faculty treated him with such care and attention as revealed by his next quote.

I feel like I can actually come to Dr. Blair Bentley and talk to him about anything and that's ... I mean that's regardless of having him know my story or any of my background. I feel that he is very approachable, about any kind of situation. Although I haven't felt that with other professors ... it's just ... it's nice to know

that somebody is there, you know, and actually looking out for you and for your best interest.

I think because certain people have ... a mindset that actually really wants to help individuals. And ... I mean I can't say that every teacher is that way, but there are many that are and ... I ... I just think (laughter) it's been pretty good so far.

Jason elucidated this further by providing a counter-example. Jason's experience revealed how the lifeworlds of faculty-students intersect and how the structural system, in this case a faculty member, was an unconstructive one for Jason.

She wasn't necessarily the ... the kind of teacher that really wanted the students to learn all of the material. It was more of a like "take it or leave it" kind of feel of her class. And it just ... she didn't really try to have the students completely understand. And even there was questions asked, it was like, they weren't taken into consideration. So I think that that played a huge part in the role of her getting an "ok" score as far as not getting a great score. Because I think that everybody has the ability to be a great person or a great teacher ...

She was teaching the class, and it was her perspective. She wasn't very open minded. And ... I think to be a good teacher you need to be open minded and try to connect. Because you know that's what I mean by essentially be take it or leave it, is trying to connect, and she didn't have that connection or their interests ... or anything, trying to get opinions on what sorts of topics that would ... (laughter) that just gave away the class, but (laughter) ... what kind of topics you could write about you know or explain them yourself. It was just more of her kind of experiences and what did we have to write on ... if we had ever experienced something like how she had, or something. But I think that we all come from different lives, you know, and we all have different experiences growing up and so we can't necessarily relate you know our experiences to what somebody else has experienced. That's why it's our story and not their story ...

At APCC there are structures created to serve all students and then some especially for the underrepresented population. For example, all students desire an easier enrollment process, but those who are academically challenged, or first-generation, require a different support structure. Yet according to Jason's comments pertaining to two such important structures, he knew nothing about them. One structure was intended to speed the enrollment process and the other to increase the academic support. He responded to questions about these structures: "What? I've never hear of that." But this

confusion and frustration is real and challenging for the first-generation student as he continues discussing his first days at school (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004):

I'm not sure but it seems to me that it would just be like the law of averages. Most people come through, they know what they're looking for, they have some idea of what they want to do ... and ... I ... I'm not so sure that there's a very large percent of people that come in that have absolutely no clue what college is all about or how it works. I think more ... I think more people than not have some idea of what's going on in college and what they're looking for ...

In another part of the interview he expressed the lack of knowledge about credit hours, math and computer labs, curricular and financial aid issues, and other collegiate structures not uncommon to many first-generation students. But Jason has learned that a community college is a good place to start. He says:

I'd say APCC is a good place to start off for college because it will open your eyes to the experience of college and also open your eyes to you know what you want to do in life.

When I first came to college here, I didn't know anything about college, other than, it's college. I didn't know what credit hours meant. I didn't know what they were worth, what they mean. I didn't know where to start looking as to you know what kind of degree to look for. What kind of classes I'd be interested in. I had no clue what kind of stuff was available.

Though Jason was often unaware of support resources available, when he did discover them he was quick to express his appreciation. Since he is planning to transfer to a four-year public institution he has visited, he recognized the differences in schools as well.

And I like that the classes are kind of small so that you can ... you don't seem to get lost in a classroom. In a class, you fall behind and you know you're just left on your own. You know, people seem to be willing to help a lot. There's a lot of good resources here, which I seem to find out more and more as times go on, resources that I wish I'd knew about before. And, but I'm finding out now, and that's good.

Low-SES students tend to maintain lower academic aspirations, use inappropriate strategies to attain desired social gains, and/or resist adopting a new habitus (Walpole, 2007). Jason has been able to break the enduring nature of habitus in which so many low-SES students remain entrapped. There are studies that show low-SES students can realize upward mobility through exposure to different habitus or values in a collegiate environment (Harker, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). This was true for Jason as he aspires to achieve a medical or engineering career. He has learned that cultural capital can be re-invested for social profits, but earlier he was not so sure. His earlier attitudes, preferences, and behaviors were self-defeating (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

I never thought much of college, I always thought college was a money scam, I was like you know, give me ten years OJT, or give me 4 years OJT and send some guy to school for four years and I'll be the better employee, you know. And I thought college was a big money scam. Why do I need to learn how to write papers? Why do I have to take this or that class, you know ... I don't need that, I just need to know how to do the job. And now I see it much different ... I didn't know how much I didn't know, until I went to college. College showed me how much I didn't know about things that I thought I knew about. So ... it showed me how much more I have to learn. And I thought that was a good thing. So I'm trying to impress into my daughter, you know, I don't want you to grow up to be anything like me.

Before it was just like ... it's nothing exciting about telling somebody you go to APCC. But I feel much more confident now, when people say "where do you go to school?" I go to All Peoples Community College. I'm much more confident about it now because I see it as a much more prestigious place than I did before I went to school ...

In summary Jason was a poor, White, first-generation student who initially lacked the point of view, values, and vision to attend college, even calling it a "money scam." He was able to break the habitus that prevents so many from completing college. The structural systems in place to serve such students were not known, irrelevant, or had

contradictory results. Jason's experiences of faculty were generally good, but he definitely understood that most had a limited vision and time for him.

Dominant Ideology

The dominant ideology has the potential to create a false consciousness which obstructs what the dominant group sees or perceives (Shank, 2006). This results in the dominant group not understanding how their beliefs are experienced by the Other. The literature states that there are significant parental and family issues that the underrepresented population experiences that are not experienced by the dominant group (Striplin, 1999). Thus the dominant ideology found in the APCC obstructs their perception and understanding concerning underrepresented population's family issues. Jason shared his future dreams, but at the same time articulated an emotional wound from his past of not having his father rear him.

Well ... man ... one of my main things is to own my own business. And there's a lot of businesses I want to own. I want to be like, a chiropractor, massage therapist. I want to open some gyms as well and I would really like to you know just help a lot of kids that have been in tough situations, like us, as well. And 'cause I understand that it's not easy, you know I really did ... and I grew up without a dad and we really didn't have anyone there to push us, we basically had to push each other. So, that's ... those are some of my main goals in life ... to do those things ... to open up my own business, to become an entrepreneur, and just be successful ... ummm ... healthy, wealthy, and wise. And ... that's what I'm looking to do.

Jason continues to share the parental impact upon his life:

I never met my father. I know his name that's about it. I know he lives near my hometown and that he has family that lives near and around my hometown where I grew up. Never heard from him. Don't know much about him. My mom ... I'm the only child from that relationship. Her and my father were never married ... My mom is ... never had any college ... ummm ... she is ... she's always been like a waitress or a cook or she used to ... she used to work as a civilian for a military contractor. But she's a cook and has been for several years.

Jason's motivation to improve his social, fiscal, and career-related standing is evident (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). Clearly Jason is motivated by professional and financial achievement and personal aspirations; he seeks upward mobility (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). What is different for Jason when compared with the dominant culture is that he has personal challenges not common to dominant or privileged collegiate students that must be overcome (Striplin, 1999). In particular, Jason has significant work and family responsibilities (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004), as revealed by the following two quotes:

I'm currently unemployed. I have tried so many places, but in today's economy, it's like ... it's really hard to get a job. But, in a way I kind of feel that it's ... like I need to focus on school and it's ... if it were meant for me to have a job, I would have one.

I have to arrange my schedule around what time I can be at the house for [a younger brother]. What time I can babysit and you know, that's like, it's ... so it's sort of like put some stress on you know, as far as, like the ability to do some of the work in class because I have to watch my little brother and ... and ... things of that kind.

Family responsibilities for students from the dominant group do not generally include purchasing necessities for the parents or the family. This is not foreign to the underrepresented population as Jason shared his story:

We had to get tires on it because one of the tires had gone out and so it was time to get like an all new set of tires because there was no way they could actually fix that tire ... so ... and the spare tire we couldn't keep on there for a long time, so we had to get new tires and my mom, she, like she has most of the bills to pay and like I contribute a monthly bill as far as that. I usually contribute like with the tire situation, I pretty much, I bought the tires for the car ... so ... and ... that wasn't that cheap ... and like now, it's even getting hard because I don't even have a job and like my older brother doesn't have a job either and we've both been looking and everywhere we go it's like they have a hiring freeze, you know, and so, there's ... it's really hard to find a place to work at ...

First-generation students will, at times, encounter conflicts between home and collegiate community cultures (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). When first-generation students are discouraged by their family, they can experience alienation, doubt their academic and motivational abilities, and even consider that they are not college material. For example, because of Jason's spiritual beliefs this conflict is profound as he desires to honor his mother and family. During the interview Jason shared that he and his family experienced being homeless, certainly not the typical experience of the dominant group. But his background also causes doubts about his self-worth and his abilities as he disclosed in this extended quote:

I mean overall I do ... but I've had ... I've not passed all my classes up til now. I mean I've had some that I've failed because I really had a hard time getting back into it. I didn't ... I think I didn't take it as seriously as I should have. I thought it was going to be ... math has always been my strong point and I thought oh I'll just get back in there and it'll all come back to me. And that didn't happen. And I didn't take it as serious as I should. And once you fall behind, it's very difficult to catch up, especially when you don't know the stuff. So, yeah that was ... so that was a struggle ...

I think I'm really behind the power curve for somebody ... an equivalent person to me would be. I've you know I've just started attending college two years ago and I don't have any retirement ... anything set up for retirement yet and I'm nervous about that. And I'm really unsure of my future because I don't ... I mean I have some skills but not ... they're not your typical skills where you can just walk in somewhere and get a job. Most of the time it would require me to travel or something and I really don't want to be away from my kids anymore because I did too much of that in the military. Part of the reason I got out. So I just ... I see myself as really behind the power curve. I don't see myself as a very accomplished person.

I still am concerned about what people think of me when I talk about that. I think it's maybe a ... maybe a self-esteem issue, I don't know, but ... so I'm a little ... I'm a little hesitant about that. But yeah, I've never gotten anything negative back. I just ... think that ... I know, in my head I can justify what somebody else would think ...

Jason is more than willing to work hard to achieve his lofty goals. He shared the difficult coursework he must take to realize his goals. The difficult course work is an

example of a structural system designed by, and based upon the dominant ideology of, the dominant group. He stated:

Once I feel that my GPA is high enough, because I don't think it is now, then I'll apply to get in there and then I can start taking some engineering courses along with the math I still have to take, Linear Algebra, Differential Equations, Physics II, Calculus-based Physics 2 ...

I'm not intimidated anymore by the college environment. It's a little bit intimidating going into a much bigger facility. And ... and it's a bit of a prestigious [a ranked] school. It's ranked, I believe it's in the top 10 [professional] schools in the United States. ...

And now I'm there, and I'm looking at [4-year institution] and thinking the same thing. I'm like, boy, this is just the core subjects. Now when I get into [professional area] classes all this is applied and who knows how that's going to be. So, it's unknown territory and it seems to be you know that you're looking down this long road that looks like it's not going to end for a long time so, it's ... it can be intimidating that way. But I'm eager to learn, though. Because I'm really interested in that. I'm really interested in starting to apply some of the stuff that we've learned now ...

I'm not sure what ... what I'm going to do with my degree, yet. You know which road I'm going to take once I get it and I have a little bit of time to decide that. I would be nice to find some way to be self-employed and use my degree in that way. ... But yeah, I believe that it will put me into a better financial situation. A more secure future. I'll be able to feel more secure about you know my future and not so much when's this job going to end, what am I going to do then, you know, what kind of work can I do then?...you know I even worked at Wendy's when I first started going to school here, just for the extra money because I, I just wasn't making it so ... So it feels good knowing that if I can get there, that you know, there's ... that opens more doors for me and it's a bigger opportunity that I don't have now.

Based upon how the APCC marketed itself, the experience of a teacher or an administrator from the dominant culture to teach or lead Jason should be a positive experience where both are changing and learning. However, Jason shared contradictory experiences as a student/work-study. I will share his positive experience first which included both a faculty member and administrative supervisor:

The good things that I like about All Peoples Community College is, I think that most of the instructors I've had have been very accommodating, welcoming, they're generally warm people. They're willing to help. And I like that the classes

are kind of small so that you can ... you don't seem to get lost in a classroom. In a class, you fall behind and you know you're just left on your own. You know, people seem to be willing to help a lot. There's a lot of good resources here, which I seem to find out more and more as times go on, resources that I wish I'd knew about before. And, but I'm finding out now, and that's good. ...

The positive things I'll remember is I probably have one of the greatest bosses I think I've ever had. She's very understanding. She's always willing to offer suggestion or help any way she can you know. She's accommodating and she tries to really help out ... to be a friend, you know. And not ... not in lieu of being a boss, you know, she's very willing to help, she's not just ... show up and work and do your thing and then go home, take care of your problems when you're not here ... she's not that kind of a person. So I think she's a great boss.

And I've had some really great instructors. [Name] is one that's going to stick in my head forever. I think [her] class is very interesting and ... [she's] ... [she's] ... [Her] thinking is a little bit outside of the box and that intrigues me because I'm interested in you know, things can get pretty boring when you're just going down the list of things, you know. But when [she] introduces something a little bit outside of that, it kind of gets my attention, it gets me thinking about other things and you know, and I'm a person that, I'm a visual person. And I like to know why I'm doing things. Sometimes ... a lot of times in math we don't always know why were doing it. But [she] seems to be able to put ... to put a picture with a lot of what we did and we seem to get a little bit extra when we're talking about you know, those of you who are going on to engineering, this, this, and this ... and that for me was good. I liked that. Because [she] was willing to give a little more than just what you're supposed to. So ... that's been good.

But Jason also experienced negative and confusing occurrences with both classroom and hallway leadership. He told his story this way:

I also had a bad experience with another supervisor and ... I wouldn't say a co-worker, but a worker in a different department that worked alongside of us. I didn't know that there was an issue until ... I wouldn't say I got in trouble but I couldn't work in that office anymore and I didn't know why. Because their supervisor wouldn't say why. Just said, you know, they don't want to work with you. And so, I couldn't work there. I had to go to a different office to work and I'm still not sure why and that was two, almost two years ago. So ... you know, I didn't like that and that supervisor is still kind of in the vicinity of the ... we kind of work alongside of them and so there's still some ... there's always been tension, you know? I always say "hi" "how ya doing" and "good bye" and they'll be, you know, minimally cordial, you know, sometimes they'll just give me the nod and keep going. There's just always that ongoing tension, so ... and so I don't know how to resolve that ...

She was teaching the class, and it was her perspective. She wasn't very open minded. And ... I think to be a good teacher you need to be open minded

and try to connect. Because you know that's what I mean by essentially be take it or leave it, is trying to connect, and she didn't have that connection or their interests ... or anything, trying to get opinions on what sorts of topics that would ... (laughter) that just gave away the class, but (laughter) ... what kind of topics you could write about you know or explain them yourself. It was just more of her kind of experiences and what did we have to write on ... if we had ever experienced something like how she had, or something. But I think that we all come from different lives, you know, and we all have different experiences growing up and so we can't necessarily relate you know our experiences to what somebody else has experienced. That's why it's our story and not their story ...

Jason negatively experienced the dominant ideology because he was outside of the dominant culture even though he was White; he was poor and lacked cultural capital. Whether he was limited as a student/work-study because of class or a relational tension is not known, but he was denied access without clarification of the issues involved. The contradictions and false ideologies of the dominant culture left Jason with lingering questions regarding his self-worth ("power curve") and abilities ("self-esteem"). Yet Jason continues with his dream of an engineering or medical career, which is an affront to the dominant group's myths concerning the poor.

Lifeworld

The Bourdieuan framework viewed "individuals as status strivers who strategically improvise to attain desired social and economic goods" (Walpole, 2007, p. 23). Certainly Jason is a status striver as he explains why he is in college:

Yeah ... not like let society take over for [me]. You know, [I] make [my] own decisions and [I am] the person who [I am] because of [my] experiences. And so, [I am] not going to let [my] bad experiences like hold [me] back from who [I] want to be ...

Now it's kind of hard, because, it's over this past year or whatever when I lived in [state], you learn a lot of whenever you're on your own, you learn a lot of who you can really trust and who people really are. And I definitely feel that it is ... it's ... you realize that some people will use you, to get what they can out of you.

Many first-generation students' lifeworld does not prepare them for the college-campus environment and its academic expectations and bureaucratic operations; they are weaker in academic preparation and lack family support in terms of advisory, financial, and emotional support (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). Jason further explicated his personal early educational experience, expected parental support, and current employment situation:

In high school, because we moved so many times, like a lot of credits didn't transfer, so I actually had to drop out and get my GED because I would have been like two years over and it just would have been way too late for me to get a diploma. So I just like, well I know I know a lot of the things and I was just getting cheated out of credits because of moving and I just really felt it was unfair.

Our dad is supposed to be paying for our college until we're 24. And because my mom gave up alimony, so, we also have FAFSA and that covered a lot of it as well.

I'm currently unemployed. I have tried so many places, but in today's economy, it's like ... it's really hard to get a job. But, in a way I kind of feel that it's ... like I need to focus on school and it's ... if it were meant for me to have a job, I would have one.

In spite of his life history Jason has no desire to allow the dominant culture, as personified by society, to keep him down. He wants to make his own decisions and become all he can be on his own merit by using his own abilities, skills, and giftedness; he wants to be looked up to.

I mean, like, be someone that, that if I wrote a book about it, people would be interested to know about it ... and be a role model to other people and ... that's what I mean by it. You know, just ... be someone that people can know that they can come to and have trust in and just, can be friendly with them and not have to put an act on or anything like that. I just want to be someone who is there for my friends and family, whenever they need of me ...

His vision for being looked up to includes multiple degrees and high aspirations. Jason is not planning to stop with his two-year associate's degree, but has much higher goals.

The four year or possibly even go on to a master's afterward. But, but you know ... it seems like a fair amount I've heard, don't just stop at your associate's degree. Anybody can get an associate's degree in just about anything, it's pretty easy and a lot of people do it. So that's not going to separate you from the crowd. You want to get something a little bit more. You want to do something more than average. So, if you're really serious about you know making something more you know out of your future, you probably would want to consider maybe going to the next level, or at least considering ... and ... that a lot of people have associate's now and it's not ... it's not that big a deal anymore like it used to be because people are seeing that you have to have ... at least an associate's and you have to have some kind of college education for a lot of jobs now that you didn't have to have before. So, a lot of people get associate's now, so if you want to distinguish yourself from that group, get your bachelor's, get your master's ... you know ...

This vision for Jason to achieve higher academic degrees came from his prior employment experience. He knew that he was gifted and had ability, but his vision for more than an associate degree was prompted by this encounter. This is another example of Jason being a status striver.

I've run into that problem in my first job I had here, too. You know I had years of experience in the field that I worked in, robotics, for a CD manufacturer in [city location]. And I was ... I was the head technician, but they had guys that would come in and were getting hired at more money than I was making after three years there because they had a college degree. They didn't know anything about what we were doing and you know they were really the lowest level of technician, but they had a degree. And I had a cap on my salary because I didn't have a degree. If I had a degree, the cap was higher.

Jason has completed much of his degree and graduation is within sight, but Jason has not forgotten, however, what it was like his first days, similar to other first-generation students (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). He reflected on his early college days during the interview, revealing as well his accumulated cultural capital which can be converted to additional educational or occupational gains (Lareau & Horvat, 1999):

I just ... one thing that is cool about being here is that ... I mean I remember when I showed up for that first day like it was yesterday because I don't want to say it was traumatic, but it really was but ... I'm not a person that generally feels uncomfortable in situations ... I'm willing to pretty much take on a situation or

challenge without letting it spook me very much, you know ... and sometimes I get nervous or whatever, but I'm still willing to try and ... and I've never quit anything in my life that I can think of ... I've failed at some things, but I've never quit, and I think about that and I think about how big that mountain looked back then and now I'm near the top, you know, and even sometimes other students you know, come to me for help with me, math lab, or ask me questions about resources or something, because I seemed to have picked up a lot since I've been here. And that kind of makes me feel good. That I've moved from the bottom up near the top now. And that ... I think that people see that too ... especially if you've been here for awhile and you see a lot of the same faces and people get to know each other ... so that kind of feels good. It's an accomplishment. If I was getting my associate's degree I could probably graduate you know this spring ... so ...

I think that you see these, these students that are like the best students and they're actually looked as above the other students and ... a lot of times, like, the other students that aren't being lifted up, like how certain students aren't, they feel that they don't want to try to be, like, like the best that they can be, because no matter what, they aren't going to be the best in the eyes of the professor ...

Jason is in full pursuit of cultural capital. He is beginning to embody the internal character and temperament of an engineer or medical professional. He can point to its objectified state by his books, computer, and other related instruments. Soon he will include the institutionalized state with his degree and credentials (Horvat, 2003). In spite of that Jason continues to show care, respect, and willingness to serve others like him. It seems that Jason's status striving is being accomplished without causing harm to others around him, that is, he has a competitive spirit that seeks to achieve without destroying others.

Care

Care will be examined through two theories previously discussed: servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) and spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003). Jason will unknowingly use portions of these theories, especially the components related to helping others, service over self-interest, and effective listening, and other characteristics, such

as, forgiveness, kindness, empathy/compassion, patience, and trust/loyalty. In the following quotes Jason defines care in a way that reflects Greenleaf and Fry's ideas. His understanding of care includes both what to do and what not to do.

I really feel that Dr. Blair Bentley is ... there for the students. Caring ... is really important. It shows that people are there for you to help you. ... Care I think is important but only to the extent if they know you. But I do believe care is definitely important because you should just care for everybody, no matter like who they are because they can somehow, one way or another, maybe you know down the road, they can somehow be in your life and affect you somehow. So you should always show care no matter what.

[Dr. Blair Bentley has] always made the time, to make it available and I really appreciate that.

I knew [he was] going to take the time to be there for me.

And one thing I've like, really liked about the class is, or about the school, is the fact of like, you know, I can just approach the professors or anything about a situation that I have. ... I think that most of the instructors I've had have been very accommodating, welcoming, they're generally warm people. They're willing to help.

The positive things I'll remember is I probably have one of the greatest bosses I think I've ever had. She's very understanding. She's always willing to offer suggestions or help any way she can you know. She's accommodating and she tries to really help out ... to be a friend, you know. And not ... not in lieu of being a boss, you know, she's very willing to help, she's not just ... show up and work and do your thing and then go home, take care of your problems when you're not here ... she's not that kind of a person. So I think she's a great boss.

Certainly Jason believed that availability—the investing of time and self—is fundamental to care, but Jason also extended care to include knowing him, providing an opportunity to reciprocate care, and approachability.

Jason continued to define care to include the ability to relate to him as a student and to his lifeworld. For Jason a caring person recognizes, or is aware of, issues that he faced and is appropriately sensitive to his reality. In private unrecorded meetings Jason shared his reality of not having a father who was there for him, including times of homelessness. These experiences left him with a sense of vulnerability and shame.

I tend to lean more toward the fellow students [who] would think that ... especially younger students feel like “look at this guy?” you know ... So, sometimes I’m a little bit hesitant and sometimes I guess with generally all people, you know, it’s not something I’m comfortable with myself, so it’s not something I’m comfortable with wanting to share with other people that much ... so it’s kind of something I feel like, you know, I feel like I haven’t done my part, to this point, and that’s why I’m in this situation and so it’s something I’m ... I don’t know, I guess it’s a little embarrassing on some level, that I really don’t want to ...

I’m not where I should be in life, as far you know job security, I don’t have any job security. I don’t really have a job now, I’m a work study and a full time student. And I go to school through vocational rehab from the military from being, through disability in the military. And ... I am a disabled vet as well. And ... I just think that at [age] years old, I’m going to be [age] this month, you know I should be secure in a job. I should be able to support my kids and my ex-wife, you know ... better than ... I should be able to give them more than I do, you know. But, I pretty much live paycheck to paycheck now and I don’t have a lot. I’m just ... I don’t live lavishly, I just wish I was in a better position ... security ... financial ... you know maybe own a house by now.

Jason stated that he was guarded about what he shared about himself with others, yet he was very willing and comfortable to reveal these intimate subjects to me. I sensed that he trusted me with this knowledge.

Jason continued defining care to include the ability to make him think, that is, to think outside of the box. He disclosed a story about one of his teachers this way:

But [this teacher] seemed to be able to put ... to put a picture with a lot of what we did and we seem to get a little bit extra when we’re talking about you know, those of you who are going on to engineering, this, this, and this ... and that for me was good.

Because [he was] willing to give a little more than just what you’re supposed to. So ... that’s been good.

I sense that Jason was calibrating care by the amount of investment made by the teacher.

He appreciated the effort and commitment that was made. Yet Jason understood that care has its limitations, and he rejected the notion of being codependent. He stated: “You

know, they're going to show that they care, but they're not going to put it completely out there so that you push yourself and that's how I feel about it."

Jason revealed what is not done in the act of caring in the next two quotes.

I'm like a very kind person as well ... I accept people for who they are. Don't necessarily judge them for what they believe in because everybody has different beliefs ...

But everybody in the math lab is like really helpful and they're all there until, like, they're not going to put you down or belittle you because you're in a lower class, they're there to help you, so it's cool ...

Because they don't look at me with like judgment necessarily. They come with a helping hand and they don't ... I don't feel that I necessarily stereotype because I don't stereotype people. And just like, you reap what you sow, and the laws of attraction. I really think that applies to a lot in life.

Jason has no time for others viewing him with a deficit, or negatively judging, condemning, or belittling him. Jason expected to change through his collegiate culture and was open to it. Jason's transformation supports the validation theory (Rendón, 2005) and demonstrates how low-SES students can realize upward mobility (Harker, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). He knew, however, that he was still responsible for what he becomes and what he achieves. He did not avoid personal responsibilities like his father.

Because going into it, you're not quite sure, exactly. You might have something in mind, but because you go to different classes and you have different experiences, you started thinking like hey, I might like this a little bit more. So I definitely think that this is a great place to start off for first coming in to college.

You know, they're going to show that they care, but they're not going to put it completely out there so that you push yourself and that's how I feel about it.

Jason experienced the best of APCC, but he also experienced its contradictions.

He reflected on his experiences with other community college stakeholders beyond his favorite two.

I've tried having discussions with other teachers and you know, they will take the time to talk to me, but they won't take extra time to help me out or if I have any

other questions. And they won't go out of their way to do something. You know, to really help them succeed.

I would just use it to help others, in general. Now it's kind of hard, because, it's over this past year or whatever when I lived in [state], you learn a lot of whenever you're on your own, you learn a lot of who you can really trust and who people really are. And I definitely feel that it is ... it's ... you realize that some people will use you, to get what they can out of you. Instead of using you, or not necessarily using you, but being your friend just because you're a friend, you know, and knowing that you'll be there for them no matter what.

With Jason's ability to see through others who would just consume him, he is already scheming how to care for others in the future. He described his vision this way:

Well ... man ... one of my main things is to own my own business. And there's a lot of businesses I want to own. I want to be like, a chiropractor, massage therapist. I want to open some gyms as well and I would really like to you know just help a lot of kids that have been in tough situations, like us, as well. And 'cause I understand that it's not easy, you know I really did ... and I grew up without a dad and we really didn't have anyone there to push us, we basically had to push each other. So, that's ... those are some of my main goals in life ... to do those things ... to open up my own business, to become an entrepreneur, and just be successful ... healthy, wealthy, and wise. And ... that's what I'm looking to do.

Jason continued sharing his vision of the future to give back to APCC that nurtured him and provided a foundation to build his human capital. He declared:

[...] just speaking for myself when I go back to when I first walked in that it would have been nice to have had somebody that would recognize, "hey, this guy's never been to college." Maybe we just need to take him by the hand and sit him down and explain to him what does all this mean, you know, when you're here. Why you're here. This is what's available to you, you should be considering this, you know. Maybe you're not sure what career. Let me show you what kind of things we offer and what that means, you know. And I think they do have some of those services, but I didn't know about them.

If I worked here ... and they said "what could you do to these students coming in that are just like you when you got here" I would say, "you know what, give me an hour with them, give me a half hour with them" when they come in and they fill ... when they apply, you don't have any college before? Let me set you up with this guy. And they'll come in and say "I was where you were, I didn't know anything." "Do you know what this is? Do you know what that is?" No, let me explain it to you. This is the question I asked when I got here. If any of them apply to you, you know, I can explain that to you. And ... only because I have the

insight of knowing how I felt when I got here. So I wouldn't know personally, what kind of things maybe to ask them to start spurring the questions they might want to ask ...

Jason clearly has in mind things that could make APCC better for other first-generation students who do not know what to expect about the college culture.

Exceptions

While all three participants comprising Jason were poor first-generation students, one participant's uniqueness of perspective, self-awareness, and experiences requires me to honor that uniqueness. His voice must also be heard and understood. He was a non-traditional age participant who had significant military experience which shows in this quote.

And then I've learned as I went along, but, it was ... it was like walking into ... like I was on the bomb squad. It's like me taking you to my shop and putting you into a room full of ... you know ... training aids and saying, you know, just look for the ones that are the most dangerous ... you know ... I mean you wouldn't have a clue what to work for first ... you know, and that's how I felt when I walked in. Like I was just in this big empty dark room, and in the middle of the room was a little candle on a table and all I could see was what was around that table, you know, but I knew that there was so much more and I didn't know how to see it.

He also expressed a sense of insecurity about being a non-traditional age student even though the average student age at APCC under study was around 28 years old and rising. He stated, "[I] feel like when I came in that people who worked here expected me to know more than I did" and "I have ADD and narcolepsy, and PTSD, and I didn't know that I could get extra time on my tests." These medical and psychological issues compounded his obstacles to learning and it is important to both classroom and hallway leadership to be aware of them in order to equitably provide a learning environment.

Though all three experienced confusion at times, my interpretation was that the non-traditional age participant felt more keenly about this, as demonstrated by the following two quotes:

I sometimes feel that, yeah, sometimes it's a little bit I'm hesitant to tell people that ... yeah I don't really have another ... I'm just a work-study and a full-time student ... I don't really have a career you know, because I think that people will look down on that and then ... share that ...

I tend to lean more toward the fellow students [who] would think that ... especially younger students feel like "look at this guy?" you know ... So, sometimes I'm a little bit hesitant and sometimes I guess with generally all people, you know, it's not something I'm comfortable with with myself, so it's not something I'm comfortable with wanting to share with other people that much ... so it's kind of something I feel like, you know, I feel like I haven't done my part, to this point, and that's why I'm in this situation and so it's something I'm ... I don't know, I guess it's a little embarrassing on some level, that I really don't want to ...

In summary Jason's experiences with APCC's structural system were contradictory. For example, he had multiple faculty who freely invested their time with him, but others were less committed or more controlling than he expected. Was the reasoning of the faculty who would not invest their time due to the myriad tasks expected of them, or was it an attitudinal issue? He was totally ignorant of some other structural systems such as the faster enrollment procedure. This lack of knowledge was not too surprising for a first-generation student who lacked familiarity with the collegiate culture, but some non-first-generation students have had the same struggle. Jason is an uncommon example of a low-SES student who is beginning to realize upward mobility partially because of his exposure to different habitus or values in a collegiate environment. Jason appears to have positive mentors, internal character traits, and enough positive experiences to encourage his transformation. Finally the use of the Bourdieuan theory as a penetrating lens proved to be useful. Jason demonstrated that he is a status striver who seeks desired social and economic assets through such fields as medicine or

engineering, with the expectation of higher wages and more challenging career opportunities.

Brandon

Brandon represents the intertwined reality for many African-Americans who also have Native-American ancestry, born in the lowest economic class, the first-generation in their families to attend college, and/or have significant military influence. Brandon was reared in the Deep South; his “mother could not read or write, and she was all about you know having to work in the fields back in [state].” His parents divorced while he was very young and he never had an opportunity to construct a relationship with his father, or any other male figure. Brandon put it this way: “There were no father figures in my life. No mentors in my life. No male figures, period.”

Structural System

Brandon’s early childhood was difficult for him academically, emotionally, and socially. He did not have an equitable learning opportunity compared to those from the dominant culture because his mother was not able to teach him to read and write. Brandon’s early structural system experiences were primarily through teachers’ and administrators’ (false) ideologies/worldviews and academic placement, special education, and career counseling policies. Brandon disclosed the following.

Little did I know at the time I was dyslexic and that back then was like it was pretty much unknown, people didn’t have a good sense of well what it was and how it really affects a child, so they just looked upon it as a child being handicapped in a way, or just a slow learner.

So when I started grade school, okay, my teacher was appalled that I couldn’t count, nor was I familiar with the alphabet. So she immediately assumed that I was handicapped and she, she removed me from the regular classroom and ... and ... placed me with a handicapped student who was physically and mentally challenged.

So after about the third grade, I was placed back into the regular classroom with the students that I initially started off with, but still, I couldn't read, nor could I write, and I didn't know anything, therefore the teacher pretty much just ignored me the entire time, okay. Because teachers they looked at it being, during my time, they thought well if your parents did not participate in PTA, and in your learning progress, and care enough about you to contact teachers and find out how you're doing in school, therefore they didn't care.

So they pretty much just passed me along to the next grade even though I didn't learn anything. They just didn't want to see me in that same grade again and they didn't want to have anything to do with me, okay? So ... if I had the nerve to raise my hand and ask a question, I was, you know, made fun of by the teacher, yelled at, and embarrassed to the point where it would make me more apprehensive or reluctant to you know ask any questions ... other questions, which I didn't do. So I just kept my mouth closed and I got passed on.

As Brandon matured he was expected to make choices concerning his future.

Without the proper education in core subjects such as mathematics and English, he found his options intimidating and limited because of institutional modus operandi, structural system. He told me of his experience with a career counselor at his high school.

So when I got to tenth ... I believe tenth to eleventh grade ... the career counselors at school called me in, every student was called in around that same time frame, but she called, I was called in ... she asked me at the time, what were my career plans and goals. And I said that I would like to become an Air Force pilot. And she said, you know, that requires a lot of math and looking at your grades, you don't come close to it and I think the best thing you could do at this time, you know, if you were to finish school, may be cook or get some restaurant and then learn a trade by means of on-the-job training. And she also added that, it's my recommendation that because you are of legal age, which was I believe 15, 16, she said that she suggested that I drop out of school because I was wasting the teacher's time and I wasn't learning anything and she said that if I were to drop out that my parents or my mom would not get in trouble, nor would I get in trouble if ... and that I would be doing the school a favor, because the kids that are learning they will continue to learn without me being in the way ... and those who already were at that level and had no problem in learning.

Brandon was given a limited vision for career opportunities during his crucial teenage years due to the poor academic opportunities afforded him during elementary, middle,

and high school. He continued to reveal the emotional stress that this caused him and again he compared his experience with that of the dominant culture.

And I just felt cheated, like deprived, like everybody else were from a home that received basic education, teacher molded and gave them the necessary knowledge and guidance in ... in ... in their education to become successful and ... I was feeling as if I was just produced in a mold in such a way to be a failure and end up in the criminal system, being incarcerated ... for ... for crime ... I was like, I was produced to be a criminal ...

Being told that I was a loser. Being told that, you know, the school system has given up on me, feeling like a failure knowing that I ... I'm a ... you know, coming from a broken home and mom couldn't read and write, okay, no one in the community really cared, and now the school's saying that I should leave 'cause I'm wasting their time. So, after crying, I walked back in to the class that I was scheduled to be in and I decided to stay instead of dropping out even though I knew that it was useless and ... and ... it could have been a waste of my time, but I for some reason I just refused to drop out.

Brandon finished his high school and received a diploma that he stated "was just an empty piece of paper because I had no knowledge." He next attempted to enlist in one of the military branches to no avail. This experience was depressing and debilitating as well. He asserted:

I took it a third time and I failed and the recruiters as I was walking out, they were laughing at me and I turned back around and I said, "Wait a minute." I said, "Every time I take this test you guys tell me that I, you know, that I failed but you're not telling me what I failed in or what my score was, okay, so could you tell me something, give me some guidance, you know." They said, "Well to get in the [specific military branch], and we're not sure about the other branches, to get in the [specific branch] all you need to score is a 31." And ... I said, "Well what was my score?" And he said "Seven. And before then, I believe it was a four." And I said, "Okay, alright." So, I left; I walked out. And you know I went around to the back of the building and I cried for about 45 minutes and because it was a realization that I didn't learn anything in school. Again, that I was a failure, broken home, no father figure, no one to really, you know, lift me up, hold my hand, and mentor me, give me a sense of direction.

Brandon picked up the broken pieces of his life and somehow found the fortitude to continue on in such a discouraging, depressing, and limiting environment. Fortunately

this was not the last time he found himself in a classroom. When Brandon was about 18 years old, he took another “step forward.”

Because, if I’m hurting and I don’t care about nobody else, okay. And as I stood up and wiping my tears, something hit me. It’s a feeling, it’s a chill that just went through my body and changed my whole concept, my whole thought process and it was something pretty much told me, “No, you’re not going to do that. What you’re going to do is acknowledge the fact that you’re weak in a lot of areas. That you need to do something about it, okay, even though your parents fail you, it may not have been any fault of your mom, you know she’s just a product of a situation at the time. Your dad, who knows, but you need to change this situation and make it work for you. Enroll into a trade school or a community college, or something.” Which I did, the next week, I enrolled into a trade school and it was a ... [vocational tech] in [city, state].

And ... I ... attended the trade school and you know, they worked with me, they saw where I was weak, okay, and I recall my focus in terms of skill-wise was management. And I wanted to do something in management. So ... you know, I had basic reading, and basic, you know, basic word knowledge, and, and learning how to type. And I picked up typing really well because I had a good memory and I found myself typing, you know, starting off initially pecking to learn the keys and I knew within two to three weeks I was typing like thirty to forty-five words a minute without actually realizing that I was doing good and I felt progress and I felt myself growing in terms of knowledge and ... you know ... and I achieved the speed of maybe I think 60-65 words per minute in typing. So I’m saying, “I can do a lot of things if I’m taught.” I said, “why wasn’t I taught?

Due to his education at the vocational and technical school, Brandon secured a position in the military by passing the basic skills test, but his military experience proved little different for him than his early life experiences. After several years in the service he proclaimed that “[the military] is a waste of my time, okay, but at the same time, you know, you were treated so much different than your White counterpart. And I’m saying, this is no better than the civilian world.”

After a career in the military, Brandon received permission to prepare for civilian life by taking classes half-time at a local community college. He recalled his first math class this way.

I recall taking one [math class] which helped me a lot and Dr. Blair Bentley's concept of teaching helped me a lot. And I learned more in his class than I did in my entire K-12 time in school. Just in that semester that you know, just overshadowed my entire time in school. Period. From kindergarten to the 12th.

Brandon had more to say about APCC's structural system comprised of its placement testing procedure, developmental courses, and his learning experience. This experience was in stark contrast to his early education. He stated that:

All Peoples Community College's placement test identified my problem and instructors here were totally awesome, they actually helped, they worked with me like [teacher's name] did. I wanted to learn and those ... and they saw that, and they were willing to work with me, okay? They knew I had a weakness and ... what was good about my classes that I was surrounded by people who had the same problem. So I didn't feel out of place. Okay. Because you know, if I was struggling with the math, and at that level, everybody else in there they were struggling math, too. So we all learned together and the learning was reinforced ... a certain method that [teacher's name] used, and other teachers, instructors used in order to ... to ... to facilitate learning, which really helped.

College level courses ... okay ... and I struggled but I stayed with it and many times I wanted to quit, and give up, but I stayed with it. My instructors helped me, and encouraged me to stay with it, okay. And I was biting the bullet, which I did. So ... I merged into the college level 100 courses, completed a whole year, and by that time I've had a little over two years with APCC.

Brandon had great appreciation for what this community college did for him and his future career. He excelled because he was motivated and because he found teachers and administrators who cared enough for him to scaffold his learning. He realized that an associate's degree was not enough cultural capital for an employment prospect. He disclosed that:

I need to pursue my bachelor's because if he was going to hold that associate's degree over my head as a disqualifier, then I was going to show him that I can go further beyond you and get a bachelor's, and let you see that I'm a much better person than you. So ... I went on to transfer to a four year college.

I asked Brandon during the interview about his initial view of teachers before his community college experience. He said:

I couldn't stand teachers ... I mean for a long time, prior to enrolling here at [name community college], I could not stand teachers, or instructors, period. You know, I thought they were arrogant and, you know, and they reminded me of someone that screwed me, so yes, but ... as I became educated my concept and my way of thinking changed ...

Brandon did not, however, respect all instructors at APCC. Faculty are part of the structural system at APCC, but faculty ideologies/worldview also intertwines with dominant ideology and care. Brandon, in his next quote, revealed the intersection of three structures: structural system, dominant ideology, and care. He said "I would say as for the environment, there's faculty that actually care, I'm going to say 85% do care ... okay, you know ... " He further explicated the community college environment the following way including the examination of the dominant culture experience.

No, no ... some of the classes you had to work in groups, okay, and some of the students did not welcome me, did not want me in their groups ... you can look at their expression, facial expression ... and ... you know ... I mean, granted, the ratio of White/Black students even now, I mean, is still predominantly White students in the college where you only have a small percent, maybe less than one percent of Black students, and even less of Black males. I, I mean, out of the three years I was here at [name of community college], I would say that the most I've ever seen as far as Black males maybe one or two other, you know, Black ... I have always, for the most part, just been me ... you know ... and ... and being a Black male, you know, you do feel the tension and you do see you know how they group and just want to talk to each other and then when they see that you're trying and that you are carrying your weight, they become more receptive and open up but you have ... you definitely have to prove yourself and that's ... over and over again, you know ... that was quite common for me to prove myself ...

There's been no one to watch over the Black male student at all ... then there's no ... there was no mentor, there was guidance in terms of ... of ... seeking help if you needed help with any situation. If you were struggling, you know ... you're basically on your own, okay. And whatever the situation or the course of study may have been, I mean you had to take not just an extra step, leaps and bounds and in the instructors face and say "listen, you know, I need help." I'm failing, I'm you know, I'm lost and I had to do that over and over and over again, okay, and I just wouldn't go away, okay. I just refused to accept things. But for those that are ... that ... that ... that were sinking, they sunk, and they just ... they were just weeded out, okay. Now it's totally different [today] ... okay ... you have an avenue to take. There's an individual within the college now that's multi-racial [retention specialist] person that you can go to that will help people of color and people in general, or the African American male who needs help and that help is there for him. I didn't have that ... I didn't have that tool, that resource. It wasn't available for me, okay. If you fail, you fail ... that was the bottom line.

In an effort to enhance services especially for African-America males without having to change faculty, administrators, or other non-student stakeholders, the community college employed a multi-cultural retention specialist. Brandon continued to speak about his concern for the other 15 percent of the faculty who were not so validating of students of color. He went out of his way to express his appreciation for one of his teachers at APCC. In this quote in reveals not just his response to the structural system, but simultaneously reveals his lifeworld.

Let me tell you what won me over ... okay ... it was that Dr. Bentley ... He approached me and the students of color; he erased that from the equation. He was there to teach. He doesn't look at color. He looked at the individual, okay. And he looked at what he could do to help an individual okay and removed the color barriers, okay. He didn't see a Black male, he didn't see a Black female or an Asian female, or whatever. Okay, he saw an individual, okay. That's what won me over ... and ... we ... equally looked at each other as individuals, without color. Okay. I saw him for whom he was and judged him, based on who he was and what he had done for me, okay, he provided me with a quality education. I really ... I was impressed with his methodology of teaching. How he reinforced his teaching methods with students going to the board and to write out their homework problems and which identified at any point, or at that point, if there were problems, then it was a collective effort to help that individual to resolve that problem. His class came together to help that individual. He bridged the gap

to help the individual. You know, but he made it possible for us as a class to work together and to share knowledge. He put strong students with the weak students. He paired us up that way and then allowed us to go to the board to explain, to show our knowledge, our understanding that “yes, I do know how to do this.” Okay ... that’s what won me over.

In spite of the fact that Brandon suffered volatile educational experiences that include administrators’ and faculty’s (false) ideologies, poor academic policies, and insensitive career counseling all of which did not recognize the unique circumstances of African-American males and are examples of structural systems that limit access and success possibilities, Brandon graduated with not only his associate degree, but with his bachelor’s degree as well. Brandon is now an upper-middle class citizen proud of his achievements and status. His status striving returned many benefits. However, Brandon is still concerned about the 15 percent of the faculty and administrators who create oppressive experiences for students of color at APCC.

Dominant Ideology

Brandon faced many obstacles on his path to higher education, each of which he endured, persevered through, and then overcame. For example, Brandon’s parents could not be there to teach, tutor, or guide him. The dominant ideology is insensitive to, or does not recognize, the unique circumstances of African-American males (Milner, 2006; Moore, 2006). This insensitivity is exactly what keeps the dominant culture from seeing the needs, appreciating positive cultural differences, and valuing the skills, abilities, and giftedness of the African- and Native Americans like Brandon.

Now, my mother could not read and write and she was all about you know having to work in the fields back in [state], therefore she wasn’t able to teach me, or my other siblings, how to read and write as well.

I never knew him; he divorced my mom when I was three years old, okay. There were no father figures in my life. No mentors in my life. No male figures,

period. It was a family of [large number], [number] girls who are older than me and one brother, a younger brother of course, and me.

Many of Brandon's classroom and hallway leadership experiences were negative because educators misunderstood his parental absence for what it actually was—a class issue. By misreading the situation they were unable to effectively help Brandon with his education.

So when I started grade school, okay, my teacher was appalled that I couldn't count, nor was I familiar with the alphabet. So she immediately assumed that I was handicapped and she, she removed me from the regular classroom and ... and ... placed me with a handicapped student who was physically and mentally challenged.

Brandon was misdiagnosed as being physically or mentally challenged instead of being dyslexic. Though dyslexia was not properly addressed for students of any ethnicity until years later, Brandon did not need to be ignored. Brandon did not necessitate experiencing abandonment. He shared “Little did I know at the time I was dyslexic and that back then was like it was pretty much unknown ... the teacher pretty much just ignored me the entire time.”

In spite of his numerous negative experiences, Brandon was able to change his habitus, electing instead to follow a “higher path” that included the ability to forgive parents, earlier teachers and administrators, and a dominant society who ignored his fate. The term *higher path* refers to decisions made by Brandon that are self-constructive based upon positive character traits that are often not seen or appreciated by the dominant culture (Moore, 2006). Brandon “decided to stay instead of dropping out ... it could have been a waste of my time, but I for some reason I just refused to drop out.” He felt cheated by the dominant ideology and considered whether he was being molded into a criminal.

Brandon nearly chose a criminal path, but an inner voice kept him from doing so.

Because he lacked educational mentors who could see, appreciate, and thereby act upon his potential and many positive character traits, educators failed to scaffold Brandon's learning effectively.

Brandon praised the current APCC's structural systems to help students like him, for example, the developmental education program, but during his community college days there was a lack of appropriate multi-cultural support especially for young African-American males. APCC's structural system included its placement testing procedures and instructors. He said, "APCC placement test identified my problem and instructors here were totally awesome, they actually helped ..." giving special recognition to one of his professors, Dr. Blair Bentley.

Although Brandon was able to get some of his needs met, not all of his needs were recognized. Concerning his days at APCC Brandon shared that he had to challenge some of his professors to provide him the needed help. Brandon sought social justice in the classroom by confronting the dominant ideology that made him and his needs invisible.

Oh yeah ... there's been no one to watch over the Black male student at all ... then there's no ... there was no mentor, there was guidance in terms of ... of ... seeking help if you needed help with any situation. If you were struggling, you know ... you're basically on your own, okay. And whatever the situation or the course of study may have been, I mean you had to take not just an extra step, leaps and bounds and in the instructors face and say "listen, you know, I need help." I'm failing, I'm you know, I'm lost and I had to do that over and over and over again, okay, and I just wouldn't go away, okay. I just refused to accept things. But for those that are ... that ... that ... that were sinking, they sunk, and they just ... they were just weeded out, okay.

Faculty, students, and administrators from the dominant group could have recognized Brandon's many, strong, and positive character traits; apparently they did not, however, according to Brandon's next three quotes (Moore, 2006).

No, no ... some of the classes you had to work in groups, okay, and some of the students did not welcome me, did not want me in their groups ... you can look at their expression, facial expression ... and ... you know ... I mean, granted, the ratio of White/Black students even now, I mean, is still predominantly White students in the college where you only have a small percent, maybe less than one percent of Black students, and even less of Black males. I, I mean, out of the three years I was here at [community college], I would say that the most I've ever seen as far as Black males maybe one or two other, you know, Black ... I have always, for the most part, just been me ... you know ... and ... and being a Black male, you know, you do feel the tension and you do see you know how they group and just want to talk to each other and then when they see that you're trying and that you are carrying your weight, they become more receptive and open up but you have ... you definitely have to prove yourself and that's ... over and over again, you know ... that was quite common for me to prove myself ...

No, no not the whole environment is caring. You've got some instructors that they only care about their paycheck, they don't care about the student, you know. They, they ... just some and maybe it's ... I would say as for the environment, this faculty that actually care, I'm going to say 85% do care ... okay, you know ...

I need to pursue my bachelor's because if he was going to hold that associate's degree over my head as a disqualifier, then I was going to show him that I can go further beyond [him] and get a Bachelor, and let [him] see that I'm a much better person than [him]. So ... I went on to transfer to a four year college ...

Lifeworld

Brandon's lifeworld is full of skills, and rich in values and attitudes that have helped him throughout his life. Brandon had strong persevering and enduring character traits that carried him through his K-12, military, and then his higher education experiences. He demonstrated these positive traits in the following abbreviated quote.

I walked back in to the class that I was scheduled to be in and I decided to stay instead of dropping out even though I knew that it was useless and ... it could have been a waste of my time, but I for some reason I just refused to drop out. ...

I ... attended the trade school and you know, they worked with me, they saw where I was weak, okay, and I recall my focus in terms of skill-wise was management.

Disregarding the malice that he suffered, setting aside his neglected emotional and educational needs, and moving through his many wounds without becoming embittered, Brandon found a way to forgive and aspired to a higher calling. He was resilient. In spite of the racial discrimination and differentiated treatment, Brandon chose the higher road. His spirituality is evident as well as his sense of morality and ethics. Certainly he has a strong sense of justice.

Due to myriad disappointments Brandon experienced, he developed a cynical perspective directed towards teachers and educational leadership. He declared that "... for a long time, prior to enrolling here at APCC, I could not stand teachers, or instructors, period. You know. I thought they were arrogant and you know, and they reminded me of someone that screwed me." By forgiving White people generally and by retesting his negative stereotype of White teachers, Brandon demonstrated the ability to adjust his thinking, values, and attitudes towards the different Other. He said "as I became educated my concept and my way of thinking changed ..."

What touched my heart the most about Brandon was how he spoke of a particular White instructor. Although he had experienced so much racism in his life and had many instances of negative experiences with both White males and females, he was still able to see and appreciate integrity, honesty, and genuineness in this instructor. I previously provided the full quote under Brandon's Structural System. This abbreviated quote demonstrates how my four structures are intertwined, that is, structural system is

influenced by the dominant ideology which in turn influences the lifeworld of the underrepresented population and their perceptions of being cared for.

Let me tell you what won me over ... okay ... it was that Dr. Blair Bentley ... He approached me and the students of color; he erased that from the equation. He was there to teach. He doesn't look at color. He looked at the individual, okay. And he looked at what he could do to help an individual okay and removed the color barriers, okay. He didn't see a Black male, he didn't see a Black female or an Asian female, or whatever. Okay, he saw an individual, okay. That's what won me over ... and ... we ... equally looked at each other as individuals, without color. Okay. I saw him for whom he was and judged him, based on who he was and what he had done for me, okay, he provided me with a quality education.

Brandon had all of these spiritual leadership traits: forgiveness, integrity, honesty, courage, patience, longsuffering, resilience, perseverance, inner strength, and fortitude (Fry, 2003). He was able to discern inequities and sought for social justice. Speaking about his need to obtain help during his community college days, Brandon shared:

If you were struggling, you know ... you're basically on your own, okay. And whatever the situation or the course of study may have been, I mean you had to take not just an extra step, leaps and bounds and in the instructors face and say "listen, you know, I need help." I'm failing, I'm you know, I'm lost and I had to do that over and over and over again, okay, and I just wouldn't go away, okay. I just refused to accept things.

Brandon's lifeworld was his foundation to survive, overcome, and confront his many experiences of inequitable treatment (as compared with that of the dominant culture); of being ignored, ill-advised, and mistreated; and of personal challenges and confrontations seeking personal justice which lead to a measured transformation, praxis, of his situation.

Care

If care is understood as the inner values and attitudes that enable sight, the ability to see visible needs and sense invisible needs, and the corresponding decisions, responses, and actions of people that comprise a particular institution and further

understood as how the lifeworlds of individuals intersect and are lived out, that is, where the lack of resources in one individual is addressed by the resources of another, then in Brandon's case these positive characteristics of care were nonexistent and no one was available to offer the resources that he lacked. There was no one to offer a hand up when he was down. Care and caring people seem to be totally absent in his life.

I was never taught from home prior to going to school, the basic knowledge of learning such as ABCs and numbers. ... I didn't know anything, therefore the teacher pretty much just ignored me the entire time, okay. ... if I had the nerve to raise my hand and ask a question, I was, you know, made fun of by the teacher, yelled at, and embarrassed to the point where it would make me more apprehensive or reluctant to you know ask any questions ... So I just kept my mouth closed and I got passed on.

From the start of his life through his early childhood days, elementary, middle, and secondary school years, Brandon was neglected, misdiagnosed, and discouraged by those who were supposed to care, understand, and encourage. Despite the lack of care, Brandon demonstrated an amazing ability to persevere, be resilient, and resist these powerful negative forces against him. During a member check meeting Brandon shared that both his White-on-Black and Black-on-Black experiences were similar, giving no relief from those he hoped would understand his predicament. Certainly by surviving and not giving in to lesser options in life, Brandon was developing character that everyone from the dominant culture would and should respect.

Brandon's early years are past, but they have left vivid and painful memories. He continued his story regarding experiences about others' care, or lack of care, for him. In this next quote Brandon informed me about his military experience. He was expected to take a military entrance exam and was told by the examiners that he failed. He disclosed

this experience, which took place after attempting the test the third time: “I took it a third time and I failed and the recruiters, as I was walking out, they were laughing at me ...”

Somehow Brandon was able to draw deep within himself to again resist the disparaging forces and choose a higher road. This is the first time he experienced affirmation and academic success. It is interesting that he found this in a public vocational technical school, prompting him to speculate on what he had been told about himself. He recounted it this way.

And as I stood up from and wiping my tears, something hit me. It’s a feeling, it’s a chill that just went through my body and changed my whole concept, my whole thought process and it was something pretty much told me, “No, you’re not going to do that.” What you’re going to do is acknowledge the fact that you’re weak in a lot of areas. That you need to do something about it, okay, even though your parents fail you, it may not have been any fault of your mom, you know she’s just a product of a situation at the time. Your dad, who knows, but you need to change this situation and make it work for you. Enroll into a trade school or a community college, or something. Which I did, the next week, I enrolled into a trade school and it was a ... [name vocational tech] in [city, state]. And ... I ... attended the trade school and you know, they worked with me, they saw where I was weak, okay, and I recall my focus in terms of skill-wise was management. And I wanted to do something in management. So ... you know, I had basic reading, and basic you know, basic word knowledge, and, and learning how to type. And I picked up typing really well because I had a good memory and I found myself typing, you know, starting off initially pecking to learn the keys and I knew within two to three weeks I was typing like thirty to forty-five words a minute without actually realizing that I was doing good and I felt progress and I felt myself growing in terms of knowledge and ... you know ... and I achieved the speed of maybe I think 60-65 words per minute in typing. So I’m saying, “I can do a lot of things if I’m taught.” I said, “why wasn’t I taught? Why didn’t someone take the time to teach me, okay?”

Brandon again turned to the military career as an opportunity to receive additional training. Having failed the test three times already, he did not expect to pass. However, his studies and work at the vocational technical school paid cultural capital dividends that he could expend. He continued his story.

... I turned into the recruiting station, I decided to walk in and [take the test]. When I walked into the door, the recruiter said, "Okay, you're the last one, let's start the test." I said, "Excuse me." and he said, "You are here for the test, right?" ... I said, "Yeah, I might as well take the test." So, I took the test, just to kill time and, little did I know, I finished the test a lot faster than the other three times and I don't know whether it was because it being multiple choice and I had a good memory I knew what the answers were after failing three times and the fourth time it's like I knew what not to check. Or, whether or not it made a little bit more sense, or a combination of both. But anyway, I finished the test and I was getting ready just to walk out without being laughed at again and not being told the bad news that I figured ... you know, I just walked out because I felt like I failed anyway, so why waste my time listening to them to tell me you know officially that I had failed the test. So I'm walking and they said "Wait, wait!" "Wait? ... Why?" "We want to give you your score." I said, "That's okay man, I don't need it." ... "No, no, no please, we really want to give you your score, can we buy you lunch, and maybe dinner?" Which they never had offered to me before. Now I'm curious.

Brandon successfully completed the test and was offered a position in the military. This new hope did not last long for him as he resumed his inhumane life story. He further illuminated the differences of the Black and White experience in the military.

So, I'm going through and ... immediately I felt like I was nothing more than a number in the military. They treated me like a number for the first four years. No respect, constant yelling, okay ... if you kind of looked dumb or sound dumb, they treated you like a dummy, okay. So, because I sounded dumb, as a result of lacking the proper education, they treated me that way, the entire time ... So ... ummm ... and also, the military then, for me, it wasn't integrated, okay where you had Black and White mixed, okay. White soldiers had very ... prestigious and quality jobs, whether they were air traffic controllers, military police officers, they actually worked on computers, you know ... more Blacks were in the field artillery, okay, in infantry and then a cook, and that's what you saw. And I was in the artillery and all you had to do in artillery was to load up ammunition on a truck, drive out to a training area, take the ammunition off the truck. Load the ammunition in a big cannon, and pull a string. Nothing to it. No education behind it at all to where you could use it on the outside. Later on I'm thinking "how could I use this skill" I mean, other than maybe the Mafia needed me, you know, to do something with ammo, or bombs. I said, "there's no demand for that in the civilian sector." So ... a...I asked to go to school in the military. They kept saying, no ... no ... no ... You don't need any school, all you need to do is load those damn bullets, those damn rounds, and shoot them down range. You don't need that ... you ... you ... you ... this is what you're made for, this is what you came in here for ... and they wanted to keep you, right there. Okay. So I made rank

from E-1 to E-4. And I said, "I'm getting out of this." Because it is a waste of my time, okay, but at the same time, you know, you were treated so much different than your white counterpart. And I'm saying, this is no better than the civilian world ...

Brandon was successful progressing through the enlisted ranks, but he was still in a quandary. He commented concerning his disappointment: "I was still being held back and I was still being laughed at by my unit because I still lacked basic skills in terms of speaking, writing, ... and just having things in common with my White counterparts." Realizing that he was limited in pursuing a military direction that would simultaneously benefit a potential civilian career, he instigated retirement procedures. It was during this process that he experienced the local community college. For the second time in his life, a 2-year institution served him well. Brandon observed:

[APCC] and placement tests revealed that I wasn't ready for 100 level courses that would count towards college. I would have to take basic...the math, English, everything that was in the 02's, 020 and 030, and...in fact, I recall taking one of [instructor name's] classes, [Name's] math classes, which helped me a lot and [his] concept of teaching helped me a lot. And I learned more in [his] class than I did in my entire K-12 time in school. Just in that semester that you know, just overshadowed my entire time in school. Period. From kindergarten to the 12th. You know...so...[community college] placement test identified my problem and instructors here were totally awesome, they actually helped, they worked with me like [he] did. I wanted to learn and those...and they saw that, and they were willing to work with me, okay? They knew I had a weakness and...what was good about my classes was that I was surrounded by people who had the same problem. So I didn't feel out of place. Okay. Because, you know, if I was struggling with the math, and at that level, everybody else in there they were struggling math too. So we all learned together and the learning was reinforced...a certain method that ... use in order to ... to... to facilitate learning, which really helped. So. I stayed in the basic level of learning for maybe about a whole year, if not a little bit over a year, before I was able to merge into 100 level courses...

Brandon's observations contained plenty of appreciation for the non-student stakeholders. This educational incident was positive—while he was receiving effective instruction, care, and encouragement he was concurrently dedicated to his studies. Brandon was achieving positive educational results because he was being taught exactly as he speculated earlier in his life.

College level courses...okay...and I struggled but I stayed with it and many times I wanted to quit, and give up, but I stayed with it. My instructors helped me, and encouraged me to stay with it, okay. And I was biting the bullet, which I did. So...I merged into the college level 100 courses, completed a whole year, and by that time I've had a little over two years with [this community college].

Brandon was seeking cultural capital through the community college in order to achieve a higher status position (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). When he had nearly concluded his two-year degree he submitted an application for a desirable position. The process with a middle manager had racial overtones, reminding him of his past incongruities with those who were White. Drawing upon his inner strength and courage he confronted the injustice and was able to achieve a measured transformation of the workplace with the help of the senior executive. He narrated his story this way.

So ... after two weeks no one called me, so I called the [specific office] and then [administrative] assistant answered the phone. I said, "... I would like to speak with the [senior executive]." They said, "Well, hold on" and ... I was transferred to the [senior executive] and he identified himself. I said, "yes" and I identified myself, and I said the nature of this call, I would like to find out... so, what happened next is ... I said, "I just want to know the nature of my employment, am I just wasting my time applying ... [or] should I seek employment someplace else? and...and to confirm that you have changed your policy in terms of not hiring anyone who has 60 credits but needs an associate's degree ... instead." And he said, "That is totally not true." He said, "There has not been a policy change here." He said, "We just hired a female [staff] last week uh ... and she only has thirty-five credits and no associate's, not even sixty." And I said, "Well is there a reason why I'm not being considered?" He said, "This is my first time hearing about you and your application was given to me maybe about five or ten minutes before you called. And ... who told you this?" I said, "Well, [middle manager

name] told me that you guys changed the policy and that you've gotta have an associate's degree." He said, "No," he said, "looking at your application you're more qualified than the last three or four people that we hired."

... He said, "I want you to come in so I can talk to you." So I came in ... later that day, sat down ... he said, "I don't know where you got that information from, but it is totally not true." He said, "I will investigate it, in the mean time we'll do a background check on you, is there anything in your background that I need to know about that would hinder you?" And I said, "No." He said, "Fine, we'll confirm that and I promise to get back with you tomorrow, but let me investigate why your application was pushed off to the side." So ... he called me in the next day and shook my hand, and said, "I completed the investigation and you're more than qualified. Go outside, get with the [proper assistant] ..." He said, "Welcome aboard."

Brandon later sought verification of the racial overtones he initially encountered. His interpretation was verified; Brandon was the only African-American staff in this particular department. Fortunately for everyone, social justice won the day.

In summary Brandon's life from birth to his young adult years was difficult for him academically, emotionally, and socially. He was not provided an equitable experience when compared to the dominant culture. He frequently made this comparison between his African-American culture and that of the dominant White middle-class during the interview. Brandon was neglected during his elementary and middle school years and his secondary school years provided a limited vision for potential career opportunities. His family's poverty, mother's illiteracy, and inadequate education were major obstacles for him. Brandon is defined by his determination, fortitude, and perseverance and his ability to forgive, to envision a different future, and to draw inner strength to forge a vastly different result than what he felt he was molded to become. Brandon is a success academically, emotionally, and socially. He is an overcomer and as a status striver he has become an entrepreneur, upper-middle-class, and an example citizen for all ethnicities to emulate. As an African-American he stands for anti-racism,

social justice, and integration. Brandon's interracial relationship with Dr. Blair Bentley is an example of how Black-White relations can be.

Juan

Juan represents Latino students (labeled Hispanic by the dominant culture), including both US born Latinos and those who may have emigrated from Spanish-speaking countries. In fact, Juan is a composite of two traditional age men; one was US born and the other legally immigrated to the United States from a Spanish-speaking country. The four largest Latina/o subgroups in the United States are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Salvadorans. Community colleges are the colleges of choice for the majority of Latina/o students due to the reality that many of these students are unprepared for 4-year colleges, the educational costs are lower at community colleges, and these 2-year institutions provide the needed academic remediation (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). According to the 2000 Census Juan represents approximately 13%, or 35.3 million, of the USA population self-identified as Latinas/os.

Structural System

Juan had pleasant memories of the community college; at the time of the interview he had transferred to a 4-year public university located nearby. At the present Juan appears to be breaking the norm of so many Latinos of not completing a baccalaureate degree when beginning their college experience in community colleges. The reason for this failure to transfer is often the "result from institutional structures that fail to support their academic needs and professional goals and aspirations" (Solorzano et

al., 2005, p. 282). It was Juan's inner strength, his family support, and a few community college faculty that helped him to successfully transfer.

Juan admitted having been nervous when his community college journey commenced. He felt that all the students were above him in ability, skills, and knowledge, but that seemed to pass once classes started. He compared the two higher education schools in the following quote.

Well like nothing like big really happened at [community college], you know. It was like, it was just the usual, you know ... just going to class, meeting new friends, everyday, and ... that was pretty much it ... like it wasn't nothing big like negative or positive ...

Well, they were like ... they were all like at first I really thought like, I felt scared, you know, I was like, "damn" this university or college ... I feel like [nervous] ... like everyone ... like is above me now. But then when I started like going to classes and everything, everyone was just normal, just like me ... just trying to learn something for the future ... Like ... it wasn't like, like creepy, like, like going crazy all the time, or like guitars, you know, all over like high school where it was just something like different, you know, it was like matureness ...

Oh, like my professors ... including [a professor] ... it was, like people just ... and like they understand where you're coming from, too ... like in ... for example in [4-year university] they would be like "oh, you're just another student" because the class is so big. But in [community college], the classes, like the classrooms are so small that like people get to, you know to, get to know you better, you know. And you get to have like more connection with the teachers or professors ...

Juan appreciated the community college teachers who understood where he was coming from; he wasn't just a number. He also appreciated the community college's smaller class size in order to connect better with his instructors.

When he was asked by his community college classmates why he and his family moved from another country to this state he shared his story this way.

They just thought it was cool ... you know, coming from over there ... but they always asked "why?" from [country] to [state]. And I just told them that it was because I wanted to learn English and all that ... and yeah ... I think, think I made more friends that way.

Juan did not disclose that his parents moved to this state for greater opportunities for him and his family.

The community college instruction was given in English and he revealed what this experience was like.

Oh ... that was ... that was kinda hard ... but I really like the principles and things, everybody was completely going like English [college level]. Like I had to start from like [lowest level] and up, you know, and then like the first class, well it was really hard, 'cause I didn't really know how to write an essay, you know, my focus in high school was like like learn English and get all your classes right ... and like learning how to write papers that come last 'cause talking and communicating was the first step ... it was hard.

I wondered if the community college ever examined its racialized structures, policies, and practices that impact Latinos educational attainment and academic progress (Sólorzano et al., 2005). I considered that Juan would make faster academic progress, increase his chances of achieving his academic goals, and realize his career dreams if the school would build an effective learning bridge such as bilingual education opportunities. Bilingual learning communities such as a Spanish and mathematics classes combined might enable both Spanish and English speaking students to help each other.

When Juan visited the enrollment, records, and/or financial aid offices, he was very relaxed and secure. He accomplished this personally rather than on-line though he did have the help of his sister who was teaching him the college culture and the various processes.

I went personal. Like I went face-to-face, because of my sister, she went there, too. So she introduced me to everything ...

... and so, she introduced me to everything, so ... I didn't really have to struggle, you know, 'cause she already knew everything ...

When I asked Juan how he was able to adapt to the community college structures, he declared:

yeah ... I was just nervous like in the beginning because it's something different, like I don't really expecting ... and I just adapt to it, you know, it was ... Well, I ... just like ... you just went like day-to-day. I didn't do anything, I mean just, like, everyday, like ... one day was just I took two people, like I made new friends ... you just ... I just fit in ... I don't know ... I really didn't do anything ... I just went like I was supposed to go ...

I just ... you know I just try to do what everyone else does, you know.

I wondered whether, when Juan was nervous, he smiled to relieve the tension and whether he learned that his kindness won people over. He answered by saying "yeah ... now that I'm thinking about it, yeah ... I would ..." I inquired further whether Juan asked many questions during his community college classes.

Not really. 'Cause I'm kind of like, like shy ... but ... I don't like, in [community college] it's so ... such a small class that like you get to like [unclear] everyone, you know, you get to like be around everyone so everyone just ... but you would not be afraid to ask questions if you need to ... but still, I'm a little afraid, so I try to not ask questions ... but if I really have to, I just ask them ...

Juan attended the community college when there was controversy over immigration from Spanish-speaking countries, and I wanted to know if he experienced any negative reactions or even hatred, or if he felt that the faculty and students wanted him there at the college. He shared how he was able to cope with the situation.

I felt both 'cause really people ... there's many kind of people. Sometimes they like you, sometimes they don't ... so ... I mean sometimes they just like ... like they want to be your friend, sometimes they hate you 'cause you are whoever, whatever ... Well like, I really didn't notice cause ... probably like ... like maybe you might be different, like cultures ... 'cause ... I don't want to be racists, but maybe like Black people have more attitude to things ... so they show you their attitude ... they show you the way they feel. But White people are just like, whatever ... and they don't really like put attitude to things ... I guess ... so that's ... maybe that's why I just never felt it ... cause I mean if someone is like, really like bothering me, like all the time, you know, I will have an attitude ... but, I'm a

pretty cool guy, you know, like I don't try to look for trouble or ... but I mean, if they look for me, I'll try to ignore them, but if I can't ignore them, I'll just face them ...

I questioned Juan if he ever dealt with any injustice. "I was like normal, like ... I just ... I don't know, the teachers liked me ... the professors did, so I just fit in, like any other student ... it wasn't like racist or nothing." I decided that Juan's definition of "normal" was an example of conformist resistance because he was motivated for social justice but lacked a social critique (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

Dominant Ideology

Juan spoke of his early days after emigrating from the Spanish-speaking country to the United States during his late high school years. Clearly Juan understood that this new country was predominantly English speaking, and he was expected to quickly learn in order to survive. There are no bilingual courses at the community college though they do offer an ESL program.

I'm from [country], with [another country] parents and something about them is uh ... they don't know English ... yeah, they don't know ... I mean they're learning now, but they ... they really don't know any ... and I've been here for about five years now ... so and ... Spanish is my first language.

Though Juan was just entering community college in a strange country and had to make new friends, he had no recollection of positive or negative experiences. What struck me the most was his ability to adjust to situations including the recognition and acceptance of different groups congregating at the large atrium near the cafeteria; he was not a member of these groups. He considered this normal.

There were like different groups, you know. Like the ... I don't want to say like weird, but ... different, you know? The different group or the cool guys or

whatever ... which is why ... there was more like, I don't know, like everyone was in their own like area. Like if you have friends who always met at the front of the cafeteria, so, you just be there and ... it wasn't like ... I don't know, like, the population was just normal, you know?

Juan recognized that the area surrounding the community college campus was predominantly White and mono-lingual culture. This appeared to be part of his definition of normalcy. It was clear that Juan's major concerns were to earn good grades, pass his courses, and improve on his English without starting with ESL instructions. Juan "jumped" into his English only classes and avoided the ESL opportunity.

Yeah, because of the area, you know. Like it's North in [state] so it should be like that I think ... but ah ... example where you go to like ummmm ... [name of] campus where you're ... you're Black or from other cultures, it's not like majority White, like here, so. I think it's just because of the area. ...

It was just normal like they're just, I mean ... just because of their grades or their color, doesn't mean that they're different ...

Yeah, I just jumped in ... 'cause it was like, I thought ... I thought that like it wasn't a waste of time, but it put me behind, a little, 'cause there'll probably be like, oh, you know, to learn these verbs and all that ... and I already know that ... all I wanted was to like start building off of wanting ...

Juan was helped by his older sister; she paid the price of learning the cultures of the community college and 4-year public institution. Juan did not experience a steep learning curve, but was able to remain upbeat and positive through the enrollment, financial, and other administrative processes. His cultural capital and his sister provided the means to successfully navigate the administrative maze.

Juan had a similar response to the dominant culture and its ideology. He expressed it in a variety of ways. He said, "I just fit in ... I don't know ... I really didn't do anything ... I just went like I was supposed to go ..." In his situation he was content to first learn what he needed and shunned asking questions or challenging the status quo. He said, "Not really, I just ... it was just like ... you kind of figure it out ..." According to

Sólorzano & Bernal (2001), Juan followed a conformist resistance approach; because he was motivated for social justice, but he lacked a social critique. He wanted to complete his studies more than he wanted to transform the situation.

Juan comprehended the differences between White and Black students' approaches to school and life. Since this campus was predominantly White, perhaps he decided just to "fit in." He earned respectable grades and avoided social justice issues that could transform the campus, such as seeking bi-lingual classes to aid students whose natal language was not English. He shared:

I don't want to be racists, but maybe like Black people have more attitude to things ... so they show you their attitude ... they show you the way they feel. But White people are just like, whatever ... and they don't really like put attitude to things ... I guess ... so that's ... maybe that's why I just never felt it ...

Juan told me that he never felt unloved or uncared for, but he also clarified what he meant by saying, "I really didn't pay attention to the others" who disliked him. He simply ignored them.

A major factor for Juan was the cost of higher education and the ability to converse with the faculty. He described it this way:

Well, the price is a big thing ... I mean a huge thing, 'cause I mean people don't wanna really pay anything extra if they can just pay less for the same class ... plus ... I'm sure they will learn more 'cause the classrooms are like limiting ... it's not like [4-year public institution] you go to a class and there's like 150 students ... you're like "dang, what am I doing here" and you couldn't even like talk to the teacher 'cause if you like wait for the end of the class you have class in ten minutes and there will be like twenty people ahead of you to talk to him, you have to wait to office hours and it just gets complicated. But here, you can just go on and talk to them ...

Lifeworld

Juan's lifeworld included all the skills, values, and attitudes that were forged by multicultural forces from three countries: his Spanish-speaking birth country, his parent's birth-country, and his adopted mono-lingual English country. The community college and the surrounding area offered other cultural forces that Juan had to navigate. The vision of attending college was given him through his parents. His father was an agricultural engineer while his mother did not attend college. With this rich multicultural foundation Juan summarized his early college days and classmates as "everyone was just normal, just like me ... just trying to learn something for the future ..." Today his father "... works at a construction company ... because when he moved from [country] like ... like he was like living good and everything but he wanted us to like live better."

Juan esteemed family-style classroom experience where he could connect with faculty. He said "But in [community college] ... the classrooms are so small that like people get to, you know to, get to know you better, you know. And you get to have like more connection with the teachers or professors ..." Juan even enlisted his sister to help him through the administrative processes of enrollment, financial accounting, and other administrative tasks.

Juan was a cheerful person; he was fun-loving, positive, and enjoyed life. Throughout the interview he was smiling and enjoying the experience. I asked him whether his smiling and his positive nature made it hard for anyone not to like him. He said "Yeah ... (laughter)." At another point I asked him about power and, specifically for him, whether his kindnesses and ability to smile would win a lot of people's hearts towards him. He stated "Yeah ... now that I'm thinking about it, yeah ... I would ..."

However, Juan's countenance grew sober when I asked him about his English experiences when he said "Oh ... that was ... that was kinda hard ..."

Juan could have made this task easier for himself by taking advantage of the community college ESL program, but he preferred to "jump" in. He was a risk-taker on this account counting on his interpersonal skills to learn from everyday experiences. Even with this risk taking, he was clear about what his sister did for him. He said that "she introduced me to everything, so ... I didn't really have to struggle, you know, 'cause she already knew everything ..."

Care

In Juan's case the positive characteristics of care were always there for him. There appeared to be a plethora of resources of family, friends, and non-student stakeholders that sought to help him. Experiencing care and having caring people seem to be how Juan was defined. Not all of Juan's interpersonal experiences were positive, but he had the attitude not to worry about those who were more negative toward him. When I asked him whether he felt wanted or unwanted, he conveyed:

I felt both 'cause really people ... there's many kind of people. Sometimes they like you, sometimes they don't ... so ... I mean sometimes they just like ... like they want to be your friend, sometimes they hate you 'cause you are whoever, whatever ...

His response was similar when I inquired about being loved or unloved: "I'm going to say loved. I'll say ... 'cause I really didn't pay attention to the others."

Juan understood that care meant being understood by his professors and building connection with them. He believed that the community college's smaller classrooms size was part of the reason he experienced care by making it more personable with more

opportunities to have interpersonal relationships. He shared that “the classrooms are so small that like people get to ... know you better ... And you get to have like more connection with the teachers or professors.” Juan was a very cheerful, personable, and fun-loving young man; he was definitely winsome. During the interview I made a comment that he was always smiling and that he would be the kind of guy hard not to like. He responded: “Yeah ... (laughter).” I concluded that Juan’s positive encounters were due to his endearing ways more than the caring attitudes of his faculty, though I am sure some of his faculty were genuinely caring people. Juan stated in several ways that he “just fit in” or “I just ... you know I just try to do what everyone else does.”

When I asked Juan if he remembered any occurrences of feeling unwanted, unloved, or any injustices he struggled to recall any such time. He simply stated, “I really didn’t pay attention to the others” who were unkind.

Juan-the-Exception

Dominant Ideology

Much of Juan-the-Exception’s (from here forward I will refer to him as Juan) identity was wrapped up in the meaning of being Hispanic and resisting the dominant ideology that circumscribes him in predetermined patterns, such as language and behaviors. He disclosed the following:

ahh ... middle class college student, currently, and as to identify myself, I don’t really like terming myself Hispanic because I think that people have certain expectations of me, maybe the way I act ... maybe the way I should act or what I should speak and I really ... it’s not that I frown upon it, it’s just I’d rather not go into that ...

Hmmmmmm ... (hesitating) ... I guess, well, since most people see me and say if they ever have an ethnicity question, I guess I’d have to put Hispanic ‘cause when they see me, physically, that’s what you are, so, it has to be that ...

It's kind of like with me ... I want to be different. I don't want to be [Juan] he looks Hispanic he must do this, he must talk like that, he must speak that language, but it's kind of like I want to do things a little different. I want to be unique. I don't want to be ... you know ... since [I am this] that, he has to, you know, do this or act like that ...

And you know, because the color of my skin, I'm kind of tannish, people think, you know, you're Hispanic, hey, you must speak that ... but it's kind of like, "no, I'm American" just like ... a naturalized citizen here, I was born here ... I'm American ...

Actually (laughs) ... I was walking to the computer lab and I think it was a Spanish professor in that room and he was ... he was going to ask me a question, I forgot about what, and first he just spoke Spanish to me first, instead of English. And I told him, "well, I don't speak Spanish" (laughter) so, yeah, I guess, that's one.

Juan emphatically stated that he was an American: "I was born here ... I'm American."

Juan had an encounter with another Hispanic worker at the community college that reflects his identity. Here is that encounter.

I remember at the, not the food court, we have a little, I guess, a little shopping center for food, last year I had a, you know, Hispanic student ... I mean not a Hispanic student but a Hispanic worker that worked there, [name], and he was Hispanic and he tried to identify me, you know, where you from, what's your background, and if this is your background, you must speak this then. I told him, "not really" I'm born here. Obviously he was from [Spanish-speaking country]. He was born there and then his parents took him ... they immigrated here, so yeah, of course he spoke it, but it was kind of like ... you're supposed to speak this, and I thought "no" ...

Was this encounter with an immigrant worker a threat to Juan's developing identity?

Perhaps he was pushing back at another stereotype that would place him in yet another

box. It was clear to me that both Juan and Juan-the-exception had the potential to work

together to transform the community college environment, making it healthier for

everyone. Together they could confront the dominant culture's privileged status,

monolingual limitation, marginalization and stereotypes of Latin@s specifically and the

underrepresented population in general, and negative immigration values. Juan, Juan-the-exception, and with other Latin@ students could transform APCC using LatCrit theory to transform the dominant culture, its structural systems, and associated values (Sólorzano & Bernal, 2001).

Juan did not want to express his feelings, thoughts, or perspective on immigration in the United States, but he did voice his belief that White people had stereotyped Hispanics. He asserted, “I think ... let’s see ... hmmm ... they’re primarily meant to be laborers, not thinkers.”

The issue of identity and stereotypes bothered Juan. He did not want to be limited or excluded from any possibility that he wished to explore. He shared this classroom experience with me and that he meant to be understood as being sarcastic.

(sigh) ... well ... (pause) well (laughter) I had a ... well back to if I had any ... you said White students ask me any questions ... well I actually had a professor, this was my [a particular class], he was talking about logic and with logic stereotypes. He said ... you know ... I’m trying to remember ... he’s talking about how if you’re Asian, do you eat Asian food. And then, are you Black, do you eat, you know ... what they ... people perceive what they eat, just like Asians ... and then he was talking about Hispanics and well he asked if there’s any Hispanics in this room, well the majority ... well most probably the one, I know the only minority in there and he was like “[Juan]., do they really eat you know tacos every day” are they really all devout Catholics. And I told him, “yeah, all the time. And I go to church every single day” ...

And then ... you know he wasn’t doing this in a malice way, it was just, you know, he was trying to know firsthand and when I saw him afterwards, I told him, “you know what I had for breakfast today? I had yogurt, bananas, and I drink green tea ...”

And then he’s like, “yeah [Juan] I was just using you as an example, that you know, just because you’re Hispanic doesn’t mean you eat tacos everyday or any of their ethnic foods ...” Well, that wasn’t necessarily bad, it’s just ... you know, expectations and everyone laughed. They knew I was being sarcastic, I don’t eat that everyday ... and it’s just kind of like ... what ... why would he think of that to ask me ... I mean I understand he didn’t just ask about Hispanics, it’s just why would they just eat that ... and I kind of thought, maybe it’s just ... you know ... back to what you said, stereotyping ... you know ... yeah ... I

admit, Hispanics are very devout ... the majority of them are devout Catholics ... I say yes ... but that doesn't necessarily mean they're all you know, down on their knees praying to God with the Rosary ... I mean, yes, they're religious ... yes ... but that doesn't mean they all are ... (laughs) ...

Actually, after that happened, I mean after I was being sarcastic ... it was like see everybody ... it isn't always like that ... you know he had some other questions some other races ... but it's just the majority of the class was White, so he couldn't exactly go into that so he just ... he concluded by saying, "everybody, you shouldn't go by these guidelines" and that being stereotypical or racists is actually a disease. So ... it will hinder how you perceive the world ...

Juan clarified that most of the students were White in the class and expanded on what the instructor desired. "Yes ... He said he wished that he had more minorities in there so that he could go further into the other races ..." I asked Juan why the instructor didn't explore the White race?

Hmmm ... (pause) ... that's a good question ... That's a good ... I never really thought of that ... you know, maybe he should have gone into that ... but I think, maybe it has to do more with difference ... maybe since we're all White, it's just standard ...

I remember I was talking to my friend, [name] at the time, who is African American, you know since we're both minorities, we discuss, you know, how we deal with everyday life situations ... or even how we talk. I mean, she mentioned to me how her Black friends expect her to talk, you know, how other Blacks do, you know, all this slang ... and you know, urban and she told me how "you know what [Juan], that's how they speak, but I speak proper ... I speak the standard" and that goes back to how I mentioned the White standard. Because they set how you talk ...

Juan wanted to push the limits of who people expected him to be or behave; he enjoyed pushing back at stereotypes that forced him into a pre-defined mold.

I've been actually int ... well I've been interested in learning Russian/Slavic language. I thought about, you know, if I'm going to learn a language it's not going to be what I should be expected as a native, but what I like, what I want to do. Not that I wouldn't mind learning Russian and just ... just how complex that whole region ... it's just ... I would rather go there than I would, say, someone would expect me to be my own country ... (laughs).

Juan considered it his right to challenge the structural system and the dominant ideology. It was his right to define himself because he was a US American. I can imagine him saying to himself “I am free!” while resisting, challenging, and perhaps attempting to transform the dominant culture.

Juan offered one final comparison of the community college and the 4-year public institution. He declared:

The way we teach, also, what they can give to the student. Because I understand so many professors at the college I’m going to there full time, they may not give as much time but I have professors here at [community college] who told me the same thing, but yet they just throw their time at me. They want to see me, even though I want to see them, they want to see me more than I want to see them. It’s just at my other school, it’s more like I have to make an appointment, I have to, to see them. Or, I have to see them on their time ... over here, just walked to their office and come on in ... I’ll help you ...

(deep breath) Well even though I’ve a few years left, I’m at a 4-year institution that can be unforgiving. It can be, and it cannot be ... but say if I was able to graduate with a four year degree at [community college], I wouldn’t say that ... I would say they’d give me options, they’ll be there when you need it ...

Lifeworld

Juan was the composite of two Latino students, that is, a US born Latino and one who emigrated from Spanish-speaking country. The US born Latino experienced the structural system differently than Juan of the Spanish-speaking country. Juan, the US born, had a difficult early childhood experience. This is his story.

[I] should not be here, in college, today ... ummmm ... I was expelled from middle school and high school. The reason being, years ago, I was a very different person ... I acted differently, I dressed differently, I acted to what my peers expected of me as a standard. And ... unfortunately a lot of that, I think a lot of Hispanic youth get into ... and ... hmmm ... I was supposed to be a gang member, years ago. I’m ... those guys aren’t expected to get out of high school. You don’t even have to finish high school, it’s just you work, you go with your other peers and you do whatever ... I guess you can say, expected activities, but yet, illegal activities expected of you ... I mean, they want you to do these things to which they think is a standard and how you should live because you identify

with us ... this is the standard, this is the norm. Everyone else isn't ... and I guess when I lived in [a southern state], I was ... when I went to a school that was primarily minorities, it's just ... in a way I felt comfortable there, living that lifestyle ... and that you know, who cares about education. You have the recognition of your other friends ... your group, and you know, you do these activities and well you have other people doing it with you, it's not just by yourself. And when I look back on it then, I thought to myself "well, I had a very different mindset then" ... and, well all that ended when I was expelled in high school and they told me ... well what happened was after I was expelled I had to go to court and they had an administrative meeting with the superintendent of the high school district. We had to sit down, my parents were there, I was there, the superintendent, and also my high school principal. We had a recording ask [Juan] why did you do this? Just what could have you done to not get into the fight that got you expelled and what eventually happened was they recommend me to go to ... alternative school. If you, if you ... if you break these many offenses, or make this one large offense, we're going to send you there, so it should not only make you learn your lesson, it's just also for punishment and with ... just the whole thing was just that okay, they're going to send me to the school because I got expelled, they're also going to send me to the same school, small alternative school with the same person I got in a fight with. It's kind of like, is that going to solve anything? And you know two gang members in the same small school? That's not good. ...

Just and the school was full of it ... I guess you could say that the school was full of guys definitely didn't care about education, was more so as ... recognition and also what your other peers expected of you ... this is the life you live, this is how you should live ... and after I was expelled I went, well, my mother searched for you know another school to go to and every high school I went to in that district they told me, you know, under this regulation of the expulsion, you're demanded to go to this alternative school,

And after going there, I learned that it was college preparatory and that the expectation of everyone is to graduate high school and go to college. You go here to prepare for college and eventually go to college after you're done here. This is what we expect of you. And also, on top of that, you're expected to learn all this ... all these theologies and also religion. You're expected to go to Mass two times a week, we want you to pick these morals, and I thought to myself, there's things called morals? There's also education and why do you need education? And from what I learned there, all the staff had at least a bachelor's, if not a master's or Ph.D. You know I saw successful people that taught there ... you know, they graduated high school, they got their degree at least and I saw that they're successful people because they wanted it, they strived for it, they worked for it ... and I told myself, you know what, this old high school I went to, they didn't inspire you to get that ... They ... they don't have expectations of you ... over here they're saying "when you graduate, we want you to go to college ..." and I told myself, wow, that's pretty high but yet, that's pretty promising ...

And after ... just after going there you know I picked up all of these things and I just dropped my old me and, yeah ... I was ... I was a very happy person after ...

The lifeworld and care of the composite Juan were closely related even though Juan (the emigrant) was the center of his universe and privileged in his home country before moving to the United States; in contrast Juan-the-exception was a gang initiate who was marginalized. They both understood, experienced, and defined care, love, and validation similarly. They were finding their way in a culture that was not always so friendly.

In summary, Juan is defined by the dominant culture as a Hispanic, expected to speak English, and adjust to other dominant expectations in order for the White culture to feel comfortable. LatCrit was an effective tool to examine Juan's racialized experiences and to challenge the dominant culture's ideology concerning language acquisition and use, immigration and native born Latinos, and Latin@ culture and identity. Juan's lifeworld included all the skills, values, and attitudes that were forged by multicultural forces from three countries: his Spanish-speaking birth country, his parent's birth country, and his adopted mono-lingual English country. APCC and the surrounding area offered other cultural forces that Juan had to navigate. As a native-born citizen, Juan was expelled from middle- and secondary-public schools and was not on his way to college. While attending a Catholic private school, Juan received a vision for higher education. Juan is now on his way to completing his baccalaureate degree in spite of beginning his postsecondary education at a community college. Juan confronts and challenges his environment in order to transform it and not be defined by others.

Desári

Desári represents US born Latina students, and she is a composite of four non-traditional age women. As shown in Juan's profile, community college is the college of choice for the majority of Latina students (Sólorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Three of these four participants are from the lowest socio-economic class, were the first in their families to attend college, and have children while the fourth is middle-class and first-generation. Two of the Latina women were fluent in Spanish; the other two were not. What they all shared in common were obstacles to attend college.

Structural System

Desári revealed that she was a "high school dropout" and shared "I'm not really quite middle class, I'm trying to get to middle class ... we were on public housing and stuff like that and like my kids get Medicaid ... so yeah, we're pretty poor." As a minority welfare-mother-with-children these multifarious issues were difficult enough to face in college, but there was more to her predicament. Additionally Desári's parents had limited educational experience, let alone any collegiate experience, and had emigrated from a Spanish-speaking country many years previously. Her three stories reveal not only a cultural setting that influences her to this day, but also significant parental influences.

I believe my mom went to maybe sixth grade or ... whatever grade ... I want to say either fifth or sixth. My dad probably went to like sixth or seventh grade and then from there on they worked until they came here to the United States ...

So my father was born in [western city], in [year] and lived there all of his life. ... my mother was born in [mid-west state], her parents had immigrated from [Spanish-speaking country] and ... worked as laborers on farms in [mid-west state]. And ... after her parents lost two children to pneumonia, because they lived literally in a little shack out in the snow, my grandfather said "I'm not going to have any more babies die from the cold" and so they moved from [mid-west] to [western city] and my grandfather never did anything more lofty than work as a

dishwasher in a restaurant on [historical site]. That was the ... extent of his skill level. And so my mother was born into a family of seven children. And she was the second oldest and so she really pretty much had to take care of all of her younger brothers and sisters.

I do remember one story my mother telling me that the night that my father ... they were in a restaurant when he asked her to marry him and he took out a ring from a little ring box, you know, to put on her finger and my mother said that the couple in the table ... at the table next to them looked over and said, "oh Christ, there goes another one ...". And I said, "what did they mean?" and she said, "Well they meant that I was a Mexican marrying a White guy ..." Because my father, even though he was from Spain, his family is very light skinned and ... and even in those days, a Spaniard wasn't considered Hispanic. It's changed now. It's changed, now if you're from Spain, you have to identify yourself on any government form as Hispanic ... Which really makes me angry. Because if you're Portuguese, which is right next to Spain, you're not ... you don't have to identify yourself as anything except White. And how ... why is it that the countries are close together ... and I asked my mom that one time, and she said "oh, well don't you know that the Spanish mixed with the Moors from Africa so they're really Black" (laughs) so I guess that was one more reason my mother was taking sloppy seconds when she married my Spanish father. But ... ummm ... I just really, that story has always bothered me 'cause I thought, here's one of the happiest moments in a woman's life when the man she loves says that he wants to marry her and that very moment, that very moment, she had to have somebody make reference to the fact that she was a ... you know ... a lesser citizen because she was Mexican. And my dad put up with all kinds of prejudice when he was growing up as well.

After several years Desári's family had moved again to a western state, the state where the community college resides. This move proved noteworthy to Desári because of its cultural influences and ideological foundations. She provided two quotes to emphasize this.

This sounds really weird, but I had never been around that many White people ... and I just felt like ... I don't know, I just felt really out of place there ... I didn't feel right at home at first, I guess ... I mean that may have been my own culture shock kind of thing, but it was like a little mini-culture shock for me when I first started going there ...

... my [parents] came here it was in the 70's and they like experienced a lot of racism back then. There wasn't a lot of ... Spanish speaking like ... like now you'll go to let's say the DHS building, they'll have workers there that speak Spanish. And it's not, you know, like unheard of ... but back then when they came, it was a totally different place ... they ... pretty much it was like sink or swim. So they were immersed with English and learned that way.

As a first-generation student Desári was nervous during her early days at the community college. She expressed this in a variety of ways:

I guess ... ummm ... just feeling really kind of scared when I first got there because I didn't know what to expect and I was kind of afraid to fail ... so I guess that would be my most memorable ... I remember even having dreams, like I would [go] up to class, and, in my dream I would not be prepared, like I wouldn't have my books, or something like that ... just really weird things like that ... so ... I kind of felt like anxiety I guess ... the first year ... I was just afraid to fail and just didn't feel like the odds were really for me.

I knew nothing ... ummm ... actually my sister introduced me to this lady, she worked for, can't remember, what is the organization called ... it was something where they helped like minority students, mostly kids out of high school, somehow my sister connected with this woman and that's how she got started ... and so, I mean I knew nothing about financial aid, I just didn't know anything ... and I was like ... I mean I didn't even know how to fill out an application for school or financial aid papers so she helped me with everything and you know assured me that everything was going to be okay. I actually even didn't start until the following semester when I could have started in fall ... I didn't start until spring because I was really kind of scared. I didn't know what to expect ...

Desári experienced fear of the unknown, uncertainty of what to do, and the lack of confidence, then additionally she sensed that her failure was almost expected. She also shared that she had many things to learn, for example, “had to learn how to manage my time and stuff like that” or “I mean I knew nothing about financial aid, I just didn't know anything.”

She experienced both administrative and academic environments negatively. Not only was this personally experienced by Desári, but she witnessed ill treatment to others as well during the time she was a student-worker on campus.

Yeah ... especially since after I got my job at the [administrative center] I would ... there would be students coming in, just barely signing up for school so I would, you know, try to help them ... tell them it's not that bad ... you know ... some of the other staff there that worked in the [another administrative] office weren't as helpful so ... they'd come over to our office ... and they would tell us these things so we would try to help them. [Student name] because she worked there with me too, and me ... mmhmmm ... the ladies in [that] office weren't as helpful ... ummm ... I remember a time when there was a ... mother who came in ... she was actually a student and she was trying to get her daughter enrolled and she didn't have her high school diploma so they flat out said she could not enroll without her high school diploma, which wasn't the case. She was able to enroll but there's like a thing where you have to ... finish your high school diploma before you graduate. And they just flat out turned her away ... I believe she was a White woman, but she was kind of ... I guess you could say poorer ... you know what I mean, like ... like her ... her economic background wasn't ... the highest ... so her daughter was a high school dropout and wanted to enroll in classes and they flat out turned her away so she was really discouraged. So her mom came and said, you know, I know this isn't true ... can you give me some information. So yeah, we told her that wasn't true, at all ... so ... I'm not really sure if they just didn't know, but I mean ... the women that actually turned her away had been working there awhile ... so I'm not really sure about that.

I asked Desári if she was acting as a servant or a helper to others. She affirmed that she was doing this early on in her community college experience. She did not want others to experience the same problems and fears that she had. She shared the following narratives about the academic environment.

I just felt like some professors weren't as understanding as others ... ummm ... for example, like my first semester ... in my [specific content] class, the teacher made us stay late and right at that time I had to pick up my kids from school and she made us ... certain people that you know she wanted them to re-do a particular assignment, and I'm like, well ... "my kids ... I have to pick up my kids" ... and she was like, well that's a personal problem and you need to learn how to manage your time and was totally not understanding so I actually ended up calling the school and ended up being like five or ten minutes late, but ... I guess

I'm just one of those parents ... I don't ever like to be late for my kids because I don't ever want them to be like the last person ... the last kid waiting for their parents to pick them up ...

One of them was a [specific content] class and [this class] is not one of my strong subjects so you know I don't know a lot of the [course] that most people know because I ... I was never taught it, I guess. So, in this class, well I was starting to feel overwhelmed, and that was part of it, but the one thing that really turned me off was I asked a question in class and he like turned it around and completely humiliated me in front of everybody about it. And so, I ended up dropping the class.

I guess, you know, sometimes you go somewhere and people give you that feeling like they're just there because it's their job and you know they don't really care ... well I guess I feel for the most part people here are here because they want to be and they somewhat enjoy their job and make me feel like, you know, I'm part of what they enjoy. I guess.

Desári knew which instructors were helpful, caring, or welcoming and this meant a lot to her. She clearly experienced the contradictions of the community college.

Earlier she shared that she “knew nothing about financial aid” and made a comment concerning work that she was “not [working] full time, but as much as I can ...” Desári admitted that financial pressures were “huge ... that's probably one of my biggest struggles right now.” She shared more about her financial pressures, that these pressures were not just related to tuition, books, and college fees, but also about child-care, transportation, and the basics of life—food, shelter, and health. There was a bit of envy when she shared a sense of unfairness when she knew that “the kid next to you is sitting there, they go to school full time and they don't have to work because mommy and daddy foots the bill and takes care of their every need.” There were aspects of her life that she felt little control over such as health issues that impacted attendance, employment opportunities and limitations, and being a single-mother.

Dominant Ideology

From the prior section we learned that Desári was a “Hispanic Mexican American woman,” a “high school dropout” who was “not dirt poor (laughs) ... I guess to some standards I’m you know better off than most people,” and was a first-generation student. She experienced the lack of help from administrative staff and witnessed a similar negative encounter for a poor White mother with her high school dropout daughter. I asked Desári whether she felt like she was pushed off to the margins; she agreed and shared that she witnessed the same treatment to others like her.

Speaking of White classmates in the community college Desári disclosed a few negative cultural experiences that she had at the college. She revealed that the lack of diversity of the campus setting along with minimal intercultural appreciation had a negative impact on minority students.

Actually a girl had mentioned how she really hated it when she goes into like a [retail outlet] and she hears people speaking Spanish and she knows that they’re talking about them. And I’m like ... you know I told her, you know, that’s really paranoid for you to think that they’re talking about you ... they’re just speaking their language that they speak, you know ... if somebody was speaking in Russian in the store are you going to like automatically assume they’re saying bad things about you, you know? She just really hated the fact that she goes places and people are speaking Spanish and she would think that they were talking about her. Which I thought was really silly.

Well there was a few ... actually a few classes that I was in where we got to do debates and ... umm ... it was around the time when they were really starting to come down on the immigration laws.

But that’s just an example I think of a similar situation of a kid today that you know, the way I felt at my college, you know, I had this huge issue but I didn’t feel like there was anybody I could talk to about it and obviously he didn’t either. I just remember a conversation in class about ... about where there was a White male student who was you know, sort of raised his hand and said “I’m a White male and I feel like I’ve been ... everybody holds everything against me because I’m White” (laughs) and I just thought, you are so young ... and you haven’t lived

yet. I mean ... he just ... I could understand where he's coming from, but it is just so not the same thing for somebody like that ... and ... and then they feel picked on when other people point it out ... but it's ... it's not the same ... but you know, other than that conversation, I don't think I have ever observed anything negative and part of the reason for that is that there just aren't a lot of minorities at that campus. At least it didn't feel like it to me.

Desári spoke more on her perception about her early days as compared to a few semesters later: "I guess now it's a little bit more diverse, but when I first started there I kind of felt like ... I just felt like I was very out of place." She had a choice where to enroll and attend classes from a nearby campus or another far across town. Although she did decide to attend the nearby campus she also stated that "I guess I kind of avoided it" initially even to the point of enrolling at the other campus across town. She described the nearby campus as "so much nicer and it's kind of a warm setting" or again "I just liked the set up when you first walk in and you see the fountains and everything ... it's really nice." It was not the physical design of the structure that concerned Desári, it was the people. She put it this way: "I guess as you get to know people it can go either way (laughs) ... I guess just the reaction ... or ... I guess I would get some looks from people."

After completing several semesters Desári had made several personal adjustments to emotionally survive and do well academically. She shared that "I just didn't let it bother me ..." and "I just felt like some professors weren't as understanding as others ..."

Desári was a dedicated mother who was also going to college full-time. She had many roles to juggle, but this experience was a disappointment. She further shared that she "just [tried] to deal with it ... I mean I guess at first it kind of bothered me and then I just after awhile kind of got used to it and just kind of brushed it off."

Desári attended classes at the community college about the time when immigration laws and enforcement were an issue. She spoke of her experiences with her classmates as well as the instructor.

It was around the time when they were really starting to come down on the immigration laws and stuff like that ... and ... umm ... actually a speech class that I was in and an [specific content class] that I was in ... we had some debates and some of them got pretty heated and after the fact I don't know, like, these students that I actually you know got into semi-confrontations with in class ... umm ... I don't know, I guess I didn't actually see them that way, they seemed really nice and then after I kind of seen how they really felt, I mean I kind of felt like, wow, this is how they look at me, like I don't belong here ... like you know, my parents should have never came here ... kind of thing ...

[The instructor] pretty much stayed neutral ... she left it ... 'cause it was part of our assignment we had to do a debate speech so one person would pick one side and the other ... another person had to pick the opposite side so me and this particular student picked opposite sides ... or actually not so much ... he picked a totally different topic but it had to do with immigration and pretty much he was ... his speech was on the Texas Rangers and he thought you know that what they were doing was just great and ... ummm ... he had mentioned how his grandfather, when he ... when his grandfather came to this country did it the legal way and so everybody should do it the legal way. And he was really upset and ... he was just really pissed off that all these immigrants were just coming in when his grandfather did it the correct way ...

She generalized her experiences at the community college this way: "I kind of knew people had their racist ways but ... never actually had to deal with it so much at one time in one place."

Her experiences with fellow classmates were a challenge for Desári. She observed the lack of appreciation for the academic opportunities and financial resources that classmates had as well as their ignorance and negative stereotypes they held.

I don't know, they just seem like kind of ... maybe not as appreciative and more like things have been handed to them, a lot, and so it's kind of like ... like I know that there's a lot of students that I have met that were like ... just hated being there ... they wanted to go on to bigger places like you know, [the larger state universities], and just felt like you know, they just really hated being there because it was a community college. Like, I guess, more as a status.

I think a lot of people felt like they're smarter, maybe ... or they would be surprised when I would do well on something or do well in a class. Because I mean I've pretty much been an A/B student, mostly As ... but ... I would get like ... like oh wow ... like surprise ... it's like why does it surprise you if I'm smart or whatever ... like they don't ... I guess they look at me and they don't see somebody that would be that smart ... I don't know, like people were surprised that I would do well and I just kind of felt like, well, a little bit offended.

Desári felt that the dominant group viewed the different Others by external measurements. She further described the community college's local setting to explain her viewpoint about some of the faculty and staff with a wish for some additional diversity makeup.

Ethnicity ... and ... I don't know ... maybe I didn't dress like them or ... talk like them ... so yeah, I think it was based mostly on appearance ... like they would kind of look at me like, wow ... and then I have like this tattoo on my hand when I was ... since I was 13 or so ... so people would kind of look at it and then kind of look at me and so ... yeah I would kind of ... maybe just my appearance ...

Because I mean I know a lot of the professors or whatever, faculty, ummm ... are really into the Christian kind of thing and, I don't know, I think that kind of makes their view on life a little different, and on people in general. I mean not for everybody. It's kind of a general statement but ... maybe a more diverse staff I would say.

Well I guess the Christians here in town, I think that if maybe they weren't so ... I mean kind of looking down on other people that don't believe what they believe and don't live what they live or consider to be a Christian lifestyle ... and then I guess for Catholics, I don't know ... I guess it's kind of a cultural thing where you know even if you're not following everything what the Catholic church says you still feel like you have a relationship with God and whatever ...

Her summary of the local area was significant, too.

I'll tell you the truth, bottom line ... [the local area] was no happier to see me than anybody at [the community college] or [specific] campus. I tell ya ... when we ... every experience we had in the first couple of years coming here was ... it was as if people just looked at us and said, "You're from [western state]— go home!" It was the most unwelcome I have ever felt in my life.

Without any regard to ethnicity, I asked her if she saw any student being supported, confirmed, or welcomed. Her reply was simply “No.” I then asked her for a summary of her administrative experiences. Desári gave me two summaries.

I don’t know if administrators have just ... at a college like [the community college] ... have in any way remember what it was like to be that age and coming to school. I mean, I saw kids there signing up with their parents by their side, that’s how young these kids are when they come to [the community college]. And I don’t know what the assumption is ... I know we’re supposed to be adults by that time and we’re supposed to be able to take care of ourselves but ... yeah it’s a big cold world and there’s a lot of paperwork and a lot of confusing rules and a ... high ... you know a cost involved for a lot of people.

I don’t feel like I got noticed very much there outside of my classrooms, or even inside the classrooms ... again, I just think I felt ... I felt like except for in [one] class where we did a lot of interacting, the whole time I was at [the community college] I think it was more as if I was just invisible.

Lifeworld

Desári’s prior quotes revealed much of her skills, values, and attitudes. She is protective of her children: “I don’t ever like to be late for my kids because I don’t ever want them to be like the last person ... the last kid waiting for their parents to pick them up.” She has a servant’s heart wanting to help others: “I really want to help people that ... can’t speak English and are coming from Mexico or South America.” Her pursuit of higher education demonstrates middle-class goals and values: “You can get a better career and you can be more financially set.” She was determined to achieve a career: “I would like to be like a court interpreter, or medical something like that ...” Desári noticed that she was different than the dominant group when she was a young teenager.

I noticed what other people started to notice. And actually when I think about it, I think it was more around the time when you know I got older and boys began to be interested in me romantically and their parents objected ... or ... they just kind of stayed away or felt like they shouldn’t be interested in me because, you know,

oh well she's Mexican. So ... that was the first time I actually ever noticed that there was a difference.

She recalled her community college graduation experience. "It was really emotional ... (laughs) at my graduation." She had achieved one of her dreams and persevered to the end overcoming self-doubts, mistakes, and an environment that was unduly harsh at times: "I just felt like some professors weren't as understanding as others." In some of her classes she felt she had to defend her family and people: "We had some debates and some of them got pretty heated ... semi-confrontations." She was definitely a risk-taker to achieve her education goals. Her identity was "Hispanic Mexican American woman" who spoke and appreciated her native tongue. She felt obliged to defend others who spoke Spanish in the community college hallways or the market place. She sought social justice or understanding in a variety of situations at the community college. She confronted White students by saying "They're just speaking their language that they speak, you know ... are you going to ... assume they're saying bad things about you, you know?" To a White instructor she stated "I would try to go to the instructor and he was just like, well, you know ... that's you know pretty much how it is."

Desári was aware of cultural, race/ethnicity, socio-economic class issues while at the community college as demonstrated by these three quotes.

I would say that kids were middle to upper-middle class. I would say leaning towards the high end of middle and then upper-middle ... that's my perception. Just based on the way the kids dress. And little things like, you know, the spending money they had to buy snacks at school and the purses the girls carried and you know

I guess they look at me and they don't see somebody that would be that smart I guess. ... I don't know ... maybe I didn't dress like them or ... talk like them ...

At times she elected to ignore people who did not demonstrate appropriate respect to another human. She said, “I had gotten to a point where I really didn’t care what people thought of me.” She never gave up on class participation, but occasionally she had to overcome obstacles that weren’t always so easy.

Well one instructor actually in particular, who’s pretty well known ... I don’t know if I should mention his name or not, you know I took a class with him because I had heard from other students he was really great, and everybody loved him, so I was like, wow, I’m going to take this class and then when I did, I didn’t see that from him, what everybody else, seen. So I felt like ... yeah like he just pretty much kind of was like you know would look at me kind of like when I would ask questions or whatever kind of like I was bothering ... him. And ... I mean I don’t know if it was because of appearance or whatever, but he seemed to give like the little petite, cute, little White girls more ... more help, more attention than I felt I was getting. Even though I’d be raising my hand just as long ... I would kind of get brushed off ... I mean I would sit in the front row ... so it was a big class but I always sat in the front row, I always you know, never late kind of thing ... so ... it kind of changed my view on this person ...

I guess I wouldn’t expect that because that’s not how you learn, I mean, that ... a quick way to discourage people from asking questions and you know, in teaching, you need to ask questions ...

Desári had to learn to be independent in dealing with her obstacles: “Huge ... financial pressures ... that’s probably one of my biggest struggles right now ... I’d say a lot of my issues I tend to keep to myself and try to work out on my own ...”

Care

Throughout the interview Desári defined how she understood *care*. At times she provided juxtaposed ideas to further enhance her definition. Speaking of a particular instructor she said:

she helped me with everything and you know assured me that everything was going to be okay ... she would give us extra help because being that I was a high school dropout I didn’t ... I mean I never learned how to study, I just was really

behind on everything ... some of the other staff there that worked in the [administrative] office weren't so helpful ...

I verified what she was saying by asking if she felt pushed off to the margins and Desári responded with “yeah, that’s pretty fair.” In other exemplars she asserted, “I just felt like some professors weren’t as understanding as others” or “I kind of knew people had their racist ways but ... never actually had to deal with it so much at one time in one place.” In responding to two different contexts she asserted the contradiction of care this way: “I don’t know ... maybe I didn’t dress like them or ... talk like them ... so yeah, I think it was based mostly on appearance” and in an extended quote she underscored:

You know, nobody ever made me feel like I belonged, but they didn’t make me feel unwelcome. They just didn’t make ... I don’t feel that anybody on that campus in any you know in any paid position on that campus ever reached out to me ever, except maybe [Professor Blair Bentley] ... none of the counselors, none of the other teachers I had there ... not even the person in the coffee shop. Nobody ever seemed to care one way or the other that I was there ... and if I was someone that was sensitive to that, if I was an 18 year old kid coming ... going to school there ... that would have really bothered me. And I know this for a fact, because it bothered me when I went to school the first time when I was that age, and had ... I was really, really lost in the crowd on that ... on [that western university] campus and I felt like just coming out of high school I needed someone ... I was young ... and I needed somebody to kind of come along side me and check and make sure I was doing, I was doing okay and that never happened. Back then, it really bothered me. And I quit school. I quit school when I was 18 over that.

In a more positive description of *care* while answering my question whether Desári witnessed students being affirmed or validated she spoke of Professor Bentley.

Well in [Professor Bentley’s] class it was a different situation because we had you know, immediately [he] put us into those groups so we didn’t have to kind of wait around ... and boy, we supported each other in those small groups. And [he] always had that open door policy ... so for ... in [Professor Bentley’s] class was definitely the exception. But in any of my other experiences at [the community college], no, I don’t remember seeing any student [affirmed or validated]

I asked Desári one more time whether she observed any student no matter what ethnicity being confirmed, welcomed, or validated her reply was simply “No.” Then she added this comment to emphasize her experience.

I don’t feel like I got noticed very much there outside of my classrooms, or even inside the classrooms ... again, I just think I felt ... I felt like except for in [Professor Bentley’s] class where we did a lot of interacting, the whole time I was at [the community college] I think it was more as if I was just invisible.

In [Professor Blair Bentley’s] classroom, I don’t know ... in that [content] class when [he] introduced at the beginning of the semester that we were going to have to write some papers and that we were going to be in these teams, these groups, and have to interact, I was SO disappointed ... I was just like, oh I can’t believe that I’ve got to take this ... class and then I have to sit and you know, do this interactive stuff ... I work so much better on my own, I just ... I don’t want to have to do this, I don’t think it has its place in [content class] ... I was just so ready to just sit there, be invisible. And expecting to ... not that I wanted to, but I expected to. Because that had been my experience. But ... I wrote a paper towards the end of the semester, it was just the best experience of my life in a classroom. It was so much fun to be ... you know, [he] kind of had to force me to get together with my little group and do things but it was such an enriching experience. And so, that’s the way I was cared for, I think, out of that entire experience at [the community college] campus was the fact that somebody ... when I know he met resistance from all of our faces when he introduced that. That [he] just kind of stood there and said, “that’s too bad, that’s how it’s going to be in this class and really, you’re going to enjoy it” and then it created a little community, and we did care for each other. If somebody didn’t show up for the class, we would call them and find out why they didn’t come. And we would get together on the weekends and study. We did our own little study groups. That never would have happened. I would have continued being invisible in that class as much as any other if it wasn’t for that. And I don’t mean we got together to study when we had to do our presentation. I mean, we still got together to study. And we would sit and we’d help each other with problems. We’d call each other up and we’d email each other. It was just a great experience.

I asked all participants what changes they would recommend to the community college. I explicitly verified with Desári that she meant that every administrative office and every classroom should be a more caring environment where students would not be

treated as a herd, but treated as individuals with their own peculiar issues that were recognized, known, and appropriately treated. “Totally, yeah,” she agreed.

I just think there’s a lot of opportunity there for the staff you know to be helpful and not expect everyone that walks in the door to be completely up on how it all works ... ummm ... there’s an area you can really feel stupid (laughs) when you walk in there and you’re not sure when you print where the things going to come out ... there’s not a lot of instructions and I think that would be a great ... A great opportunity for reaching out and helping people, because there you’ve got people generally that work there that are you know, geeky geek-guru type people that are really passionate about the machines, know all the ins and outs and yet they hoard the secrets ... instead of just sharing them ...

At the campus Desári attended there is large open area that a few participants described as “warm” and inviting. Speaking of that area she stated:

I just always felt kind of bad that there wasn’t much of a community there to speak of, you know, that they didn’t have active, social, you know, things going on ... and that things they did have were poorly attended and ... I just ... I just remember thinking that they ... it’s just too bad because they have this big beautiful facility and all these kids that come here and it should be more of a place that you feel like you can hang out, you know ... it’s safe, it’s well lit, it’s ... you know, I just always ... that’s an impression I have ... that’s it too bad that it’s more of place, you know, place you go in and you do your classes and then you leave.

Desári is a non-traditional age Latina woman. As was the case for Juan, Desári commenced her collegiate education at a community college because of its lower cost, access, and local convenience. The four women who represented this composite shared the same ethnicity and common obstacles to attend college. All four were first-generation students with three from the lowest socio-economic class while the fourth was middle-class. Desári’s experiences included dropping out of high school, living in public housing, and being a minority welfare-mother-with-children. She experienced fear of the unknown, uncertainty of what to do, and a lack of confidence; additionally she sensed

that her failure was almost expected. She experienced the lack of help from administrative staff and witnessed a similar negative encounter for a poor White mother with her high school dropout daughter. Desári agreed that she felt marginalized and had a racialized experience at APCC. She is a status striver as demonstrated by her middle-class goals and values. Desári is currently completing her baccalaureate degree.

Stephanie

The three participants who are characterized by Stephanie do not deny their intertwined ethnicity of being African-American and Native-American, but struggle with how the dominant group maintains its negative stereotypes, values that limit Stephanie's achievements, and racist attitudes. Two were in or near the lowest economic class while in college and one was in the middle class. Two were the first-generation in their families to attend college while all of their families were involved with the military. Only in one case was child-care an issue, but it was a crucial one. For two participants the death of their father was a monumental emotional event that perpetually impacts them. All three are pursuing doctorates with two in medical fields and one in education.

Structural System

"I am African-American female" was Stephanie's response to my ethnicity question, but she also acknowledged that she was Native-American. Her identity was anything but simple for Stephanie.

umm ... hmmm ... that's ... I mean ... racially, I'm mixed ... but, I grew up in a very not diverse town so ... you know, I'm not really ... I don't really think I've been exposed to you know the different cultures I might come from necessarily, so, that's hard for me to answer ... ummm ... (long pause) ... I don't ... I don't really know ...

I made a comment at this point stating that Stephanie had a wonderful smirk on her face.

She did not want to be placed in a box based upon a stereotype.

I would say that ... umm ... I mean I don't want this to sound messed up but, I'm "White washed" ... I'll put that in quotations. Like, you know, I pretty much grew up in a White town, grew up around White people, I don't think that I fit the stereotype that people kind of have put up for me, if there is one.

umm ... I ... I don't ... let's see ... I think, I think it's just how people from different racial groups would view, like African-Americans ... ummm ... some who aren't bigoted, some who are bigoted, you know, who might expect me to listen to rap music or to, you know, have grown up somewhere where I ... didn't have money, or I didn't get a good education, or ... something like that. Maybe, that's what they might perceive me to be ... I mean I hope that they wouldn't but ... I definitely don't fit that mold, if that's what they're looking at ... Definitely not, no ... I shouldn't be ... put in a box.

Stereotypes are bogus, I think, so ... and I don't fit the stereotype for I guess the typical African-American person, if there is one ...

Stephanie spoke well of APCC faculty as compared to 4-year institution faculty in another western state.

Biggest thing that I think is that I've had great professors. I've had great professors here. And I didn't really realize that until I had gone to another school and seen their professors and then realized how much money I was paying to not get great instruction. So ... then it hit me like, "wow" you know, I really had a great thing and I didn't see it when I was out here. When I first came out here I kind of resented being out here. I'd just moved from [far western state] ... initially I wasn't even going to go to college, I was just going to join the [military] and then figure it out from there and for some reason, you know, I just decided, well why don't I just try one semester. So I tried one semester here and it caught me, and you know, here I am, still in college, so ... I'm lucky ... glad it was at this school.

Right, well or they got their tenure and they're just like "well, whatever" I'm just going to coast to the end of this ... they don't seem to really care about what they're teaching, they don't seem to have passion for it ... and ... that means they're bad when they're trying to convey it to us, they just don't care ...

However, Stephanie did have some difficult experiences at the community college. She discovered APCC's structural system contradictions.

I had one really horrible professor here ... I forgot his name ... I do remember that like only five people ... that I was talking to ... five people ended up, maybe not even passing his class, but finishing it ... and then he didn't teach here the next semester, that's the only thing I remember.

There was [another] professor here who was awful and ... he would come in and he wouldn't even talk about [the course] for the first hour and a half, he would just talk about other stuff, random stuff, so ridiculous I don't remember it. But we recorded it, me and a few other students, we recorded the lectures so we could take it to [an administrator] and show her you know, this is, we really need to learn this stuff, this is what's going on in class, we've recorded it for you to see, or for you to hear, and she basically laughed at us ... there's two students who went to her, she basically laughed at us ... initially she told me that it was my fault, that ... I forgot what she said but it really, really upset me. She told me that it was my fault that I wasn't understanding the professor, something like that, I don't remember what exactly she said, but umm ... basically it was my fault that I wasn't getting something from his class, and I'm saying, "no, it's his fault because he's going and talking about history for an hour and a half and I'm paying for [specific course], I'm not paying for history" you know? Cool ... this is what the Aztecs did, but at this moment I don't care about that, I want to learn [specific course] ... I've already taken history, if I wanted to take history I'd register for history. But she basically told me that it was my fault. Then my buddy went in, on a separate occasion, and he played her the tape, and she basically told him the same thing.

We talked to him in a way in asking if we could focus on the material at hand. We were trying to be appropriate but he's very hot-headed and he was very stubborn, and his way was the right way, and he didn't listen to our questions and ... he was just, seriously, he seemed socially inept. He just ... I couldn't ever see him with anybody than himself. He didn't seem to have any social skills. He just seemed very ... he shouldn't be teaching. He didn't listen to anybody so it was very, you can't approach him and say anything because then he would tell you that it was your fault, so ... it was just a bad situation. The [administrator] made it worse because we tried to go about it in a way where we had the evidence to show that we weren't just, you know, I have no grudges against that guy, I don't know him, we just wanted to show, look, we paid for [specific course], this is what we're getting, he's still testing us on [specific course] but he's teaching us about Ancient Mayan culture, you know, this ... it's not what I want in my class, you know? So ... yeah I was ... it was weird ...

The resolution of the above contradiction was for Stephanie to finish the semester at a different campus with a different instructor. She described this instructor as "a fabulous professor ... [and] did a wonderful job."

Stephanie shared other not so pleasant experiences. One contradiction was a registration problem and she provided a recommendation that would resolve future problems.

I think for the most part it's been pretty much ... pretty normal ... umm ... I've had basic problems, you know, but that's just with their registration, you know, their computer glitches, stuff like that. Like I registered for [a science course] last semester, actually, and it was an online course, but what they didn't tell you was that you needed to order this lab kit, and it took time to be shipped to you, that you couldn't just go down to the school and pick up the lab kit. So here I am, thinking, okay so I'm just going to start ... I'm going ... getting the book, so I'm thinking I'm going to start this class and then it's like all of a sudden I need a lab kit and I'm like wait ... counting the days that it's going to take, I'm already going to be behind before we even get into the class, you know, so I ended up dropping it because I wasn't interested in you know, catching up. I was already taking 14 other units at [a local four-year institution] ... umm ... but now I'm registered for it this semester and I know that I need it so I can go order it. So I hope that the other students know that they need it so that they can go order it ... and I ended up telling the people in the office, because they told me well just log on the first day of class, and I told them, actually, you should tell people to log on just a little bit before because they need a lab kit and they need to order it off line and it takes sometimes a week or more to get to us.

I asked Stephanie what she meant when she used the word normal. She said “umm ... I guess just going through the motions ... going into my class, doing my homework, and leaving ... pretty much.” Her next negative story was another administrative incident.

I think I'm ... I guess like as far as advising goes, you know, I haven't really found ... a school that has great advising ... so ... and it's the same for this one. I mean I think some of the advising at this school is horrible. I know my advising here has been horrible. But, it's something that I can't look at a sheet of paper and do myself, so ... pretty much going here taught me that I need to learn how to read my degree progress reports, or read ... ummm ... my plans to see what I need to take and how I need to ... to get where I'm going.

I actually have a book that has all of the med schools ... here in the United States. And it tells you what are their prerequisites and a lot of the schools you don't even need a four year degree, but by the time you've gotten a lot of those pre-reqs, you might as well get a four year degree ... umm ... so, and it tells you

the average GPAs for med school. It tells you ... just everything about it. So I've looked up some of the schools that I'd want to go to, looked at what I need, make sure that I have those pre-reqs because even though, you know, the [specific university] tells me they want something, it could be completely different for another school. And I learned that early on ... so ... making sure I just get everything that I need to go ...

Her responses turn positive again when Stephanie spoke of learning and education at the community college while simultaneously recognizing that she was Black.

... I always felt like I got a great education, so, as long as I'm learning what I need to learn, I'm happy where I'm at ... I guess ... I started appreciating learning when I got to this school. Before I just took it for granted ... so I don't know what ... I don't know ... it's certainly ... you know there's more White people on this campus, you know, that's probably a fact. I haven't done any studies but ... umm ...

But I haven't walked down the halls and gone, "I'm the only black kid here" I haven't felt that way ... maybe I should ... but ... I mean I don't judge ... I don't see my race having anything to do with what I'm capable of so ... which shouldn't matter what I'm doing in the sea of White people as long as I'm accomplishing my goals, I guess ... I don't know ...

Stephanie spoke fondly of other professors, too, who met her where she was the weakest.

She knew I was weak in my writing ... but she was right there, to say this is how we're going to do it ... and she would let me turn in drafts and she would go through and edit and give it back until I was able to produce an A paper. That was called "love" I can't put it any other way ... because who has time? WHO HAS TIME? She took the time. So I will never forget that ...

But it wasn't everybody, because I had others that would look at me ... as if to say, why are you wasting your time?

I had some instructors who I would go to try and ask a question and he'd say "figure it out." Or, would give that breath, like (sighing sound) ... I thought I just explained that ... or you don't get it? It started to make me feel ashamed to raise my hand ... to ask a question. And it wasn't until I ... a teacher told me, "sit at the front, center, and even if a teacher gives you that look, you don't have to be embarrassed by seeing people turn around and look at you, you can't see them, you're at the front, so just look them in the eye, and make sure he answers your question, because that's his job." Now when I realized that that was his job, oh ... I took it and ran with it ... (laughter) ... Oh it's your job ... yeah ...

Dominant Ideology

Stephanie, who is racially mixed and “grew up in a very not diverse town,” previously shared that she is “White-washed” and that “stereotypes are bogus.” She had more to share about how she experienced, witnessed, and felt about the dominant ideology. She wanted some things to change in spite of APCC’s many good qualities.

I’d like to make it ... so that students are more noticed and that you don’t have to be an extrovert to get the attention, you know? So that ... I don’t know ... so that students who need, you know, to be cared for and need somebody to pay attention to them and make sure that they’re doing okay, get that, so they can finish and they can make something of their lives, I guess. That’s what I’d like to see ... Instead of it just being you know, everyone for themselves or ... just the normal go with the flow, whatever, you know ... do your own thing ... where you end up you know, who knows ...

It’s what we think, what society thinks, is acceptable ... it’s okay for people to fall through cracks, I mean ... I might not think so, but society just thinks it’s going to happen, so why do anything about it ... you know ... whatever, they’ll find a way to make it work ... I guess, but ... no! you know, if they’re making an effort let’s do something to make sure they keep making an effort because some people you know, this is their first time ... I mean, going to a good school where they have to ... put in some time, put in something that they’re not ... they’re not completely used to and they might get discouraged or you know they might have things going on that they just feel like nobody understands it, it could be anything ... but ... I guess it should ... maybe if there’s like a mentors or ... maybe if your advisors knew you or if there’s a way to make that happen, it would be easier ...

With her future medical career always on her mind Stephanie selected professors who could not only teach her the necessary content, but also be used for a potential reference. She revealed frustrations and disappointments that she faced.

He wasn’t um ... a personable person. I wasn’t very approachable; he wasn’t pretty much a nice guy ... but I said that I would take him a second semester because hopefully I can get a letter of recommendation when it comes time for me to hopefully go to med school one day, and if I take him again I should be able to build some rapport. Um ... I regret that now and I feel naïve, or I feel like I should have known that there was no way to build rapport with a teacher that acted in such a manner.

And I realized this when I took him ... in the class and he makes a statement um ... mentioning how it used to be back in the olden days when African-Americans couldn't date White people, or we couldn't do certain things, and White people were in charge, and the statement he made was kind of encouraging all the other White students to get back on gear, like why are they not performing as well anymore and I ... that was when I realized this guy doesn't even see me as being a part of his class. He doesn't even know that I'm here.

My second experience at [the community college] was in [specific] class, and this wasn't specifically with the teacher, this was just me coming to a realization with the students ... um ... I noticed that the other students weren't nervous about [specific class], like if they passed or failed it wasn't that big of a deal, like they felt that they were going to be okay either way. I never felt that way. I felt like I could do bad um ... and maybe a majority person would do bad, but if we're both trying to go into med school they would make it fine, they would just make it just fine and it doesn't matter if I try harder, they're probably just going to make it just fine.

Then my third memory um ... was when I met probably, I probably wouldn't still be going to community college if I didn't meet her ... I met her my first summer here, my first semester here and we had two classes together and she was ... I noticed her because she was crying ... she just ran out of the room crying, it was [specific] class and the next day I saw her in my [other] class and I asked her what had happened and we were discussing the [situation] and it really from then, it formed a bond and just to be able to talk to somebody else that understands how you can feel differently and to have somebody that cheer you on I guess and you cheer them on. And so I'll never forget when I met her and um ... she's a big part of my life.

I asked Stephanie what were the risks to transform the situations that she faced. I certainly felt how she perceived her environment and understood how difficult it could be. In one conversation with a fellow faculty member I asked whether the faculty and administrators could change the way they dealt with students, especially minority students. He soberly stated that it would take protesting from united students to prompt this change. Perhaps Stephanie understood this, too; she is both innocent and shrewd.

One, either risking my grade ... um ... two, because of my own personal life and personal experiences, I'm ... I can't handle the strain of doing that ... there used to be a time when I was ... very vocal (laughs) about the way I was treated or if I felt like I deserved a better grade I would speak up immediately ... um ... but because I can't handle the emotional aspect of it ... I would say I'm physically stressed out ... I'm really just ... I can't ... like I can't ... I physically can't do it

so now I just do what I have to do to alleviate my stresses, and that is get my grade and ... I would like to be somebody in the future, after I ... you know, get past my struggles and make it ... to come back and change certain situations for other people

(laughs) yeah ... and observe before I jump in and that's ... um ... I think that's saved me in a lot of situations because I've noticed when I'm not quiet, um ... I portray myself as not very smart (laughs) but after I'm quiet and I get to, you know, know people, it becomes "I know you, but you don't know me" and I can pick out you know, who is a good soul to talk to ...

Stephanie and I continued discussing how the community college environment might change through less forceful methods but would involve past graduates who have made it in society working as team-members with current students for change that serves all students. Her experience has not been dissimilar to other minority students at the community college.

I can see how that would work out, but there's ... there are people like me, and then there are people that are just going to say, forget about it, I'm saying something now, and they do, and that's how you get certain movements to happen ... um ... I think it's important I guess to know your role, like some people are um ... good at being activist and good at just jumping in there and getting it done ... um ... and other people, I would say, there's ... like Barak Obama or um ... the people ... there's the people that can speak that can speak, and there's the people that will write your speeches for you ... and I would love to be a part of a bigger change, but I would like to work it from behind the scenes ...

Yeah, that should be a team effort ... um ... just wherever anybody can help, is good, and I definitely admire the people that can just get up and do it ...

My mom ... she grew up in [a western state], in [specific city], and so did ... my uncle, he lives here now ... but he ... he and my mom have mentioned like it wasn't a big deal ... in that area where they grew up and that [the state of the community college] is a racist state ... (laughs) and um, I felt bad hearing that because it just brought it to my attention, because I've been ignoring these things so that I can move forward, and when my uncle tells me, yeah, you don't know they sell Confederate flags on the side of the road sometimes, there's people driving around with those things on their vehicles ... and I'm oblivious to this because I'm trying to live in the now, or what I think should be the now, and really it ... reminded me that things really haven't changed ... um ... and my dad ... he ... he told me ... I remember him telling me that I was going to come across people in my life that aren't going to like me ... um ... and I think knowing that and just preparing myself for that is probably another thing that's made me get ... deal ... with it basically or move on or have the strength to overcome it ...

After graduating from the community college Stephanie sought a position at a nearby city. She was promptly hired through affirmative action process. She divulged her story this way.

So I started working and I was confronted by an [employee] who said the only reason why I was [hired] was because I was Black (laughs). And when she said that, I felt my role was to explain to her that wasn't the case. I felt like I had to explain myself. And I found that she just kept on. There were just little things here and there and I had ... and then people started to get on her bandwagon and I found myself having to prove myself constantly through just words and apologies and I got tired. I got tired and I just stopped. And then it stopped. Because I also believe that, that in which you resist will persist and I just kept resisting ... and I said, you know what, I'm not going to resist this anymore, I'm just going to let it go.

Lifeworld

Stephanie recalled her days at the community college with humor and some nostalgia, saying, "I don't know, I think I'm just a regular kid trying to go to [medical] school and make some money (laughs)." Stephanie previously averred that she was "White-washed" because she has been surrounded by so many Whites. She believed the people were complex and had multiple realities while affirming that "stereotypes are bogus." For sure she did not want to be placed in a box.

umm ... I ... I don't ... let's see ... I think, I think it's just how people from different racial groups would view, like African-Americans ... ummm ... some who aren't bigoted, some who are bigoted, you know, who might expect me to listen to rap music or to, you know, have grown up somewhere where I ... didn't have money, or I didn't get a good education, or ... something like that. Maybe, that's what they might perceive me to be ... I mean I hope that they wouldn't but ... I definitely don't fit that mold, if that's what they're looking at ... Definitely not, no ... I shouldn't be ... put in a box.

I asked Stephanie whether there was a *typical* White person. Her response was clear and she shared more of her own complex heritage. She continued on by sharing how she resisted in many ways and not just in the community college context.

Not that I've heard of...so...but...I mean I guess I don't really know where I come from. I knew where I grew up, but my heritage, I don't...I kinda know where the bits and pieces come from...I know that you know that I'm part Native-American, I know that I'm part African-American, I know that I'm part...Caucasian, you know. I know all of that, but I don't...I don't know all the different aspects of all those different cultures, I guess...

Just like when I gotta check the box, you know, I know that I'm two or more races but do I check African-American because I look more African-American than I do, you know...that's kind of one of those things where I'm in the box and I have to check a box, which box do I check? Sometimes I just mess with them and check both...

With humor and energy she shared a bit of her lifeworld: “[Medical career] is it ... no, no ... I don't do planes, don't do elevators, don't do spiders, so ... three things I don't like ...” Stephanie has demonstrated her ability to be independent and responsible for her future.

I actually have a book that has all of the med schools and all of the dental schools here in the United States. And it tells you what are their prerequisites and a lot of the schools you don't even need a four year degree, but by the time you've gotten a lot of those pre-reqs, you might as well get a four year degree...umm...so, and it tells you the average GPAs for med school. It tells you the...just everything about it. So I've looked up some of the schools that I'd want to go to, looked at what I need, make sure that I have those pre-reqs because even though, you know, the University of [state] tells me they want something, it could be completely different for another school. And I learned that early on...so...making sure I just get everything that I need to go...

Stephanie had the ability to diagnose situations especially when there was a weakness or a problem and had the additional ability to provide an insight or a solution. “Well part of the problem is that they just have mass advisors that advise for everything, and it's different for med school and dental school ... can't be done that way.” Earlier I

wrote how she assessed herself in light of the community college environment: she “grew up in a White town, grew up around White people;” “I’ve had great professors ... then it hit me, wow, you know, I really had a great thing and I didn’t see it when I was out here;” “I had one really horrible professor” and her solution was to get a different professor; but she shared another insight for the community college leadership to listen to:

I’d like to make it ... so that students are more noticed and that you don’t have to be an extrovert to get the attention, you know? So that ... I don’t know ... so that students who need, you know, to be cared for and need somebody to pay attention to them and make sure that they’re doing okay, get that, so they can finish and they can make something of their lives

Stephanie cared about others who might otherwise fall through the cracks in society or in the community college. She divulged “What society thinks, is acceptable ... it’s okay for people to fall through cracks ... I might not think so, but society just thinks it’s going to happen, so why do anything about it?” She believed otherwise.

Stephanie revealed some of her childhood memories and feelings concerning both her educational and family experiences.

We spent a lot of the time, at least when I was growing up, just fighting, fought with them a lot ... well, we didn’t get along, yeah, we had a lot of family problems ... you know, I was just a little kid when it all started so basically I started going to college just kind of to spite them ... because I didn’t think they thought I could be anything ... we ... we really weren’t on good terms, so basically I just wanted to show them, and I wanted to show everybody in high school, you know, a lot of my high school teachers just thought I was an invalid ... so I just wanted to show them all, well look, I’m going to go and I’m going to do this and you can all eat your shorts, you know, because I know I’m smart enough to so I just want to prove all of you wrong ... you know ... you ... you ... you ... and you ... so ... that’s why I started ...

She did not always win every life battle. “I regret that now and I feel naïve, or I feel like I should have known that there was no way to build rapport with a teacher that acted in such a manner.” The color of one’s skin was not an issue for much of her life; “color was never in my head until I moved to [western state] in the ... I think the third ... around the third grade.” Stephanie’s experiences were not so tidy and neat either; it was complex.

We moved into just a predominantly black area and I got kind a claustrophobic, I guess, and then immediately my dad got a better job and we ended up moving up to the [specific locality] area and that was a predominantly White area and I remember in like middle school and high school I used to wear a jacket all the time and I’d never take it off. And it was because I felt claustrophobic (laughs) again ... um ... in the ... I didn’t ... I didn’t realize I was different until I made that transition, because when I was first in the Black community they didn’t really accept me there because I didn’t listen to rap music and I didn’t recognize my color, and I didn’t act the way that they wanted me to, and then when I moved to the White community I wasn’t White, I wasn’t accepted there either, so that’s when I started to notice, and put together all um ... my experiences of racism throughout my life ... um ... and so now I guess ... like I try to ignore it and just put it past me, but every once in awhile I’ll have incidences ... that remind me, you know, the world’s not a happy place.

Though Stephanie experienced oppression infrequently at the community college she did experience its contradictions (Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). With her ability to discern situations and to offer reasonable solutions, social justice appealed to her, but she discovered that this too had limitations.

I think the only time I’ve ever actually felt oppressed was in my [content] class. Because ... he made it ... and I confirmed this later after the class, but he made it seem like if the White kids were not acting up to par, like he felt they should have been and they weren’t going to pass his class or succeed where he wanted them to, then I could not and I will not ... I got a B on a lot of my papers, which I don’t ... I never have a problem with, I’m somebody that if the minimum is three, I’m going to do the minimum ... but I’m going to do the best minimum ... so ... there’s this girl that I ran into after my second semester and she was talking about [name] and she loved him and she learned so much in his class and she’s saying she took him for three semesters, got A’s on everything ... well I didn’t have her

in a class this semester, but [name] had her in a class and she got ... I guess this girl got a C on a paper and started throwing a fit about it and saying she was going to take her paper to [name] and see and have him re-grade it and tell her what she should have got. Well, [name] reads her paper and told me that if she was getting As all three semesters, I should have had an A. And there were times when I wrote papers and I felt like I should have had an A, but I'm not ... I'm not a penny pincher, so at the time, I didn't think anything of it, but when ... to me, that's saying, if they can't do it, like you're not going to let me get you know my A that I deserve ... I like ... lot of times he would tell me, [name] would tell me, um whenever we stepped out of the formal paper writing and into like creative writing, um ... that I had amazing ... a great writing voice and I should do writing on the side, which I agree with because I ... when I stepped into this class I felt like I'm a very good writer, like that's what I do, I consider myself a writer and my thing is you're complimenting me and telling me these things, then why can I not get an A in your class ... if I'm such a great writer?

I asked Stephanie how she was able to survive and thrive. Through her answer she revealed other positive character traits.

Just being the bigger person. Just, you know, really I had to tell myself this guy grew up in another time; he's ignorant ... and telling myself. Yeah, and I probably shouldn't have like ... I shouldn't have let that discourage me but I think it was the fact that I'd just got discouraged by my teacher (laughs) you know, and then you know I already feel scared walking in ...

I inquired of Stephanie about what changes she would recommend to APCC based upon her experiences and beliefs. She simultaneously revealed some constructive judgments and utopian ideals.

yes ... um ... I do ... um ... there's ... I just think ... like I said, there's a lot of bad teachers out there and I think they're heavily protected by I don't know what, because I'm not in that field, but they ... it shouldn't be so hard to eliminate certain people that aren't helping the environment, the growth environment ... um...from working ... like ... [for] example, ... if you don't like your job, why are you working ... here ... and why are you complaining to me about it, you know? ... like I didn't tell you to work here ... (laughs) you know ...

um ... I think the classes should be a bit more diverse ... um ... I've always kind of wondered what if all these people from the east coast came over and moved to the west coast and all the people from the west, you know, in like a mass integration ... you know, I'm sure it would shock a lot of people ... but I think that's kind of what needs to happen in order to start like a change

immediately, is to just dump ... you know ... a thousand minorities at the campus ...

Stephanie did not want to talk about race much in the classroom because of her ideals. She wondered *why* this is still a problem; shouldn't people be able to *move* on?

Me personally, I don't like discussing it ... um ... especially, and I know you have to discuss it in history, but I notice that I ... whenever I'm in a history class when it gets to that discussion about slavery or racism, it makes me angry and I don't feel that I should feel angry in a classroom ... um ... I ... I can see some areas where it would need to be discussed and I think that's the part that angers me, is that it shouldn't even have to be discussed ... and so ... me, just me personally ... since I'm on my whole little move ... just forget about it and move forward ... I just don't like to hear about it because it brings me back to um ... I get into this state of why am I living in this ... time that shouldn't be right now ... like shouldn't even be ... it shouldn't even be a matter of discussion, but we're discussing it ...

Stephanie disclosed her special appreciation for one of her professors and in so doing revealed more of her strengths and character traits. She was transformed by the experience, but it did not end there. The professor was also transformed by listening, understanding, and allowing herself to be transformed.

One of them was while I was a student here, and while I was a student I was in a [content] class with [Professor Bentley] and we were assigned to read a book on a different culture and write a report. And I knew I could not do that. I knew that it was going to take me longer than the semester to read those hundred pages of a book, or any book, and I knew that I could not formulate my sentences very well. So I was very intimidated and I was ready to drop out of the class. But my instructor said, "I have every bit of belief that you can do this." She believed in me, and she didn't just say it, she actually showed me and reminded me of the things I had done in her class that was a success. She also told me that she understood my struggles. Not as a ... from a White perspective, but really looking into my struggles because she got to know me as a person. So she gave me a book called [title] ... oh my gosh ...

[Title] ... was talking about the aborigines. It was such an adventurous book that it fit my personality. That I can go on an adventure, you had to ... the

book had to start out exciting to keep my attention and it had to go this way throughout the book. And it had to be short enough and I wish it had pictures, but it didn't. So I wrote ... I read it and I wrote my report. And uh ... she ... I got an A and to this day, I don't have that paper, right ... I don't really believe it was A work, but boy did it make me feel like I could do anything. I encouraged me to go to the next class. I believe that [Professor Bentley] really played in integral role in transforming my life in to education. And I tell that to anybody so that was the one experience.

I will say ... that the transformation may have come from her taking the time to get to know me as an individual. And when she did, she learned a lot about being African-American ...

Care

In the preceding section Stephanie shared how Professor Louise Bentley demonstrated *care* by allowing a student to transform her way of thinking, character, and behaviors; she believed that Stephanie had something worthwhile to hear and to learn (Nussbaum, 1997). Stephanie provided many insights into her definition of care by using both positive examples and its contrapositives. She believed that a caring person would not hold onto stereotypes: "stereotypes are bogus." The opposite of care for her was being bigoted, placed in a census box with a single choice: "Just like when I gotta check the box, I know that I'm two or more races but do I check African-American because I look more African-American"

For Stephanie the lack of passion was the opposite of a caring professor: "they don't seem to really care about what they're teaching, they don't seem to have passion for it...and...that means they're bad when they're trying to convey it to us, they just don't care ..." Surely a boring class was not an example of caring: "I remember it being very boring. We watched some movies. I didn't think it was a great."

Within the classroom Stephanie felt that a caring professor would serve the main purpose of the class. With one faculty member and an administrator the lack of understanding the problem or carefully listening indicated for Stephanie the lack of care.

There was a ... professor here who was awful and ... he would come in and he wouldn't even talk about [the subject] for the first hour and a half, he would just talk about other stuff, random stuff, so ridiculous I don't remember it. ... We talked to him in a way in asking if we could focus on the material at hand. We were trying to be appropriate but he's very hot-headed and he was very stubborn, and his way was the right way, and he didn't listen to our questions and ... he was just, seriously, he seemed socially inept. He just ... I couldn't ever see him with anybody than himself. He didn't seem to have any social skills. He just seemed very ... he shouldn't be teaching. He didn't listen to anybody so it was very, you can't approach him and say anything because then he would tell you that it was your fault, so ... it was just a bad situation.

Not seeing in advance the needs of individuals was a sign of the absence of care: "Well part of the problem is that they just have mass advisors that advise for everything, and it's different for med school and dental school. It's ... can't be done that way ..." but when learning was taking place she assumed that care was the underlying motive.

I always felt like I got a great education, so, as long as I'm learning what I need to learn, I'm happy where I'm at ... I guess ... I started appreciating learning when I got to this school. Before I just took it for granted ...

Care, according to Stephanie, requires a person to be observant and ready to respond to the visible and invisible needs. Here Stephanie responded to a question about what changes she would make at APCC. Her desire was for social justice, an equitable treatment based upon the individual student.

I'd like to make it ... so that students are more noticed and that you don't have to be an extrovert to get the attention, you know? So that ... I don't know ... so that students who need, you know, to be cared for and need somebody to pay attention to them and make sure that they're doing okay, get that, so they can finish and they can make something of their lives, I guess. That's what I'd like to see ... Instead of it just being you know, everyone for themselves or ... just the normal

go with the flow, whatever, you know ... do your own thing ... where you end up you know, who knows ...

What society thinks, is acceptable ... it's okay for people to fall through cracks, I mean ... I might not think so, but society just thinks it's going to happen, so why do anything about it ... you know ... whatever, they'll find a way to make it work ... I guess, but ... no! you know, if they're making an effort let's do something to make sure they keep making an effort because some people you know, this is their first time ... I mean, going to a good school where they have to ... put in some time, put in something that they're not ... they're not completely used to and they might get discouraged or you know they might have things going on that they just feel like nobody understands it, it could be anything ... but ... I guess it should ... maybe if there's like a mentors or ... maybe if your advisors knew you or if there's a way to make that happen, it would be easier ...

Stephanie knew how to confront when it was necessary to achieve a measure of justice. So far she was able to deal with issues without it affecting her GPA as was a concern for some underrepresented population.

Well ... try to be normal. I mean I guess I don't really, I don't really care, I'm pretty much just me. If a professor, if I think a professor is a ... I don't know, I'm going to say I'm never mean to professors, I really respect my professors and I respect what they do, you know, but, I think if they're being unfair or ... if they're ... if they're you know doing something I might think is not cool or something like that, I have subtle ways of inserting that I feel like it's not cool. Hasn't affected my GPA so far ...

In one episode with a White classmate who Stephanie referred to as a "soccer mom" she would say that not only negative stereotypes are the opposite of care, but attitudes and values that limit the expectations or abilities of another would also not be care. She has witnessed the tendency of people to measure others by their strengths and limit others by their weaknesses.

But somehow [soccer mom] still found a way to complain about everything in regards to studying for that class. But before I knew her, before I knew that she did this, I had tried to form a study group with her and she kind of got this snobby attitude and she was like, well ... I'm already forming one, but I know that she needs a study partner, so that's how I have my [new] study partner, who is another African-American, very intelligent female, and ... it was just funny, the

way it happened, because you know I didn't read much into it, but maybe I'm oblivious, because I can be sometimes ... but my [new] study partner was just like, "oh, she just thinks she's better, you know" kind of got offended by it you know because I guess she'd asked her if she wanted to study as well. So anyway, our whole, our whole purpose throughout that course, beside learning [the content], became to do better than soccer mom just to prove that ... we can do it too (laughter). You know, don't write us off before you know who we are ...

According to Stephanie caring professors are those that return respect and honor and provide encouragement.

I mean people who aren't strong, might not be able to support themselves ... they don't know ... am I doing a good job you know, does this even matter? Like what ... like ... does anybody even care that I'm doing this? How am I going to make a difference ... if they don't ... if they can't tell themselves that they're making a difference, they need somebody to help them and guide them, and let them know, yeah ... this is good what you're doing, embrace education and ... more than that, you know, it gives them somebody to look up to, you know, they might not have anybody to look up to. Like when I was in high school I didn't feel like ... I didn't look up to my parents that was for sure, you know we were just ... from elementary school, you know, it's not normal ... umm ... and so I tried to find teachers I could look up to, that I respected, and those teachers were the ones who cared, you know? Those teachers are the ones that I want to make proud. The other teachers are the ones that I want to prove wrong, you know, so ... I think it's very important.

Sometimes when I didn't even know it ... and it was good, because I needed to learn you know? And some teachers who I looked back and in their class I was just like "man, I don't get this teacher, I don't want to do this" you know ... those are the teachers I still talk to today, you know the ones who told me "keep going, you'll be fine" you know, you'll get it at some point.

The classes you think where they would care the most, is where it seems like they cared the least, you know? Where I made no you know connections at all where I left that class and was like, oh, well there's another class you know ... another teacher you know muddling in his misery or whatever, you know, so ... ummm ... that's what I've seen so far ... but ... it was odd how that worked ...

Besides the ability to connect with students Stephanie wanted her professors to want to be with students and to be spontaneous.

I've felt wanted you know, I like it when my professors stop me in the hall and we talk, you know, about anything, about football, you know ... there's a professor here we just ... haven't taken a class with him in years and we'll still just [take] five minutes and chat about football you know and last Sunday and what

happened or you know professors that I stop by and tell them what's going on you know and what's been happening

Stephanie felt that a caring person would be personable, the opposite of one hurtful professor, and a person who could sense the inner needs of others. Care also involved community and mutual and equal partners.

yeah, I would get um ... I would get scared, like I would show up to every single class and there would be kids that wouldn't show up to class at all, but it was okay, you know, because it was like they felt confident that they were going to pass. I never felt that confidence that it's okay, I'm going to just make it through this ...

I probably wouldn't still be going to community college if I didn't meet [a new friend] ... I met her my first summer here, my first semester here and we had two classes together and she was ... I noticed her because she was crying ... and the next day I saw her in my [content] class and I asked her what had happened and we were discussing the teacher and it really from then, it formed a bond and just to be able to talk to somebody else that understands how you can feel different and to have somebody that cheer you on I guess and you cheer them on. And so I'll never forget when I met her and um ... she's a big part of my life.

Since Stephanie had her own reality it made it easier for her to recognize different life stories. For Stephanie care had to include the appreciation, understanding, and moving past differences within the same ethnicity and outside. Difference should not be so divisive.

I didn't ... I didn't realize I was different until I made that transition, because when I was first in the Black community they didn't really accept me there because I didn't listen to rap music and I didn't recognize my color, and I didn't act the way that they wanted me to, and then when I moved to the White community I wasn't White, I wasn't accepted there either, so that's when I started to notice, and put together all um ... my experiences of racism throughout my life ... um ... and so now I guess ... like I try to ignore it and just put it past me, but every once in awhile I'll have incidences like [name] that remind me, you know, the world's not a happy place.

Stephanie believed that care within the classroom would include being wanted, validated, and welcome in the classroom. Caring would require one to slow down in

making judgments, cease being negative about a person, and to give encouragement that a student could make it in a difficult subject.

Well, I took [name] for [content course] and immediately when I walked in the room, um ... this was probably my second semester, I felt discouraged because she didn't ... she made it seem like I shouldn't have been in the class in the first place.

She told me well, why are you in this ... class? Did you take a placement test? Who's ... class are you in and I ... that hurt me because like I came ... I was really just trying to get out of high school, I didn't want to finish school, I didn't want to be in school any more. ... they made me feel like I didn't know it and couldn't know it, and so now [the subject] is really, really hard because I don't have the confidence I walked in the room with, it's not there, at all ...

Stephanie continued her definition of care to include providing "a good support system" and not use race/ethnicity to measure someone or to motivate a person.

I think the only time I've ever actually felt oppressed was in my [content] class. Because ... he made it ... and I confirmed this later after the class, but he made it seem like if the White kids were not acting up to par, like he felt they should have been and they weren't going to pass his class or succeed where he wanted [them] to ...

Stephanie brought in business ideas to further clarify care's importance and to define it.

That is important because in a sense, going to the math lab or going to the financial aid or the computer lab or any facility is the same as walking into a WalMart or a Target, or Bed Bath & Beyond and it's really everywhere you go it's about customer service ...

it's just certain things where you have to uphold a certain, you know, customer service type of relationship just with your students in those facilities, you have to be caring, because that can deter people from getting the help that you need ... I guess there's some teachers that you can um ... they let you know from the beginning that they want you to succeed and you can come to them for help, and then there's other teachers that um ... you can succeed, just not so much ...

Stephanie believed that care and a caring environment should be the standard; it should already be in the community college classrooms and hallways as marketed in APCC's website.

Me personally, I don't like discussing it ... um ... especially, and I know you have to discuss it in history, but I notice that I ... whenever I'm in a history class when it gets to that discussion about slavery or racism, it makes me angry and I don't feel that I should feel angry in a classroom ... um ... I ... I can see some areas where it would need to be discussed and I think that's the part that angers me, is that it shouldn't even have to be discussed ... and so ... me, just me personally ... since I'm on my whole little move ... just forget about it and move forward ... I just don't like to hear about it because it brings me back to um ... I get into this state of why am I living in this ... time that shouldn't be right now ... like shouldn't even be ... it shouldn't even be a matter of discussion, but we're discussing it ...

In the end Stephanie had to find her own way through the higher education and contradictory maze: "So I found the way the way to resist the pain and the rejection and all this was to take and to master something and be good at it. That ... no one could take it away." Care was not always experienced nor was it totally absent, but it was expected as the standard for the community college environment.

Krista

Five participants are symbolized by the composite Krista who represents the interwoven realities of being White, Native-American, and mothers. All 5 participants had experienced poverty, 4 during their collegiate days, and all were first-generation and non-traditional age; 2 claimed significant Native-American ancestry. Three participants were divorced, 1 was recently married, and 1 had been married for several years. All 5 had children. Four participants had unique realities that distinguish them. One was born in Western Europe, so her native tongue was not English, and she immigrated to the United States with her parents. One had military experience and was a disabled veteran.

During her formative years 1 had experienced the foster-care system, and 1 was even homeless during her community college time. Their individual unique experiences profoundly influenced them, but did not define them; nor did they allow this history to limit them. All 5 exuded inner strength that provided them resiliency and hope to overcome myriad obstacles.

Structural System

Krista was quick to point out her positive response to APCC's structural system and how it helped.

I would say, one of the most things that really struck me the most, is the amount of help that people are willing to give me. I mean, all I have to do is, you know, go say "this is the problem" not necessarily the problem I'm having but you know this is my situation and people have been more than happy to help me. I don't know if it's because I'm first generational, or single parent, or what, but I have had no problems whatsoever getting financial aid, getting help with classes, or getting ... ummm ... if I need money for books I've been able to ... people have been more than willing to help and bend over backwards. It really ... you know it really makes me realize, you know, these people are here to help me succeed and they are really helping me succeed with whatever way is necessary.

Actually, it was by chance [that I attended APCC]. I had a friend of mine that mentioned she had attended one of the woman ... is it called "Women's Re-entry program"? She had attended a meeting ... something about the women's reentry program and she said it would be something I might be interested in. So I attended a women's reentry program on ... what was it ... job interviewing and putting together a resume and that got me interested and they said in a couple of months we are having a financial aid seminar through the women's seminar ... the women's reentry program, give us your emails and we'll send you all this information on it. So I signed up for the information and then I attended the financial aid meeting, and I'm like "Oh! I can do this!" (laughs) and that was in April or May of ... [year] I think? ... cause I started here August [year] ... I attended the financial aid and I'm like, I can do this and I went on line, filled out the FAFSA, and realized just how easy it would be for me to go to school. And that's what made me get involved with APCC and decide to come here, 'cause the women's reentry program kind of gave me the "oh I can do this" and gave me the knowledge that I needed to do what I needed to do to find ... to attend college.

Two professors, Drs. Blair and Louise Bentley, especially stood out in Krista's mind. In fact these two functioned as Krista's mentors and recruited others to help and encourage Krista during her community college days. One structure that the Bentleys set up was a learning community which provided relational continuity and connection in two different content classes.

I thoroughly enjoy my classes ... I really do ... and I completely enjoy the process of learning. I love being a student and it's something I'm really good at, so that just in itself is a highlight. I totally enjoy it. Some of my classes have been a lot of fun. Like some of my favorite classes are my [content] and [another content] classes and those I have a blast in and they really ... they're showing me ways of learning that I never would have thought of and ... wanting to be a history teacher myself, I'm seeing ways that I can teach students and have them learn, and they're not even, you don't even realize you're learning it because it's fun and the way the subjects go together and the content of the subjects go together, it makes a lot of fun the way you learn it ... in the learning community. So I would say the learning communities have been one of my absolute favorite classes.

[The Bentleys] engage the class. I mean, they make the content interesting even if it's a topic you don't find interesting, they make it interesting, through various methods, you know whatever methods they have up their sleeves, whatever teaching styles they happened to have ... they make the class interesting, they engage everybody. They get the class laughing ... this doesn't sound right but there's great teacher chemistry with the students, or with the co-teacher. And that right there, the chemistry between the students and the instructor, if there's no chemistry there, and that's not the right word, but I think you know what I mean ... like a connection or you know you just ... you feel right ... you're comfortable with that teacher.

But not every professor was as inviting, welcoming, and energetic as the Bentleys. Krista shared her story about other professors, some of whom were very anti-military.

There was a couple of times when I was really struggling being at school ... I just was discouraged and it was very difficult ... when I started school my son was [age], my daughter was barely [age], and ... I was going to leave, I had [content] professor that was very anti-military and very nasty and very discouraging and he did not like me and I couldn't ... do anything right in his class. And [another professor] actually was a mentor to me and he ... handed back my paper and he

said, “You really have something here, you really need to realize how good you are at this, and I don’t want you to give up.” He looked me in the eyes and said that, and because of him, I didn’t [give up].

[Content course] as well ... and she really encouraged me. It seems that I had certain professors when I was ready to give up that said, “Please don’t.” But, I know a lot of that has to do with the fact that I put my all into it and ... I helped myself a lot of the time, so ... and then ... [name] has always, always been there ... had an open door policy with me, ... and I still talk to him regularly. And as I was going through my divorce ... I was open about it when I found out that I was going to get divorced. You know, and I had some fantastic professors that were there for me and they didn’t, they didn’t give me the easy road, per se, but they were there and, [name] she was my [language] professor at the time and ... she said “I know what you’re going through and I’m going to keep you busy.” And I just ... it seems like because I sought out the help, I got it.

Krista shared more about her contradictory experiences at APCC. She knew that a professor was anti-military, but was not so sure if he was a sexist.

I had a ... the two [content] classes I had, they were awful, awful. I ... couldn’t believe it ... the first one was you know, the ... [name] he was very anti-military and would berate me in class even, it was awful. Awful! And he was very pretentious and didn’t ... I don’t know if it was because I was a woman ... I could never quite figure it out ... but he didn’t like me and it was obvious and everybody knew it ... and then ... my second [content] class ... I did not have a good experience with the ... department over there ... the second [content] class I took ... she was just amazingly awful and I remember I went home for my mom’s wedding and I came back ... and she ... in the middle of class, even, she made fun of me because I was in my mom’s wedding and she just thought that was ... that was just completely trashy ... it was humiliating ... it was humiliating to say the least ...

There is a girl in my class, she was African-American and ... there was racism and sexism in the class and [the professor] ... the grading was off ... and I don’t know who complained, I didn’t personally do it ... but I had originally got a B and then got a letter from the ... I don’t know ... the chair of the whatever department it was ... saying we reevaluated the grades for that class and you actually got an A.

Krista negatively experienced administrative offices at APCC as well. Since she was a disabled veteran and lived at a subsistent level she had to cope with other federal and state agencies as well during her studies at APCC.

The [administrative] office is awful, awful over there ... You can't ever get a hold of them, number one. They're impossible to make an appointment with. And ... it was very difficult to, because, I don't know if you know this, but, they're working on switching it right now through Congress, but a lot of veterans are below the poverty line, big time, and ... and they consider when you get a ... subsistence allowance from the VA, that's education benefits and so that tops you out, even though you're making \$1,500 a month, period. Part of that is education benefits, so when a lot of people are getting five, ten, grand a semester in financial aid, we're only getting about two.

We get Pell Grant and we get scholarships. No loans, not eligible, we're topped out. They won't even let us have loans subsidized. They're working on it. 2010 is supposed to be the golden number, but ... um ... for example, my friends got ... each got about eleven grand this past January, I got three grand. So, it ... I mean ... it's just ridiculous, ridiculous. So you have to go through all that. But when I went through my divorce, they were very crass, for one. And they expected a lot of paperwork that I had to prove that I wasn't, that this income wasn't there anymore. And they weren't helpful, it was a lot of hoops to jump through. And, I know my ex-husband ... is in college too, and he didn't have to go through all of that.

There's a lot of things ... we share them. He gets one, I get one, on the financial aid. But I lost ... I was a stay at home mom, and so you know I had ... he kept his income the same, I lost all that income so I had to jump through all these hoops to get some sort of support to be able to stay in school, to afford to stay in school.

Krista not only faced poverty during her community college days, but she also experienced homelessness. There are myths that state that poor people are lazy and lack the will power to achieve (Payne, 2005). Krista debunked this myth as she shared her thoughts concerning the inequities she witnessed and experienced.

You know, there's a lot of envy that can be felt among others when you see what they have and you don't. It's hard ... it's hard to see people that have whatever they want and knowing that if I buy two or three shirts that you know, each month, that I'm not going to have money for groceries at the end of the month. I can't do that ... and it wasn't like that when I was married. I had ... to reevaluate what was important in life, and what was important was to make sure that my children, number one, that they don't know that we're impoverished, because we are ... you know. And they don't know that. And that's the most important thing to me, is that they don't feel like they're missing anything. And they have no clue at all. They don't know my woes. And ... I had to reevaluate and decide what was important and ... whether or not I had the name brand jeans did not, did not fit in and I didn't ... I wasn't like that before. I had everything from Pottery Barn. I had

all the, you know, I wanted a big house, I wanted an expensive house. And that doesn't even occur to me anymore. I just ... I don't know if the frivolities in life lessen as your intelligence rises, or if that's the case for me ... or if it just became less important. But it's hard ... it's hard sometimes to see people in nice clothes and having a nice car and realizing I can't do that right now. But it also, as you said, steels my path, that if I do want to be able to, I don't need ... I'm a minimalist, you know, I don't want a lot. But there are things I do want that I can't have, and that motivates me.

Krista experienced the foster-care system for several years. She narrated her experiences this way.

The [foster homes] when I was little, the earliest ones I remember seemed nicer, you know, there would be a family and sometimes ... they had their own children, one or two and that's when me and my sister were placed together and those seemed not too bad, and then there was a span of six or eight years where um ... we weren't in any kind of foster care, but we would occasionally go stay with my mom's friends, they would care for us for a couple of months while she got on her feet or got a job or something like that. And then when we were teenagers, is when it got bad ... um ... the foster homes were group homes that I was placed in ... um ... there was one in [city] that stands out, it was awful ... it was ... there were eight girls, there were three bedrooms, the windows were broken in my room, I remember showing up there at the end of February with just the clothes on my back because my mom would throw us out ...

She would tell us to get out and we'd go to a friend's house and then she would, almost immediately after she threw us out, she would call the police department because she didn't want to get in trouble for anything we did ... so she would call us in as runaways and they would come and get us, and usually take us home ... while um ... there was a time, I think it was about the sixth time she'd thrown me out and the police came and got me, because they knew where I was, usually, and they said, "We have to take you home" and I said, "I don't want to go" and they took me to a foster home, a group home, and it was older people ... I think the lady was almost in her 70s and the man was in his 70s and they were unable to go up and down the stairs, so the upstairs was where we were, there ... it was destroyed, it was nasty, the windows like I said were broken, it was cold ... ah ... a set of bunk beds and then a mattress on the floor and it was just really dirty and ... we had very bare minimum things that they supplied for us ... shampoo, no conditioner, because it wasn't necessary, toothpaste, a toothbrush, ah ... we got soap and then ah ... we weren't allowed to shave, ... there was um ... no television time because television was the root of all evil and it just wasn't necessary. And any time one of the girls got into trouble we all had to write sentences ...

During the interview I shared with Krista about my experience with the foster-care system as a care giver. I disclosed various requirements placed upon us such as periodic inspections, training requirements, and proper management of physical, medical, and educational needs and records of our foster-children. We connected at a deeper level because of our shared understanding of her life.

See and that's kind of what I wondered about, was how she was getting away with it because she had her own therapy type business, which we never saw, by the way, we knew about it um ... and it was supposed to be to help runaways and to help struggling youth, none of us ever saw it. But we did had to work for her fundraisers. She did fundraisers at a church in town and we had to serve the food, we had to wash the dishes. We were not allowed to eat at the tables though; we ate in the kitchen on the floor. Um ... it was just awful and you know, they ended up getting shut down, which is how I got out of that home ... um ... we had called our case workers, there were at least four of us who had called our case workers on a regular basis and ... finally ... um ... I don't remember what happened, but one of the girls, who was pregnant, had a miscarriage, and it was due to the stress in the home and then somebody came in and checked it out and realized that there's no way that these people should be caring for kids ... they had their own fridge, we had a separate fridge ... their fridge was locked, we weren't allowed to touch it ... they had good food, we had our food (laughs) ...

yeah ... just bare minimum ... but ... the woman would tell us, you guys are here until we get enough money to remodel and then you guys are all gone, and you know, it was awful, and nobody ... I mean it just felt helpless because there was nobody that listened ... I wasn't in there because I had done anything wrong, um ... I had a bad ... bad mother ... and ah ... it just felt like um ... people looked down their nose at me because I was a trouble maker, I mean I had to have been a trouble maker, right, I was in foster care ...

I never had records when I went to a different home. They never had my records. Matter of fact, I almost died once ... I had an allergic reaction to ... some kind of medication they gave me in the hospital, it was up here, um ... I had ah ... there was something wrong with me, I got sick and I had just moved to this group home in [city] and I had a reaction to something, they took me to the hospital, and I told them I'm allergic to codeine, and that's the only thing I ever knew about my medical record, was that I was allergic to codeine, and I told them and they didn't have my records so they gave me something with codeine in it and my throat swelled shut and I you know they had to stick the tubes down my throat and give me a ... counter-acting medicine, you know ...

I never had one visit with my mother the whole time I was in foster care

...

I was aware that the majority of children who experienced foster-care were academically behind and did not complete high school let alone attend college (Zetlin & Weinber, 2004). However, Krista was an exception and I was curious about the circumstances that led to her attending APCC. She shared her story this way.

a friend of mine started going [to APCC], and ... uh ... I think it was after her first semester ... we started talking quite a bit and she would always tell me, you should just go back to school ... because she saw how much I struggled and it was actually, there was a family around the corner, when I started taking my son to kindergarten I didn't know who was going to watch him, I was working nights at the time and I would sleep when he slept, so I was like a zombie all the time, because I just wasn't able to sleep and ah ... a little girl that he was in class with, her grandmother came and picked her up every day, and I started talking to her and said, would you be interested in you know, keeping my son for a few hours after kindergarten, it was only half a day you know, and that way I could sleep, you know, I would pay for her, you know, and she started keeping him and we became really good friends and it was actually her daughter that went back to school and she was telling me, and she was older than me, you know, so she was ... so she was pushing me to go, and I was working at a sheet metal shop at the time and ah ... I went to [APCC] and ... spoke to somebody about getting in part time, I don't remember who I spoke to but they were very helpful and ... ah ... let me know all my options and everything. I honestly did most of it by myself because things are so spread out there. You have to talk to this person for this thing and this person for this thing and you have to make an appointment and ... I didn't have time to go four times a week down there to get everything straightened out so ... um ... I did a lot of the stuff on my own ... ah ... you know, working out my schedule and things like that where I didn't have to go sit and talk to somebody ... and I started out with two classes ...

Krista, like Jason, earned a GED and did not have a continuous 4-year high school education experience. Her reality was different than the dominant group and left her with some gaps of knowledge. During one course an APCC professor assumed, and stated, that what he was teaching should have been learned in high school. Krista believed differently based upon her lack of high school experience. Such insensitivities or ignorance of different realities hurt her.

The instructor kept saying, “this is stuff you did in high school” ... and I ... I ... I mean, what do you say, that was fifty kids ... fifty people in the class ... it was the biggest class I ever took there as well um ... and when he said stuff like that, “this is the stuff you should have learned in high school”, because I asked questions ... what can I say, I didn’t go to high school? In front of all these people?

Krista wanted faculty and administrators to be sensitive to and aware of different realities. Such insensitivity and ignorance of differences is belittling to students like Krista and Jason. The dominant group is not only measuring the different Other by their strength, but also defining what is normal for the Other instead of meeting students where they are and scaffolding learning accordingly.

I asked Krista about her transportation needs. In her case this need was well cared for because she owned an inexpensive but reliable car. I then asked her concerning childcare while she was away at college. These two issues are significant factors that face students like Krista (Pandey & et al., 2000). This is what she shared about APCC’s structural system set up to address this issue.

It’s still very expensive ... and ... you know they ... I guess there’s a some kind of help with day care help that you can get, and a couple of my friends get that through the county, I guess ... but if not, then it’s ... it’s very expensive, it’s over \$30 a day, even at the lowest pay scale ... um ... and then they don’t have it at the downtown campus.

It’s for young kids, it’s not for older kids, and in the summer, you know, a lot of people have those...like my son, maybe was too young to be left alone, but he wasn’t ... he was too old ... so that’s, you know, that made me cram everything into the time where he was at school and then in the summer, I took a loan to where I could pay my bills and...I went and applied for food stamps and I didn’t work for the two and a half months that I went to school ... I went to school, I did two classes and I made sure that they were on the same days, and ... sometimes it was a class that I wanted to take, and sometimes it wasn’t, it was ... I took it because it fit ... but I couldn’t be ... gone for more than two days a week and ... a lot of times when you know you try to find a job around a school schedule, the school schedules are just so messy, there’s no way you’re going to be able to find a job.

Years ago APCC student government voted to fund daycare physical facilities at two campuses where individual students would be charged a sliding scale fee for staffing costs. APCC now has four campuses and the cost remains prohibitive for students like Krista who are at or near the poverty line. Krista wanted to inform classroom and hallway leadership about students who lack a complete high school education. She wanted them to understand how tenuous life is for students like her.

... because the people that didn't finish high school are going to be easily deterred from college, because they already feel like, I couldn't even make it through high school, you know, so things like that ... that could be all it takes, like a person could be having a bad day you know and hear something like that and that's completely discouraging ... well I didn't get this in high school so maybe I don't belong here ...

Dominant Ideology

Krista summarized her life-long intersection with the dominant ideology this way: "I functioned in a man's world and sometimes wasn't really welcome there ... hasn't always been easy ... most of the time it's been pretty tough." Though her summary represented her whole life, it represented her days at APCC as well. In the preceding section Krista shared the positive and negative experiences of APCC's structural system. These incongruous stories prompted me to ask her how she would train or teach the dominant culture to deal better with differences of people. Her reply was simply: "You know, I don't even know how to untrain people from seeing the differences in others." In this section on dominant ideology she explained further her contradictory encounters.

Krista had positive stories about APCC's administrators and faculty who encouraged and helped her to succeed.

I would say, one of the most things that really struck me the most, is the amount of help that people are willing to give me. I mean, all I have to do is, you know,

go say “this is the problem” not necessarily the problem I’m having but you know this is my situation and people have been more than happy to help me. I don’t know if it’s because I’m first generational, or single parent, or what, but I have had no problems whatsoever getting financial aid, getting help with classes, or getting ... ummm ... if I need money for books I’ve been able to ... people have been more than willing to help and bend over backwards. It really ... you know it really makes me realize, you know, these people are here to help me succeed and they are really helping me succeed with whatever way is necessary.

Krista is confident of her abilities and expects to do well. She has experienced Drs. Blair and Louise Bentley’s classes and envisions herself to be a teacher at some point. Krista is developing her own framework of understanding learning and teaching theories.

I thoroughly enjoy my classes ... I really do ... and I completely enjoy the process of learning. I love being a student and it’s something I’m really good at, so that just in itself is a highlight. I totally enjoy it. Some of my classes have been a lot of fun. Like some of my favorite classes are my [two content] classes and those I have a blast in and ... they’re showing me ways of learning that I never would have thought of and ... wanting to be a ... teacher myself, I’m seeing ways that I can teach students and have them learn, and ... you don’t even realize you’re learning it because it’s fun and the way the subjects go together and the content of the subjects go together, it makes a lot of fun the way you learn it ... in the learning community. So I would say the learning communities have been one of my absolute favorite classes.

Contradictions have occurred to all my participants and Krista was not an exception. She appeared to assign the problem to external factors (outside of herself), but she also recognized the lack of chemistry between a teacher and the students. Krista noted what special classes were like. They had a safe learning environment; students were validated, welcomed, and encouraged; and there was a connection between students and the teachers (Parks, 2000; Rendón, 1994; Tisdell, 2003).

Well, I’ve never been very good at [course content] and I’ve struggled with [it]. And actually, I started at the bottom of the pile so to speak with [lowest level content course] and I had Mr. [name]. That class I actually aced [the content] for the first time in my life and enjoyed it and actually learned it and retained that

information. It was the same for [next level] with the same instructor and then I had [third level] over the summer with [name] and that ... was not as easy as the other two ... but I still passed ... passed it with a pretty good, high B, and then I went to do [4th level] ... and that particular instructor's teaching style did not work with me and I ended up pretty much failing the class, and I ended up withdrawing from the class, before I could fail it ... and that ... that was really hard. I struggled a lot with that class. I had tutoring help, I had ... other people helping me, friends helping me, tutor on campus and all sorts of other ... I did a little bit of the [web-based software] and it just wasn't ... it just was not connecting. And I was just not remembering it and just was not understanding 90 percent of those topics. So I had a lot of trouble with that class. And that, you could say, was a down ... was a downside of it. I didn't enjoy that class at all and I was just not doing well in it.

[The Bentleys] engage the class. I mean, they make the content interesting even if it's a topic you don't find interesting, they make it interesting, through various methods, you know whatever methods they have up their sleeves, whatever teaching styles they happened to have ... they make the class interesting, they engage everybody. They get the class laughing ... this doesn't sound right but there's great teacher chemistry with the students, or with the co-teacher. And that right there, the chemistry between the students and the instructor, if there's no chemistry there, and that's not the right word, but I think you know what I mean ... like a connection or you know you just ... you feel right ... like it's the right teacher or you're comfortable with that teacher ... and without that connection, you know the class doesn't move as smoothly and if there's disruptions in the class, which do happen you know on a fairly consistent basis at times, whether ... whether it be weather, fire drills, whatever, there's disruption in classes ... even with that disruption, the class still seems to move really well and it doesn't have a "oh, where did we leave off" you kind of just jump right back in to where you left off ... and ... plus the teacher's take a personal interest in their students ... and you know they get to know their students on a regular basis and they get to know their students and they see them in the hallway and they'll stop and they can talk to you, ask, you know, "how are your kids?" or "did you have a good weekend?" or "what'd you do over spring break?" or "did you get the help you needed for this other class?" Those ... teachers get to know you and that, when you realize that I'm important to this instructor, in ... on a personal level as well as in the context of the classroom, that really makes a great class, is when you have those things and you know sometimes you have all that, and sometimes you don't, and you'll have varying degrees of a great class. But, you know I said with my learning communities, that ... part of what makes them a great class is, they're a lot of fun and the teachers have a personal connection with the students and there's great co-instructor chemistry that makes it a lot of fun and they just ... you know they can play off each other and ... one instructor can have a ... carry on this conversation and the other one knows exactly what's going to be said next and it makes the class work really well.

... the teachers overall, even when I've had instructors that didn't work with my learning styles, you know they looked at you with respect and they treated you ... they have treated me that way and depending on the class, you know, if I have something, input ... valuable input to the class ... they'll ... let me give it.

In spite of these positive stories and the affirmation of several teachers, Krista also shared negative stories. She theorized that perhaps the reason that she received positive feedback was because she had first sown positive seeds. I was left wondering if her positive teachers were not so altruistically good, but that Krista was receiving what Jason stated as his law of attraction.

I didn't feel comfortable in the class and ... it wasn't so much that I didn't feel welcome, I just didn't feel like I fit with the group ... it was like I was just kind of like the odd man out so to speak, but I wasn't necessarily unwelcome ...

I think some of it is age, but I also think it's part of what today's culture has evolved into. Because a lot of the younger ... people, their culture is ... different than the culture I grew up in ...

There was a couple of times when I was really struggling being at school ... I just was discouraged and it was very difficult ... when I started school my son was [age] and ... I was going to leave, I had [a content] professor that was very anti-military and very nasty and very discouraging and he did not like me and I couldn't get ... do anything right in his class. And [name] actually was a mentor to me and he ... handed back my paper and he said "you really have something here, you really need to realize how good you are at this, and I don't want you to give up." He looked me in the eyes and said that, and because of him, I didn't [give up].

There's some fantastic [content] professors there ... and the [another content] department ... and Dr. Blair Bentley's class ... fantastic ... both just energetic and you know ... I didn't know that ... number one, I didn't know that I was good at [content] until I took those classes ... and ... just fantastic professors ... a lot of the professors over there are very, very helpful as long as you're willing to help yourself. So ... umm ... the [content] department, they're tough over there and as long as you're enthusiastic they will be enthusiastic with you ...

I was thinking ... the professors I have come across have been ... as long as you are bright and motivated and try ... you know, not even bright, that's not even ... as long as you are motivated to do the work and be involved, they will do whatever they can for you.

Not only did Krista have negative experiences, she also witnessed some. She was very aware of the contradictory nature of APCC's environment (Moore, 2006).

I'm not even sure what happened, ... [the professor] was not a nice man and ... there is a girl in my class, she was African-American and ... there was racism and sexism in the class and he ... the grading was off ... and I don't know who complained, I didn't personally do it ... but I had originally got a B and then got a letter from the ... I don't know ... the chair of the whatever department it was ... saying we reevaluated the grades for that class and you actually got an A. Because there was no reason I should have gotten a B in that class ...

Krista possessed a different expectation than what became her reality at APCC. I interviewed her while she was attending a 4-year institution. She made this comparison about the openness, approachability, and availability of APCC's faculty.

I don't know ... you know over here there's very much an open door policy of "come and see me" and I mean, there was that there, but there's not really ... the office hours and the approachability wasn't like it is here. It just ... maybe it's not vocalized enough or something. But I spent a lot of time in the [course content] hallway here and all my professors know me by name, and I feel like I could go talk to them. I did not feel like that there ...

What was particularly difficult for me to hear was Krista's state foster-care system story. The dominant state culture separated Krista and her sibling, allowed Krista to live in an inhumane environment, and failed to provide her a vision to attend college. She also experienced the dominant ideology in her education in that she, the victim, was blamed for her predicament (Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004).

We grew up in [city] and there were times where just I would go, there were times where just she would go, there were times when we both went and we were able to ... they kept us together when we were kids more, but when we hit teenage years there wasn't room, and there were times where we would be in separate towns because ... there was not enough room in the foster care system to keep us together.

I was never placed with a long term foster home, I was in group homes ... my sister was placed with a foster mother, where she was one of two foster kids from the age of 15 to 18 where she aged out of the system, but I was never in with

a small group, I was always in a group home ... where there would have been at least ... 8 kids.

The foster system was discouraging, even, because um ... how it was then, and it wasn't discussed very much ... um ... it seemed like they only discussed it with the older kids when they got close to age, you know, getting close to 17 ... and then it was, you have to have \$1,000 in your bank and you can leave ... it was never, "you need to go to college" I don't ... I don't ever remember hearing about college even ... it was not something that was discussed, ever ... um ... I'm the first in my family, my mom's side, or my dad's side, who I did not know growing up, I didn't know my dad, but ah ... I'm the first one that ever went to college. ... it just wasn't something that was discussed ... it wasn't ... that was for people that lived a different life than I did ... [I belonged] at the bottom of the food chain ...

I mean it just felt helpless because there was nobody that listened ... I wasn't in there because I had done anything wrong, um ... I had a bad ... bad mother ... and ah ... it just felt like um ... people looked down their nose at me because I was a trouble maker, I mean I had to have been a trouble maker, right, I was in foster care ...

I asked Krista about how she captured the vision of attending college. I knew that the population who experienced foster-care was among the least likely to attend college (Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004).

It was probably a mixture of foster care and my mom, there was no encouragement to do anything better than what everybody else in the family had done ... it was kind of like this is what we do, we just ... we work, and we struggle, and we don't have nice things, those are different people ... sorry ... so ... it just was never important until my son, I had my son two days before I turned 17 and um ... then ... then it you know, an education became important when I started working and seeing how it is to take care of a kid you know, with no education. All I could do was work fast food, kind of ... but at that point, I couldn't even afford to go to college ...

I thought there was no way that I'd be able to do it and I never even bothered to stop in and talk to anybody. It wasn't until...a friend of the family started going to college ... and said, you should go check into it ... I guess it was when my son started school ...

I started talking to people that you know had a better job than I did, of course, I always had to work men's jobs [to earn enough money to support us.] ... I got my CDL and then started driving a truck here in town and I worked at a sheet metal shop for a few years ... but I've always had to do jobs that women don't normally do ...

My son's father was never around, he was gone. I didn't get child support, and I did not want to be part of the system ... I didn't ... I guess I never thought

that there would be another option than you know working hard and doing it myself. There were no options ... I wasn't going to be on welfare because the people that I saw that were on welfare didn't have a decent standard of living, they didn't even have, I mean, I wanted my own space ... being from foster care and never having my own space, that was my main goal, was that I had my own space that nobody could throw me out of ... and ... I ... I worked very hard for it, and I bought my house. I have a townhouse, I bought it when I was 20 ...

A friend of mine started going, and ... I think it was after her first semester she ... we started talking quite a bit and she would always tell me, you should just go back to school ... because she saw how much I struggled and it was actually, there was a family around the corner, when I started taking my son to kindergarten I didn't know who was going to watch him. I was working nights at the time and I would sleep when he slept, so I was like a zombie all the time, because I just wasn't able to sleep and ah ... ah ... a little girl that he was in class with, her grandmother came and picked her up every day, and I started talking to her and said, would you be interested in you know, keeping my son for a few hours after kindergarten, it was only half a day you know, and that way I could sleep, you know, I would pay for her, you know, and she started keeping him and we became really good friends and it was actually her daughter that went back to school and she was telling me, and she was older than me, you know, ... so she was pushing me to go, and I was working at a sheet metal shop at the time and ah ... I went to APCC and ... spoke to somebody about getting in part time, I don't remember who I spoke to but they were very helpful and ... ah ... let me know all my options and everything. I honestly did most of it by myself because things are so spread out there. You have to talk to this person for this thing and this person for this thing and you have to make an appointment and ... I didn't have time to go four times a week down there to get everything straightened out so ... um ... I did a lot of the stuff on my own ... ah ... you know, working out my schedule and things like that where I didn't have to go sit and talk to somebody ... and I started out with two classes.

Lifeworld

The complexity of Krista's lifeworld must be understood by the APCC's faculty and administrators who encounter her. Not only did she experience homelessness, poverty, and the foster-care system; living unwelcomed in a man's world and doing "jobs that women don't normally do "; mothering children; enduring physical disabilities; but she also had to recognize her ethnicity, inner character, and spirituality.

I am a little more than half Native-American. I'm a mixture of [Nation] and [Nation] Indian and ... my parents are both dead. They've been dead for many,

many years. Twenty-two ... I believe. ... I am divorced. I live on a disability income, which is not a lot ... My mom was mostly Indian; my dad was part Indian, part Mexican, and part German. He dropped out of school in ninth grade. My mother dropped out when she was I think in eleventh grade.

I'd consider myself a spiritual person. ... A lot of people gasp if you admit that out loud. ... but I am very spiritual. I see God in everything ... and in my children's eyes ... but having a historical ... view point I see the holes in religion and realize that religion is made by man and not, not that I judge those who do it, because I understand what other people will find in the solace of religion, and I think that's what people need. I just find it in another way. But ... I believe you get what you ask for and I ask for help when I need it and it comes. I think ... it's more of an internal conscience that you feel ... it's that internal gauge that the love that you feel and I remember reading this quote that said ... "... God is the tool by which we measure our pain" and ... that always stuck with me, you know. A lot of people try to blame God or blame whatever their higher power is when things are wrong and I don't believe that's correct. I believe in being grateful in what I have. I think that ... and being thankful and that's what my spirituality is ... it's being grateful for what I have and seeing that something helped me to get to where I am. I'm not sure what it is, and I'm okay with that ...

There were at least four of us who had called our [foster care] case workers on a regular basis and ... finally ... um ... I don't remember what happened, but one of the girls, who was pregnant, had a miscarriage, and it was due to the stress in the home and then somebody came in and checked it out and realized that there's no way that these people should be caring for kids ... they had their own frig, we had a separate frig ... their frig was locked, we weren't allowed to touch it ... they had good food, we had our food (laughs) ... just bare minimum ... but ... the woman would tell us, you guys are here until we get enough money to remodel and then you guys are all gone, and you know, it was awful, and nobody ... I mean it just felt helpless because there was nobody that listened ... I wasn't in there because I had done anything wrong, um ... I had a bad ... bad mother ... and ah ... it just felt like um ... people looked down their nose at me because I was a trouble maker, I mean I had to have been a trouble maker, right, I was in foster care ...

Krista has maintained a can-do attitude in spite her life-difficulties. When she learned a way to attend college through a financial aid meeting, her response was "Oh! I can do this!" and she laughed with anticipation. Krista's response to her education has been just as positive: "I thoroughly enjoy my classes ... and I completely enjoy the

process of learning. I love being a student and it's something I'm really good at." She has a strong personality that does not infringe on others.

I don't try to subdue anybody, because that's not ... my personality ... I'm not going to insult somebody. I'm not going to try and make somebody feel less than what they are. I'm comfortable with myself as I am ... and you know, power is ... one of those things that you can use it properly ... or you can abuse it ... and I don't know that I necessarily have any you know power so to speak in ... that context ... but ... I understand my own strengths and weaknesses and I think in some way that's power ... that's powerful to me, is understanding you know, this where I have problems ... this what I excel at ... and I use that personally, you know, if I know I'm having trouble with math, I go and find somebody to help me. Or if I have information to share in history, and somebody needs help, I'll be more than happy to tutor or help them ... I had to give myself a lot more credit for personal strength than I ever had before ...

Krista has demonstrated resilience to various life-difficulties such as being born to an alcoholic mother, suffering homelessness, and enduring divorce and single-parenthood. She remains positive and upbeat.

[My ex-husband] always did his best to make me feel worse, make me feel bad, make me feel useless, worthless, whatever, to make himself feel better and I think after being with him for so long, and being married to him for [several] years, I just kind of started accepting it. And then when everything hit the fan, I had to find myself again, so to speak, and realize you know, that strong person that ... that strong willed, stubborn, persistent person that I have always been had to come back up and I had to dig and find it ... and I think I realized I had a whole lot more personal strength than I ever gave myself credit for.

Krista can be assertive without being aggressive. She shared two stories that describe this character trait.

I went to several different teachers and said, you know, can I get a letter of recommendation ... and they were more than willing to fill out these long, glowing, make me blush letters of recommendation for these scholarships and it really, it made me realize you know, I'm an important factor in this ... I am an important factor in this class, I am an important factor in this school. I may not be like the president or something, but my presence does make something of a difference and it does maybe make somebody's experience themselves better ...

But I think that, that I pushed myself into the spotlight, though, whereas a lot of people don't know how to do that. And I made sure I was known, I made sure I set meetings, I networked with my professors, I said what am I doing right? What am I doing wrong? What do I do to become successful? I used tools that I had, not necessarily that I learned anywhere, I just figured out ... to get ahead ...

Besides having a can-do attitude and being resilient and assertive Krista has upheld her humor and an expectant perspective.

I'm just thoroughly enjoying my time in college (laughs) I really am ... I really am. I'm excelling at it, I'm doing really well, and I'm really enjoying my time at the college. I'm really glad I started at the community level instead of the four year college level because I don't think I would have done as well jumping in to something as big as a four year college.

Krista was appreciative of several faculty who had helped her along at the community college and discerned their motives in demanding excellence in her work. She shared this during her interview while attending a nearby 4-year university.

There's some fantastic [content] professors there ... and the [content] department ... Dr. Blair Bentley's class ... fantastic ... both just energetic and you know ... I didn't know that ... number one, I didn't know that I was good at [content] until I took those classes ... just fantastic professors ... a lot of the professors over there are very, very helpful as long as you're willing to help yourself. So ... umm ... the [content] department, they're tough over there and as long as you're enthusiastic they will be enthusiastic with you ... At the end [of a semester] Dr. Blair Bentley sent me an email ... you know, because as you know, I keep in close contact with my professors and he told me that it was a pleasure to have me in his class and he really wished me well. And that was very nice ...

Krista did not expect a trouble-free and undemanding educational trip. She shared this attitude, "I've never looked for the free ride ... I've always been willing to do my work." She also had the perspective that, comparing traditional age students with non-traditional ones, "it seems to me that the non-traditional students as myself seem to work harder than the traditional student." As a mother Krista wanted to instill a passion to learn

and the expectation for her children to attend college. She led by example and kept her financial troubles to herself while sustaining dreams for her future.

I tell my children, they talk ... about growing up and what they want out of life and getting married and having children and I tell them that that's fantastic you want children, fantastic you want to get married. But you don't have to get married; you have to go to college. You will go to college. That's number one ...

I had to reevaluate what was important in life, and what was important was to make sure that my children, number one, that they don't know that we're impoverished, because we are ... you know. And they don't know that. And that's the most important thing to me is that they don't feel like they're missing anything. And they have no clue, at all. They don't know my woes. And ... I had to reevaluate and decide what was important and ... and whether or not I had the name brand jeans did not, did not fit in and I didn't ... I wasn't like that before. I had everything from [brand name]. I had all the [big dreams], you know, I wanted a big house, I wanted an expensive house. And that doesn't even occur to me anymore. ... I'll have done it in three years, so ... that gives me a sense of pride, knowing that most people do it in five and I'm doing it in three. And ... I will go into grad school and I will ... I want to teach; I want to be a professor ...

Krista believed in herself. She was confident because she became competent. She believed that her success lay within herself and was not totally dependent upon outside forces.

I build on my strengths ... my resistance has changed since as my education goes on. When I took that first [content] class I was very timid and I didn't know what I was capable of at the time and, if it wasn't for [name] because I was taking his class at the same time, I would have dropped out and I would not be in college because of that [content] class. And ... it would be very, very sad because I'm doing very well and I would have never known that ... but ... I was very timid, and I just kind of kept going just because I didn't know what else to do ... but now, I'm to the point where if somebody was to tell me that I couldn't do something, I'd say, pretty much "screw you! I can!" so, you know (laughs) ... I know my strengths now and I've shaped my strengths. And I can write really well and I build off of that and I've honed on to what I can do really well and I've pushed aside what I can't. So, it's just a lot of self-motivation.

Krista was industrious, dedicated to her children and life-goals, and realistic about her situation; she took personal responsibility for her life.

[A friend] saw how much I struggled and it was actually, there was a family around the corner, when I started taking my son to kindergarten I didn't know who was going to watch him, I was working nights at the time and I would sleep when he slept, so I was like a zombie all the time, because I just wasn't able to sleep and ah ... a little girl that he was in class with, her grandmother came and picked her up every day, and I started talking to her and said, would you be interested in you know, keeping my son for a few hours after kindergarten, it was only half a day you know, and that way I could sleep, you know, I would pay for her, you know, and she started keeping him and we became really good friends and it was actually her daughter that went back to school and she was telling me, and she was older than me, you know, so she was ... so she was pushing me to go, and I was working at a sheet metal shop at the time and ah ... I went to APCC and ... spoke to somebody about getting in part time, I don't remember who I spoke to but they were very helpful and ... ah ... let me know all my options and everything. I honestly did most of it by myself because things are so spread out there. You have to talk to this person for this thing and this person for this thing and you have to make an appointment and ... I didn't have time to go four times a week down there to get everything straightened out so ... um ... I did a lot of the stuff on my own ... working out my schedule and things like that where I didn't have to go sit and talk to somebody ... and I started out with two classes and I talked ...

So that's, you know, that made me cram everything into the time where he was at school and then in the summer, I took a loan to where I could pay my bills and ... I went and applied for food stamps and I didn't work for the two and a half months that I went to school ... I went to school, I did two classes and I made sure that they were on the same days, and ... sometimes it was a class that I wanted to take, and sometimes it wasn't ... I took it because it fit ... but I couldn't be ... gone for more than two days a week and ... a lot of times when you know you try to find a job around a school schedule, the school schedules are just so messy, there's no way you're going to be able to find a job ... so ... I ended up getting a work study job after, which was great, because they let me work in between classes and the time where I would have been there anyway ...

I asked Krista how she was able to survive these trials. Her answer revealed her spirituality and strong will. She had inner strength that was developed by enduring many life-trials including work-related experiences.

... prayer ... a lot of prayer ... and I really think that's where most of my strength has always come from ... But I think you develop a strong will when you're in business and I'm sure that's where a lot of that came from.

Care

Krista appreciated how her best teachers dealt with diversity within the classroom and scaffolded learning accordingly. She recognized that her teachers were seeking ways to help her and other students be successful, that is, to achieve her or other students' goals. Krista was impressed with how Drs. Blair and Louise Bentley dealt with diversity, different learning styles, and how creative they were in addressing students' needs. The Bentleys enlisted other faculty members who could specifically help Krista with a peculiar issue.

I would say, one of the most things that really struck me the most, is the amount of help that people are willing to give me. I mean, all I have to do is, you know, go say "this is the problem" not necessarily the problem I'm having but you know this is my situation and people have been more than happy to help me. I don't know if it's because I'm first generational, or single parent, or what, but I have had no problems whatsoever getting financial aid, getting help with classes, or getting ... ummm ... if I need money for books I've been able to ... people have been more than willing to help and bend over backwards. It really ... you know it really makes me realize, you know, these people are here to help me succeed and they are really helping me succeed with whatever way is necessary.

Krista's life-experiences included poverty in her past as well as currently as a student at APCC. She did not seem to be embittered by this, but rather accepted it as her reality. However, she was preparing for a different future.

They managed to make ends meet most of the time and we didn't grow up dirt poor, but neither did we grow up privileged. I mean ... my brother and sister and I all contributed to the household and we helped with chores, we helped with ... if we had a job that was our money but if our parents needed ... you know ... I need ten bucks for gas, and if one of us had it, we'd do it ...

Krista defined care as professors by how they engaged the class, developed a positive chemistry or connections between themselves and students, and maintained a

personal interest in every student. The Bentleys demonstrated that every student was important.

They engage the class. I mean, they make the content interesting even if it's a topic you don't find interesting, they make it interesting, through various methods, you know whatever methods they have up their sleeves, whatever teaching styles they happened to have ... they make the class interesting, they engage everybody. They get the class laughing ... through, there's great ... this doesn't sound right but there's great teacher chemistry with the students, or with the co-teacher. And that right there, the chemistry between the students and the instructor, if there's no chemistry there, and that's not the right word, but I think you know what I mean ... like a connection or you know you just ... you feel right ... that teacher feels like it's the right teacher or you're comfortable with that teacher ... and they have ... without that connection, you know the class doesn't move as smoothly and if there's disruptions in the class, which do happen you know on a fairly consistent basis at times, whether ... whether it be weather, fire drills, whatever, there's disruption in classes ... even with that disruption, the class still seems to move really well and it doesn't have a "oh, where did we leave off" you kind of just jump right back in to where you left off ... and ... plus the teachers take a personal interest in their students ... and you know they get to know their students on a regular basis and they get to know their students and they see them in the hallway and they'll stop and they can talk to you, ask, you know, "how are your kids?" or "did you have a good weekend?" or "what'd you do over spring break?" or "did you get the help you needed for this other class?" those ... your teachers get to know you and that, when you realize that I'm important to this instructor, in ... on a personal level as well as in the context of the classroom, that really makes a great class, is when you have those things and you know sometimes you have all that, and sometimes you don't, and you'll have varying degrees of a great class. But, you know I said with my learning communities, that's what part of what makes them a great class is, they're a lot of fun and the teachers have a personal connection with the students and there's great co-instructor chemistry that makes it a lot of fun and they just ... you know they can play off each other and do ... one instructor can have a ... carry on this conversation and the other one knows exactly what's going to be said next and it makes the class work really well.

The Bentleys demonstrated care to Krista by being appreciative of her valued input to the classroom experience. Krista felt that she was co-leading and co-constructing a mutual investment in herself as well as other students in the classroom.

if I have something input ... valuable input to the class they stop ... you know, they'll let ... let me give it you know, say, you know this ... contribute to the

class if it contributes to the class, will comment on it and discuss it or if it doesn't she's like well "okay, that's a good point but let's move on.

Krista recognized the differences between various students at APCC. The differences involved several issues not just related to socio-economic, generational, and philosophical. A caring administrator or professor would have to accept, appreciate/respect, and understand these issues in order to welcome, validate, and serve these students. She saw APCC as "incredibly diverse" (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Davies et al., 2003; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996).

Well, that ... the socio-economic issues, and ... ummm ... the way different age groups see the world, because that was one of the things we touched on in class, you know, the way different age groups and different socio-economic classes see the ... see things, because it is very ... I see things very differently than somebody fresh out of high school. And I see things very differently from somebody who's ten or fifteen years older than I am coming back to college ... so ...

You know it's a community college and one of the things that I've learned and discovered about community college is it's incredibly diverse ... it really really is ... I mean you have people from all colors, all races, all ethnicities that all combine together to make this incredibly diverse, very interesting group of people, and you know, I've got friends from all age ranges, but I ... and I've never really felt oppressed because each person's an individual and from what I've seen, all the teachers treat each ... you know they take it as an individual and you know people are different and it's just an incredibly diverse ... it's a very interesting mix of people and you know, I've really never felt oppressed and never really seen anybody else look like they were being oppressed. ...

I have friends of all ages and all varieties ... (laughs) it just makes life more interesting because you get a different perspective on some things ... they see things differently than I do

Using force or attempting to subdue another was not part of care or a caring person for Krista. She included in her sense of care an aspect of spirituality where a person knows oneself, including one's strengths and weaknesses. For her this was power; the power to survive and thrive.

Well, I don't try to subdue anybody, because that's not ... that's my personality ... If somebody's not comfortable with something I say and they say so, you

know, I'll stop. I'm not going to insult somebody. I'm not going to try and make somebody feel less than what they are. I'm comfortable with myself as I am ... and you know, power is ... one of those things that you can use it properly ... or you can abuse it ... and I don't know that I necessarily have any you know power so to speak in ... in ... in that context ... but ... ummmm ... I understand the ... ummm ... I understand my own strengths and weaknesses and I think in some way that's power ... that's powerful to me. ...

I'd consider myself a spiritual person. ... a lot of people gasp if you admit that out loud. And ... ummm ... but I am very spiritual. I see God in everything ... and in my children's eyes and ... but having a historical, an historian view point I see the holes in religion and realize that religion is made by man and not, not that I judge those who do it, because I understand what other people will find in the solace of religion, and I think that's what people need. I just find it in another way. But ... I believe you get what you ask for and I ask for help when I need it and it comes.

I think it's that ... internal, it's more of an internal conscious that you feel ... it's that internal gauge that the love that you feel and I remember reading this quote that said "God is the measure by which ... God is the tool by which we measure our pain" ... that always stuck with me, you know. A lot of people try to blame God or blame whatever their higher power is when things are wrong and I don't believe that's correct. I believe in being grateful in what I have. I think that ... and being thankful and that's what my spirituality is ... it's being grateful for what I have and seeing that something helped me to get to where I am. I'm not sure what it is, and I'm okay with that ...

Krista defined care as the willingness and ability of faculty to serve students' needs, to validate and welcome each student, and to encourage and recruit students for a class because of students' ability to contribute. However, Krista also stated that the lack of this willingness, ability, and student interaction was the absence of care.

I went to several different teachers and said, you know, can I get a letter of recommendation from you and they were more than willing to fill out these long, glowing, make-me-blush letters of recommendation for these scholarships and it really, it made me realize you know, I'm an important factor in this ... I am an important factor in this class, I am an important factor in this school. I may not be like the president or something, but my presence does make something of a difference and it does maybe make somebody's experience themselves better and ummm ... I would definitely say I felt cared for ... and you know, when I had trouble I was given ... they challenged me to do better ... and like "Krista, I know you can do this" ... and so I would ... I was definitely noticed and I've had several teachers say you know I really want you to come back and take this class.

I think it may be more the instructor because we don't have that interaction; [a teacher] just kind of overwhelms us with the amount of work. I mean it is ... it's a very interesting subject but I'm just not getting anything out of it

Krista noticed that care for her as a single mother-with-children and for other students was potentially conditional.

A lot of the professors over there are very, very helpful as long as you're willing to help yourself. So ... umm ... the [content] department, they're tough over there and as long as you're enthusiastic they will be enthusiastic with you ...

There was a couple of times when I was really struggling being at school ... I just was discouraged and it was very difficult ... when I started school my son was [age], my daughter was barely [age], and ... I was going to leave, I had an [content] professor that was very anti-military and very nasty and very discouraging and he did not like me and I couldn't get ... do anything right in his class. And Dr. Blair Bentley actually was a mentor to me and he ... he ... handed back my paper and he said "you really have something here, you really need to realize how good you are at this, and I don't want you to give up." He looked me in the eyes and said that, and because of him, I didn't.

Krista believed that a caring professor or administrator would demonstrate an open door policy for, discern the special needs of, and offer creative solutions to life dilemmas fitting for a student in crisis. However, the opposite of a caring nonstudent stakeholder would demonstrate the lack of availability and therefore could not discern needs or offer solutions.

Dr. Blair Bentley has always, always been there ... had an open door policy with me, so ... and I still talk to him regularly. And as I was going through my divorce ... I was open about it when I found out that I was going to get divorced. You know, and I had some fantastic professors that were there for me and they didn't, they didn't give me the easy road, per se, but they were there and, [name] she was my [language] professor at the time and she ... she ... she said "I know what you're going through and I'm going to keep you busy." And I just ... it seems like because I sought out the help, I got it. ...

You can't ever get a hold of them, number one. They're impossible to make an appointment with [administrative office]. ... I don't know ... you know over here [at the 4-year institution] there's very much an open door policy of "come and see me" and I mean, there was that there, but there's not really ... the office hours and the approachability wasn't like it is here. It just ... maybe it's not

vocalized enough or something. But I spent a lot of time in the [department] hallway here and all my professors know me by name, and I feel like I could go talk to them. I did not feel like that there ...

Krista held a similar belief about care as Stephanie; they both believed that it should not be necessary for students to be extraverted and assertive in order to receive recognition, help, and timely advice. As individuals both Krista and Stephanie demonstrated the ability to achieve upward mobility through exposure to different habitus or values in a collegiate environment (Harker, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Krista and Stephanie also believed that care would not be characterized by negative attributes of racism or sexism and insensitivity towards those from low socio-economic class.

I've never looked for the free ride ... I've always been willing to do my work. ... But I think that, that I pushed myself into the spotlight, though, whereas a lot of people don't know how to do that. And I made sure I was known, I made sure I set meetings, I networked with my professors, I said what am I doing right? What am I doing wrong? What do I do to become successful? I used tools that I had, not necessarily that I learned anywhere; I just figured out ... how to get ahead. ...

I'm not even sure what happened, he ... he was not a nice man and he was ... there is a girl in my class, she was African-American and ... he was ... I don't think he's even there any more ... but there was racism and sexism in the class and he ... the grading was off ... and I don't know who complained, I didn't personally do it ... but I had originally got a B and then got a letter from the ... I don't know ... the chair of the whatever department it was ... saying we reevaluated the grades for that class and you actually got an A. Because there was no reason I should have gotten a B in that class ...

You're at a community college with people from low socio-economic standards, we count on that money, for everything ... and you don't get your financial aid money until six weeks into the semester? It's ridiculous ... and then half the time, you say, they request information and you bring it in and you say "do you need anything else?" "oh, no, no, no" you have two or three more letters requesting more information. It's exacerbating, and you're trying to concentrate on school. You're trying to better yourself. The last thing that you should be worried about is that. So the [administrative office] department there is phenomenally awful.

Krista believed that a caring professor would accept, appreciate/respect, and understand the diversity at APCC and not assume that single-mothers' realities were the

same as others from the dominant middle-class culture. Since Krista had experienced the foster-care system, she had already distinguished herself from the majority of this educationally vulnerable population by succeeding at APCC and attending a local 4-year institution (Zetlin & Weinber, 2004). As a single-mother she further distinguished herself by seeking additional education to better care for her children; her children motivated her to achieve (Jennings, 2004).

I was never placed with a long term foster home, I was in group homes ... my sister was placed with a foster mother, where she was one of two foster kids from the age of 15 to 18 where she aged out of the system, but I was never in with a small group, I was always in a group home ... where there would have been at least [several] ...

Just wasn't something that was discussed ... it wasn't ... that was for people that lived a different life than I did, you know, I always felt like this is where you belong ... at the bottom of the food chain ...

You know I ... I don't know ... um ... it was probably a mixture of foster care and my mom, there was no encouragement to do anything better than what everybody else in the family had done ... it was kind of like this is what we do, we just ... we work, and we struggle, and we don't have nice things, those are different people ... sorry ... so ... it just was never important until my son, I had my son two days before I turned 17 and um ... then ... then it you know, an education became important when I started working and seeing how it is to take care of a kid you know, with no education. All I could do was work fast food, kind of ... and ah ... but at that point, I couldn't even afford to go to college ...

The diversity at APCC does not end with welfare and single mothers-with-children or those who experienced foster care, nor does it end in Krista's mind that a caring professor would accept, appreciate/respect, and understand other forms of diversity. For starters how does the underrepresented population develop the vision to attend college? Jason discovered a vision from a family member; Brandon through the process of re-entering civilian life, and still other participants through friends and neighbors. APCC and other community colleges could expand recruiting processes to

include others who lack such a vision. Krista was given a vision through a friend yet faced a real obstacle to attend college because of her need of day care.

... she saw how much I struggled and it was actually, there was a family around the corner, when I started taking my son to kindergarten I didn't know who was going to watch him, I was working nights at the time and I would sleep when he slept, so I was like a zombie all the time, because I just wasn't able to sleep and ah ... ah ... a little girl that he was in class with, her grandmother came and picked her up every day, and I started talking to her and said, would you be interested in you know, keeping my son for a few hours after kindergarten, it was only half a day you know, and that way I could sleep, you know, I would pay for her, you know, and she started keeping him and we became really good friends and it was actually her daughter that went back to school and she was telling me, and she was older than me, you know, so she was ...

She was pushing me to go, and I was working at a sheet metal shop at the time and ah ... I went to APCC and ... spoke to somebody about getting in part time, I don't remember who I spoke to but they were very helpful and ... ah ... let me know all my options and everything. I honestly did most of it by myself because things are so spread out there. You have to talk to this person for this thing and this person for this thing and you have to make an appointment and I don't have ... I don't have time ... I didn't have time to go four times a week down there to get everything straightened out so ... um ... I did a lot of the stuff on my own ... ah ... you know, working out my schedule and things like that where I didn't have to go sit and talk to somebody ... and I started out with two classes ...

According to Krista, each of APCC's professors, no matter the content, has the opportunity to open students' eyes to see the whole world, to paint a life-picture of achievement for students, and to provide a choice for students to pursue a different direction. In the next paragraph Krista describes her changing habitus without simultaneously degrading or negatively judging her past friends. She would consider this transforming teaching style as care because it would serve the student's best interest.

... so it's pretty exciting, it's been really exciting ... after the first class that [content] class, and I think it was ... just learning that there's more than just this tiny little piece of earth that I've been living on ... was like enough ... I wanted to learn ... I felt ignorant ... I'd never felt so ignorant, because I surrounded myself with people that were on my level, you know what I mean, and I'm not saying that they were ... they weren't bad people by any means, they were just at a lower

educational level and ... that was okay, but when I had to go and interact with other people, I was intimidated, because I had no clue what was going on. I didn't know what was going on in [nearby major city], much less Africa, you know ... and this class was like, wow, there's ... the world is just so huge and I haven't gotten to see any of it ... and you know, I might never get to see it, but at least I'm going to know what's going on, and I'm going to be able to tell my son, you know, what's going on ... when he asks me what's going on, I'll be able to help him, you know, and I think it was that [content] class that just made me want to know what was going on, and from then, I was addicted ... I ... I ... I really had no clue how much I had missed out on until I started ... and I was [age] years old? And had no clue ...

Like Desári Krista also experienced transportation problems which is another example of diversity of need no less important than day care (Jennings, 2004). Now that Krista had the vision for college, she fought to finish college, destroying the negative stereotypical myth of welfare mothers (Tiamiyu & Mitchell, 2001). Krista would argue that care would require non-student stakeholders to accept, appreciate/respect, and understand this form of need and adjust their thinking and behaviors towards students like Krista or Desári.

I have a car ... I took the bus ... a lot ... and once there was ... one summer, it was [year], I ... my car broke down and I had already made the choice that we're going to be broke ... I talked to my son about it before I decided to go full time and I said, we're not going to have extra money ... um ... being that I got into my house when I did, my mortgage is low ... so, I don't pay as much for my mortgage as I would for an apartment in town, which was a blessing ... I also happen to be located right on a bus route um ... so when my car died, it sat, and I took the bus ... and ... it ... thankfully I was at the [nearby] Campus and the bus goes there, because had I been at [distant campus] I would have been SOL.

Two aspects of spirituality are to know oneself and to learn about the different Other. Krista would expect that a caring classroom or hallway leadership would accept, appreciate/respect, and understand different spiritualities, developing identities, and ethnicities, all aspects of diversity. Though she knew about her Native-American ancestry, she was still developing and discovering its meaning and significance. Krista

felt that a caring professor would allow and encourage this personal growth in students and desire the same personal transformation. In the following paragraphs she contrasted a caring professor with one that was not; one was an “amazing teacher” while the other was “just a teacher.”

I’m [non-traditional age] years old. I am a little more than half Native-American. I’m a mixture of [Nation] and [Nation] Indian and ... I live alone and I am divorced. I live on a disability income, which is not a lot, it’s about [dollars] a month, I get. My mom was mostly Indian, my dad was part Indian, part Mexican, and part German. He dropped out of school in 9th grade. My mother dropped out when she was I think in 11th grade.

I have done a little bit of Indian things, but not really too much yet. I just got involved in art three semesters ago. Before that I never realized that I had any kind of talent for it or any particular interest in it, aside from being jealous that everybody else could do it but me ... with my little stick figures.

Well, the first one was in my magazine writing class, and it was a woman, and she was very negative about everybody, including herself. And she ... she picked a couple of people in the class that she paid a lot of attention to and the rest of us, you know, we were like fish out of water. We didn’t know what to do, just kind of flopping around ...

Well ... like I said, I’ve had some really, really good teachers. Some have just been teachers. You know, I’ve enjoyed being in their class and there was no particular rhetoric back and forth or discussion or anything, I just enjoyed it. I had another math teacher that I felt was you know, he went above and beyond also, not as far as Dr. Blair Bentley did, because he stayed after class and helped me, tried to get me through, which I certainly appreciated I just ... I’m talking about [name], he ... he was ... he’s what I consider an amazing teacher. He not only taught us, he entertained us ... he made us want to come to class. I hated it when class was over. We didn’t want to leave ... and ... you know he would go through things three or four times in total patience, no matter how many times it took, in order for us to understand. And ... he’d meet with us in his office if we needed to.

[The just-the-teachers] were ... they ... they came in, they taught the class, and they left ... there wasn’t a lot of ... dialog ... it wasn’t ... they weren’t unfriendly, or friendly, they just had a job to do, they were good at it ... and when it was over, it was over ... but then there’s other teachers who, you know you could stand and talk to or even confide in or whatever ... and you know you have a something a little bit more than just a teacher ... I don’t know that they’re at a higher scale, I don’t think that they’re better teachers necessarily, but they’re just different kind of people. They have more people skills I think than just teaching skills.

Noelani

Noelani represents students labeled Asian by the dominant culture (Siu, 1996) who were either born on the continental area designated as Asia and later emigrated to the United States or were born to a family with parentage of Asian or Pacific Island ethnicity. Noelani is a composite of four women. More specifically two are of traditional age; two had children while a student; two spoke their native tongue, while all claimed to be bi-cultural and shared similar cultural values (see chapter 2). Only two shared the same ethnicity, however, and none were Chinese yet they all experienced the Chinese whiz-kid stereotype (Siu, 1996). They were all first-generation students, but only two identified with the lowest economic class.

Structural System

Noelani's introduction to APCC's structural system was the general ignorance about Asia and its diverse peoples.

Well people say, "oh, are you Chinese or Japanese?" and I go, no ... and they say "what?" and I go, I'm neither ... and they go "oh, you're not Asian?" and I go, you know there's more than Chinese and Japanese, buddy ... but I don't take it offensively. I know that it's ... it's you know, if somebody doesn't have exposure to [country], they don't know what [ethnicity] would be ... we're a very small country and we don't have as much money as Japan, we're not as big as China ... so, I do mention that "oh, I'm [ethnicity]" and they go ... "oh, like from North Korea?" and I go, "no ... 'cause then I don't think I'd be here ... "

Every participant was asked about her most memorable experience. Noelani's answers exposed contradictory experiences with APCC's structural system. In one instance Noelani shared: "I think the most memorable experience was probably the one I had this semester, in my [content] class, which umm ... Dr. Louise Bentley had us ... we played games in class" and that "it was really, really great to like have people screaming

across the room” during this very active learning experience. Yet in another instance Noelani disclosed that a professor “would scream at them ... for coming in late and you got the feeling that he took it personally.” In spite of contradictory experiences Noelani stated:

I find it remarkable like how all the teachers that I’ve encountered so far are very, very passionate about you know, their students and that they care about them and they’re not ... I’ve never feel like they’re just doing it like it’s a job.

Part of the structural system of APCC is the ethnicity and associated culture.

Noelani then shared her current experience compared with the ethnicity and culture of the far western state from which she moved.

APCC is overwhelmingly Caucasian ... Well, from where I was coming from, it was kind of ... it was like ... weird ... it was really, really weird because ... I moved here ... shortly after, well I just moved here maybe a year and a half ago ... but in [a city], and I know the demographics probably just like way off, it’s probably like in one instance, like graduating from the high school I went to, and also the community college I went to over there, like it was really, really diverse ... and though it was mostly of ... like Asian origin, like to me Asian is not just one set defined thing, there are differences (laughs) ...

Though Noelani’s new environment was quite different from her prior experience, she took it in stride. She said: “I just ... kind of just try to get used to it ... it’s just a visual aspect to me ... people are people, they just look different,” or in another part of the interview she said “Sometimes I felt like a fly like in their glass of milk ... I don’t know (laughs) that’s like the best way for me to explain it” and she expanded still further by saying “I fit in the middle of everything. That’s what I feel like. I feel like I identify with many different cultures, aspects, socio-economic classes ...” Yet in the next illustration she expressed a contradiction.

And I don’t know why it’s like the only really significant thing that I remember, but it was when I was taking a class with [name] and basically the first, the first

day of class we were talking about immigration laws, because that was around the time when that whole thing was going on with Mexico and I said that America was a melting pot and that we should take a different approach because there was a lot of people in class speaking out about how they should just go back to Mexico ... and I felt offended because my family's not ... doesn't really originate from America ... like Japanese people and my family, [birth country] people, my family and so are not all from America. My mom came over here from [birth country] so I was ... I was like really offended with that and so I was like, "well, we are the melting pot so we should probably act like it ..." and then from that day forward, there was just a lot of stuff that went on and right after I made that comment, there was a student in my class that told me that I should go back to [birth country], or wherever I'm from.

In this case Noelani was not protected by the professor; she felt overwhelmed and intimidated by students' responses. Noelani expressed:

There were a lot of kids like speaking out towards me and I was kind of offended that [the professor] just like kind of let it happen right in front of her.

I was ... that was the worst thing, was that she didn't say anything about it so it was like demotivating to me because I didn't really want to come to class after that ... and ... there was one other minority in the class and he was like too afraid to speak out. And that was actually like from his ... he was like a ... half Mexican and half White and he was offended too, but he was too, like, scared to say anything ...

Noelani's summary was pointed: "I just felt like it was discrimination" that she experienced during the entire semester in this class. Similar to Brandon's experience, Noelani acknowledged:

There were a lot of students that didn't want to be in my group, like whenever we'd do group activities because of my views about the border laws and stuff like that ... there's nothing more oppressive to me than that ... there's nothing that feels that is so hurtful to do to a student ... I don't think that there's ... there's a lot of things that goes on on a college campus ... but I don't think that anything is worse than the discrimination that can happen.

Noelani's initial responses were self-defeating and self-destructive. She failed to turn in some assignments and missed several classes that impacted her grade. She

conveyed her thinking that revealed not only responses to structural system, but also the impact of the dominant culture values.

I don't know, I guess I just feel like it was really oppressive because it made me look at myself from their eyes ... so I made me see myself as not being able to succeed because I was looking at myself through their eyes ... that I wasn't going to be anything, ever, because ... because of who they saw me as ... and ... I didn't really have the power to change that until I started looking at myself differently ... and not facing that because I realized that I shouldn't be basing it off of the way that they see me because there's going to be a lot of people in life that want to see you fail and then there's going to be a lot of people that want to see you succeed.

But for you to succeed, you have to be able to see yourself doing that and so that's kind of how I overcame that ...

I inquired whether Noelani considered dropping out of APCC. Noelani's responses demonstrated courage, ability to reflect, and resilience to cope with negative structural systems.

I did. I did actually consider that and then I thought about it and realized that that was not a good solution because it's important to overcome your obstacles. So for me, that was just an obstacle that I was going to have to overcome because there's a lot of stuff like that that goes on and if you don't learn how to deal with it then it'll probably hold you back from ...

I guess I really didn't realize about how big of a voice I could have until I was getting ready to leave there ... so I really ... I really didn't use power in a lot of ways ... I guess I would say to overcome the situation but I really didn't strive as hard as I could have or maybe should have in that situation because I was just kind of trying to get through enough credits so that I could leave APCC and come to [4-year university].

After graduating from APCC Noelani did attend another local 4-year university where she believed that the resources to redress discrimination were more accessible and available. I asked her about the importance of discussing race/ethnicity and class issues in APCC classes and what changes could be achieved by doing so.

Because I really realized like how big of an issue that it is ... like a lot of us like to say that it's not an issue when we get to college because we're so much more

educated. And even I like to lie, sometimes, and say like “oh yeah, it’s not an issue” but it really is. It is still an issue today and I think that’s hard for a lot of us to accept, and the fact that you brought it up I think ... it put more emphasis on it, where you want other people to look at their surroundings and understand maybe what’s happening to other people and not be so in their own bubble and think that way. And I just thought that was like really good because none ... I think that Dr. Blair Bentley was the only teacher that I’ve ever had that has brought up ... ummm ... race and diversity and actually talked about it ... Even ... even like in my younger school years, never, that was never brought up because there’s just a really taboo thing to talk about ...

Since Noelani was a first-generation student she experienced some anxiety about attending APCC. She shared “it took me a long time to find the courage to even attend. It was so nerve wracking and ... it was really hard for me.” In spite of the initial concerns and contradictions that Noelani experienced, she had positive statements about APCC. In one particular class she had this to say.

Who Dr. Blair Bentley is, what he stood for and what he did are all so admirable and commendable. I’m glad I had the opportunity to speak with you about him, because if nothing else, I will take that experience with me. Dr. Bentley is a great leader and inspiration. I appreciate him making the class setting safe for all. I think our learning environment is enhanced and we are all learning so much more with just that single stance he took, alone. As well as ... validating my feelings on how things are supposed to work. Anyway, these are things that happen in life that one does not easily forget, so I will take this entire experience with me, to include his inspirational qualities and hopefully someday find the courage to make a difference.

After Noelani had attended several classes over a couple semesters she had this to say about the number of non-traditional students at APCC.

(laughter) [It] was so memorable. I just ... I’m not the oldest one ... in fact; the majority of students were not the traditional student. I mean we’re getting more and more of them now, but, they weren’t and I was just ... so relieved.

As a first-generation student Noelani had expanded her knowledge about college life and experience. A classmate shared fears concerning a particular knowledgeable professor.

I have a couple of students tell me, even with one of the math instructors, they said “this guy’s a super-duper engineer guy and he’s teaching this math 30 ... and I just feel completely inept and I don’t want to go to class.” And I said, “that’s just a shame ...”

Noelani valued her biculturalism because it provided insights into diverse people and their lifeworlds, but she was frustrated with the blindness and rigidity of some. She expected more liberal thinking than she witnessed at the community college.

I have two sides to seeing things differently, that’s what I don’t think people understand. In [country], you grow up and ... right out of high school you go into your specialty field. And if it’s med school, you go to med school, right. Whereas here, we say, well you need these generalized broadness ... which I agree with ... and at the same time I’m like do you need that much generalized broadness? I mean don’t we need doctors now ... you know, ummm ... so I see both sides, but, my experience here has shown me that there are some people that are just very stuck in their ways ...

Noelani was sensitive towards the needs of the underrepresented population especially when it came to required computer usage and unstated technology prerequisites. She believed that this was an injustice to many students who did not own a computer, internet access, or lacked the expected skills; the school or department should supply sufficient computers with appropriate access and support structure to help these students.

... with their needs, you know, with the classroom ... and you know like I see some of the students who are taking the [development content] class and I love [software system] and I love [another software] I think they’re wonderful programs ... but when you force students to use it ... and they’ve never seen a computer before, it’s not fair. You didn’t even tell them there’s a computer pre-req ... so if you say all the [content] classes have pre-reqs, fine, but at least they know, there must be a computer thing in there, you know? So I think that my experience is that we’ve gotta get past this ... shoving education down everybody’s throat, thing, you know

Noelani had much to say about stereotypes as well even if the stereotype was positive. Stereotypes, even positive ones such as the “whiz kid” stereotype of Chinese

(Siu, 1996), are injustices that cause unnecessary harm to the underrepresented population.

yeah, ... what if I had blonde hair (laughs) you know, what if I dyed my hair blonde ... (laughs) but ... ah ... but yeah, so I get that sometimes ... I tell them, stereotypes are wrong and even when they're positive, even when it's "oh you're Asian, you're good at math" because then you have placed an expectation on this person and they may not be good at math, but they're not going to say anything, especially to a tutor because if you're assuming they're good at math, you know, with the African-American male, you can't say "oh, well you're African-American, you gotta be great at basketball" you know? And it's like, I've never played basketball ... you know, I have friends who are African-American and they go, and they're tall, and the tall African-American, oh you've got to play basketball. And they go, "actually, I play basketball" or "I hate sports" and then, oh my goodness, revelation ... you know?

Noelani shared her discrimination experience, but she did not understand or find the appropriate structure and resources that could have helped her.

Well, the thing about APCC is like I really didn't know who to ... go to about it ... they have a multicultural or diversity center and it was hard for me to ... I don't even know where that is, pretty much ... and ... I just really didn't know who to go to, the department chair or the dean and I didn't know if there was a department chair ... I guess I was more confused about their structure than anything ... 'cause I didn't know who all of the instructors or professors answer to and so I guess there was a big disconnect for me and the structure at APCC in knowing how to follow a chain of command and where to go if you have problems with discrimination or other things ...

Dominant Ideology

In the following quote Noelani reveals her most memorable experience that had racist attitudes found in the dominant ideology. When ideology becomes a false ideology it creates a false consciousness which in turn causes contradictions and harm. Harm is executed not only on the victim, in this case, Noelani, but also on the executor by not serving the executor's best interest (Shank, 2006). In this narrative the dominant group was represented by both the professor and students.

Okay, so my most memorable experience was actually a negative one ... ummmm ... and it was only one. And I don't know why it's like the only really significant thing that I remember, but it was when I was taking a class with [name] and basically the first, the first day of class we were talking about immigration laws, because that was around the time when that whole thing was going on with Mexico and I said that America was a melting pot and that we should take a different approach because there was a lot of people in class speaking out about how they should just go back to Mexico...and I felt offended because my family's not ... doesn't really originate from America ... like Japanese people and my family, [country] people, my family and so are not all from America. My mom came over here from [country] so I was ... I was like really offended with that and so I was like, "well, we are the melting pot so we should probably act like it ..." and then from that day forward, there was just a lot of stuff that went on and right after I made that comment, there was a student in my class that told me that I should go back to Korea, or wherever I'm from. And I ... I think that I look pretty American, so I was pretty offended he said that. But even more so, I was offended that [name] didn't stop it. Because there was a lot of kids like speaking out towards me and I was kind of offended that she just like kind of let it happen right in front of her.

Dominant ideology represents the ideology of the dominant group which imposes its wishes on various minorities (Shank, 2006). This imposition is real and is experienced by the minorities as demonstrated by Noelani's further explanation.

the worst thing, was that she didn't say anything about it so it was like demotivating to me because I didn't really want to come to class after that ... and ... there was one other minority in the class and he was like too afraid to speak out. And that was actually like from his ... he was like a ... half Mexican and half White and he was offended too, but he was too, like, scared to say anything ...

Yeah, well I talked to him about it and he was like, "I just want to get an A in the class" and so I guess that's more important than standing up for what you believe in? And from that day forward, there was a lot of things that happened to me that I couldn't really explain, and I just kept on telling myself that it was like ... that it was just me and that it wouldn't really happen in a college setting where I would be graded down, not for my work, but because of what I said on the first day.

I further inquired if Noelani experienced any class issues besides racial issues as she described above. In this quote Noelani shared the dominant ideology of her classmates who impose not only racial values, but also class norms.

I didn't actually fit in very well because I remember that was back when I was going through like a stage, like a ... where I dressed more "urban" I guess I would say ... and ... it really just kind of like made me stick out like a sore thumb and I guess my experiences there ... I've tried to dress more like the other students so I fit in more ... and ... yeah I just think that that was another thing that made me probably added to it, because I didn't wear like Abercrombie & Fitch and I didn't wear like the "White" name brands, so ...

In Noelani's following quote she reveals an important aspect of the dominant ideology, that is, it is lived implicitly rather explicitly. In other words, dominant culture members are blind to their own belief system (Shank, 2006).

I think that at [4-year institution] because the class sizes are a lot bigger than at APCC that it's a lot harder to see a lot of students. I do think that it still happens. I think that there's a lot of favoritism and brown nosing and other stuff that goes on on this campus, but I think that it's pretty hard to, for most students, to recognize any deficiencies in their class. But I have since I've been here ... there was one incident and it was resolved pretty quickly because I went to the department chair. And ... ummm ... I think the resources at [4-year institution] are more accessible than the resources at APCC for discrimination.

Noelani valued the liberal and social justice ideals of college that frees students from parochial thinking and enlightens students to equity themes. Her experience in this class caused her to think afresh about continuing in college.

I'm a pretty strong person but to me it wasn't really about protecting my self-esteem, it was more about I guess right and wrong for me ... I don't know, I just felt like somebody needed to say something and so I kind of felt like I was in my right in doing so and because it is a college it supposed to be more liberal and you should be able to share opinions without having them ... a majority like turn against you for that ... so it wasn't really so much about protecting my self-esteem, because I didn't really lose any of my pride or my dignity, it just made me like rethink ... uh ... kind of rethink going to college ...

Noelani described this experience as oppression. She verified that minority students carry the burden of significant, negative (deficit) stereotypes from the dominant culture (Davies & et. al, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner, 2006). Noelani is clear about the importance of these class and racial issues.

I would describe them as oppressive ... I would ... ummmm ... there's ... there's nothing like wanting having the motivation to want to learn new things all the time and then kind of seeing that the door's only open for certain classes ... certain people ...

There's nothing ... yeah ... there's nothing more oppressive to me than that ... there's like ... there's nothing ... there's nothing that feels that is so hurtful to do to a student ... I don't think that there's ... there's a lot of things that go on on a college campus ... but I don't think that anything is worse than the discrimination that can happen.

Noelani expected to find higher education experience to be inclusive, discerning, and validating, but instead discovered the experience to be exclusive, indifferent, and annulling. The qualities of spiritual leadership theory were lacking at APCC since she did not experience a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership by one faculty and several classmates (Fry, 2003).

I don't really think that a lot of people had a very good understanding of compassion and I say that in the nicest way about people at APCC because a lot of them are coming from wealthier families and they didn't really have a hard life, like I did so ... I think ... I just think that they're really, like, privileged people that maybe don't think about things as much in depth as maybe some of us do. Maybe some of the other people do that have gone through extreme adversity and ... there was a lot of times where I'd hear students say, they'd like point out what someone was wearing and laugh and be like "oh that person must be one of our poorer students" ...

Yeah ... and there was just like a lot of comments like that ... like look at what she's wearing and I kind of felt like it ... to me it was a lot like high school 'cause things were so ... 'cause class was such an issue. 'Cause usually in college I think that a lot of us are poor ... or that's what I thought going there ... that a lot of us were like kind of ... we just made it there and we weren't really thinking about what we were wearing but we were just trying to get an education. So I was kind of surprised by that and then some of the other comments made by the students or I don't know, I just think that when you haven't gone through a lot of tough situations that your perception is maybe blurred a little bit about why other people dress the way that they do or why they look a certain way or why they act certain ways. So I didn't think that there was a lot of compassion at APCC.

I asked every participant what she or he would change at APCC if they had an opportunity to do so. Noelani had read APCC's core values and mission statement and

believed that there was a major discrepancy between what was marketed and what reality was.

I think that the main thing that I would change at APCC is ... I would make their ... 'cause I realize that their core values do include diversity ... don't they?...and so I would make it really important that all of the professors, instructors, people at every level of the organization uphold those to the fullest. Because I really lost a lot of faith in APCC after reading like their core values and their mission statement and I was like, "wow, they talk about it but they don't practice it." And that's kind of the way that I felt. I was like, this is hypocritical and they're getting a lot of money to ... to not live up to all these standards that they've created ... so, I guess that that's the main thing I would change is I would make it ... I would enforce it every single level, administrative ... just everywhere ... in every single department ... even with financial aid. With like the lower staff, people that are high up, I would just make that really enforced that they live up to all those core values. Not just while they're in school, but in their life, too.

Noelani believed that values, attitudes, and behaviors should be consistent with APCC published statements. She further believed that it was reasonable for APCC staff to have integrity, empathy/compassion, honesty, patience, and courage in their dealings with students, especially the poor and minorities. Without knowing about servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) and spiritual leadership theories (Fry, 2003), Noelani was espousing the leadership theories' attributes and importance and connection to students' meaning and purpose (Parks, 2000; Tisdell, 2003). She believed that action spoke louder than words and that these actions were expected by all staff great and small.

I don't care if you're the president, you're the chancellor, you're the vice president, if you see somebody in need, at that moment in time, they need you, they need your help ... and it doesn't, you don't go, "well my secretary will help you out or my ... I'll get somebody to get back with you ..." You get up and you take [care of] them ...

Noelani deemed that stereotypes are developed through human experiences, but these stereotypes should be retested on each individual without negative assumptions. She stated that "anybody could have a talent [or a weakness] in any aspect." Noelani did

not infer that she had achieved the ultimate level of knowledge, ability, or skills. She stated “that I have room to grow and I’m willing to grow and I try as much as I can to be flexible.” Noelani rejected a rigid stance for any staff in higher education. She shared: “... you can’t just say, ‘I’m the professor, this is what we’re going to do. You’re going to take it that way ... and too bad for you.’” Noelani had more insights to expose. Without knowledge of critical theory she insinuated the idea of false consciousness.

but at this level, at the community college, I mean the word “community” is there, you know? You would think that the way that people think would be different. So ... but I do see it sometimes it’s not on purpose, sometimes it’s not consciously done, sometimes it’s consciously done, which is very, very depressing.

I shared with each participant concerning my research purpose. Noelani was pleased to learn that someone was examining APCC’s structures and ideology. She was clear that APCC’s culture was not so accepting as the dominant group would like to think. Noelani was ready for an actual change in APCC culture.

It’s nice to know that there are people out there that are still reviewing some of these things, like what’s going on with our higher education institutions ... not just going, oh culturally we have become so accepting of diverse cultural ... but that’s not true ...

Lifeworld

Noelani, like other Asian-American students, are more likely than other minority groups to live in intact two-parent families (Carter, 2002). She is a first-generation student with children. She expressed her fear about also being a non-traditional student: “oh man ... I’m going to be the oldest student in this class” (laughs),” but she quickly learned that there were students older than her.

It took me a long time to find the courage to even attend. It was so nerve wracking and ... it was really hard for me, being [age] years old knowing that I was going

to be amongst people that were my daughter's age and all of that stuff but I was very pleasantly surprised when I first started ...

Even though Noelani was a first-generation she had certain expectations of her higher education experience. Whether this was related to her minority status, a personal belief, or how she thought as a bi-cultural person Noelani was slow to make a discrimination charge against teachers, administrators, or students. She held herself accountable for her situation at APCC.

I thought it was like my own fault for thinking it was discrimination at first ... 'cause ... I guess ummmm ... I really didn't think that it was realistic for this setting for me to ... like I didn't want to pull the race card or be like "oh, well this is discrimination."

Noelani described her socio-economic class: "I would say, middle ... definitely, definitely middle class."

I didn't actually fit in very well because I remember that was back when I was going through like a stage, like a ... where I dressed more "urban" I guess I would say ... and ... it really just kind of like made me stick out like a sore thumb and I guess my experiences [at APCC] ... I've tried to dress more like the other students so I fit in more ... and ... yeah I just think that that was another thing that made me probably added to it, because I didn't wear like Abercrombie & Fitch and I didn't wear like the "White" name brands

Noelani was seeking to know herself and how this related to others especially the dominant group. Her values included the commitment to the group rather than just herself. Her Asian cultural values impressed upon her to remember the group, but her US-American values wanted simultaneously to be independent.

If I'm just myself then people will like me for who I am instead of trying to be somebody else and not like, I'll fit in where I fit in, and I won't where I won't, and that doesn't bother me one bit. But in terms of feeling oppressed, or ... definitely feeling burdened ... is ... in group projects ... about like how ... and I don't know if this is just me, or not, right ... but ... like ummm ... having just to take charge and like having people just let me do it instead of trying to put their own input because I'm the ... I'm the kind of leader that likes to get input from

everybody because it's not about me and it's never about me, it's about what we're doing and it drives me absolutely crazy that people just let stuff happen ... I think that's one thing that I feel burdened about having to bring things out of other people because they themselves won't step up ...

Noelani was critical of some practices at APCC. She questioned some practices at the college that seem to limit or exclude some students. Noelani witnessed false ideology of some hallway and classroom leadership.

In some ways it's done underhandedly, where the student just gives up, they might not be overtly told, "no, we're not going to let you take these classes ... but we're sure going to make it tough so you don't want to" ... you know ... ummm ... so that ... I ... I ... I ... do see that with the ... I guess because of the prejudgments that are made ... ummmm ... I don't know why that happens, but ... especially with a community college ... it's one thing when you're at a very traditional university model and this is the way we're always going to be ... so you've got to fit that or you're not going to make it ... but at this level, at the community college, I mean the word "community" is there, you know? You would think that the way that people think would be different. So ... but I do see it sometimes it's not on purpose, sometimes it's not consciously done, sometimes it's consciously done, which is very, very depressing ...

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Noelani had an inner strength that guided her and a strong sense of social justice that focused her awareness and actions. She even considered dropping out of APCC, because of her personal experience with discrimination. I purposefully left out details to protect her identity.

for me because I'm a pretty strong person but to me it wasn't really about protecting my self-esteem, it was more about I guess right and wrong for me ... I don't know, I just felt like somebody needed to say something and so I kind of felt like I was in my right in doing so and because it is a college it supposed to be more liberal and you should be able to share opinions without having them ... a majority like turn against you for that ... so it wasn't really so much about protecting my self-esteem, because I didn't really lose any of my pride or my dignity, it just made me like rethink ... uh ... kind of rethink going to college ...

Noelani's bi-cultural background significantly influenced her skills, values, and attitudes that confused and surprised her dominant culture classmates, teachers, and

administrators at times. She stated that “I have two sides to seeing things.” Noelani described APCC as “overwhelmingly Caucasian” and ignorant of geo-political issues: “Well people say, ‘oh, are you Chinese or Japanese?’ and I go, no ... and they say ‘what?’ and I go, I’m neither ... and they go ‘oh, you’re not Asian?’” Though the actions of administrators, faculty, and students were defined by levels of discretion, ignorance of Noelani’s situation remained a common fact. She identified, described, and shared more of herself in the following two separate quotes:

Well I guess I would describe myself as being Asian-American, even though that’s not an ethnicity, like we said. I was mostly raised by my mother and she’s full Asian, so I feel more connected to that culture than I do the White culture

My family’s really strict, and so I don’t get to do a lot and sometimes I think I’m a little bit too sheltered because I don’t really know what’s going on, and you know, out of the context of maybe school or something ... and not only that, it overlooks the kind of societal pressures that families put on the children to be able to do like that ... I mean like, it’s great that their smart, but the pretenses under which they have been are not always great, which is why I say that sometimes the positive stereotypes are not always the ... their not always that great ...

I asked Noelani the value of being bi-cultural and the difficulties of living in two cultures, her parents’ and APCC’s. She shared about how being bi-cultural helped her to gain insights of herself, others, and social environments in these three quotations.

I’m all for tradition, I am, I know the whole “old school” Asian kind of thing ... I’m all for tradition, respecting your parents no matter what. I’ve never talked back to my parents in [number] years, never questioned them ... ummm ... especially not in front of them, you know, so I understand that tradition and respect of tradition and having traditional things.

You can analyze yourself better ... and maybe ... you can say okay, well ... I like what’s happening here because I understand what’s happening, what are the reasons for it, and that makes sense and maybe you want to try to apply it to your own life and ... and to also, ummm ... kind of relate to the other person because maybe you find something in someone else’s culture and you say, oh, this is kind

of similar, or different to my culture and you can actually try to connect with people that way.

I think a really really interesting thing that people can get from that is that not only that you can connect people with your similarities, but also by your differences, which is you know, something you don't think about, but it's possible. I mean like I talk with friends and we're always like, we're always like exchanging different things like "oh, in our culture we do this, this, and this" or something like that and then they'll say, "oh yeah, but in mine we do this ... or we do other things" or something like that and then you kind of understand each other more and you connect on something that makes you different, which I don't think a lot of people think about sometimes, but it's really, really fun to talk about

...

to have an understanding of what other people are thinking and to also to be able to judge people's actions appropriately ... because people do things based on how they are raised and also on how they view the world and if you just like ... and if you just judge something or if you kind of try to organize it in your mind from your own perspective, you're not getting the entire picture, which is where like some sort of miscommunications happen or misunderstandings about people ... happen ... and even extreme cases stereotypes about other people ...

Noelani believed that her bi-cultural values helped her to not only understand her birth-culture's world, but also APCC's world as well. She possessed the skills to relate to diverse people; she was able to connect with people of like or unlike ethnicities, socio-economic classes, or other differences. Noelani could understand the actions of others without condemning them or experiencing misunderstandings. I asked Noelani about the value of small group work at APCC. She said that "[small groups] force you to like look at other people differently and get past those first judgments that you make about people."

Noelani's contradictory experiences at APCC were a disappointment to her. She had other expectations, but not what she experienced: "I just felt like it was discrimination ... I guess I felt shunned." She was clear about her expectations in the following quote.

You'd think that at the community college level all of the faculty and administration would want to give everybody a chance. Whether you're student, staff, whatever it is and you know, because we have great success stories ...

and there's nothing ... yeah ... there's nothing more oppressive to me than that ... there's like ... there's nothing ... there's nothing that feels that is so hurtful to do to a student ... I don't think that there's ... there's a lot of things that go on on a college campus ... but I don't think that anything is worse than the discrimination that can happen

I don't really think that a lot of people had a very good understanding of compassion and I say that in the nicest way about people at APCC because a lot of them are coming from wealthier families and they didn't really have a hard life, like I did so ... I think ... I just think that they're really, like, privileged people that maybe don't think about things as much in depth as maybe some of us do. Maybe some of the other people do that have gone through extreme adversity and ... there was a lot of times where I'd hear students say, they'd like point out what someone was wearing and laugh and be like "oh that person must be one of our poorer students"

Care

Noelani experienced care as authentic teaching that was congruent with the needs of students and the personality of the teacher (Palmer, 1998). In Dr. Louise Bentley's class Noelani stated that "we played games in class" and the students

were completely and fully engaged, which was really, really funny ... you had people in the back of the classroom yelling "no! no! no! you're doing it wrong, you're doing it wrong ... just erase the whole thing, start over" and then, like hatching schemes against the other team and stuff like that ... and even though ... even if it was something that we didn't know how to do, you're like okay, I don't know how to do this, I need someone who does ...

Dr. Bentley was effectively motivating Noelani through calling and membership characteristics of spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003). Noelani felt she was part of a community and that she and her classmates' lifeworlds were recognized and respected by the professor. Noelani went on to share that many of her friends gave up on education, but teachers who showed authentic care motivated students to persevere.

just the fact that like I've seen so many of my friends just kind of give up because they feel inadequate, and I think that a teacher having already been there kind of

has the power to ... like ... not persuade, but to impart some sort of like passion on these students to be able to ... not just do all [the work] ... but want more ...

Noelani revealed the need for professors to incorporate the different Other's worldview along with their own. Noelani, being bi-cultural, recognized the importance of having skills, values, and attitudes that lead to inclusion and discernment within the classroom in order to demonstrate care.

to have an understanding of what other people are thinking and to also to be able to judge people's actions appropriately ... because people do things based on how they are raised and also on how they view the world and if you just like ... and if you just judge something or if you kind of try to organize it in your mind from your own perspective, you're not getting the entire picture, which is where like some sort of miscommunications happen or misunderstandings about people ... happen ... and even extreme cases stereotypes about other people ... and not only that, it overlooks the kind of societal pressures that families put on the children to be able to do like that ... I mean like, it's great that they're smart, but the pretenses under which they have been are not always great, which is why I say that sometimes the positive stereotypes are not always ... that great.

I further inquired of Noelani to tell me more about this skill to compare cultures and its importance. She revealed both personal and relational benefits to intercultural competence.

You can analyze yourself better ... and maybe ... you can say okay, well ... I like what's happening here because I understand what's happening, what are the reasons for it, and that makes sense and maybe you want to try to apply it to your own life and ... and to also, ummm ... kind of relate to the other person because maybe you find something in someone else's culture and you say, oh, this is kind of similar, or different to my culture and you can actually try to connect with people that way.

Noelani had more to say about a caring environment that includes awareness of and sensitivity to multiple cultures within the classroom.

I think a really really interesting thing that people can get from that is that not only that you can connect people with your similarities, but also by your differences, which is you know, something you don't think about, but it's possible. I mean like I talk with friends and we're always like, we're always like

exchanging different things like “oh, in our culture we do this, this, and this” or something like that and then they’ll say, “oh yeah, but in mine we do this ... or we do other things” or something like that and then you kind of understand each other more and you connect on something that makes you different, which I don’t think a lot of people think about sometimes, but it’s really, really fun to talk about ...

It is really, really important. It’s just because ... just because the attitude of the professor or the teacher kind of bleeds into the classroom. If the professor shows that they’re not ... they don’t really care, and they’re not trying to be as thorough or there maybe be absent in terms of where their thoughts are in class, then it’s going to reflect on the students. They’re going to feel like they can’t do anything, or they don’t have to do anything. And that’s not my experience like ... that’s me comparing here as opposed to some of the classes I took in [state] ... because some of the classes there, there are teachers that I ... that ... really tell they were just there for the paycheck ... you didn’t really learn anything and so you had to end up learning everything yourself or not doing anything at all. But over here, like ... teachers ... they’re engaged, they care, they take time from their schedule outside of class to be able to do things ... like to help, even outside of office hours ... and ... and that they’re like having ... it’s a great resource to take advantage of ... but it also ups the energy in the class overall ... it kind of helps set standard because you can’t really get excited about a subject if the person teaching you isn’t excited about it ...

Noelani had more comments about the expectation of mutual respect of diverse cultures and congruence with the ideals to guide individuals, APCC, and the United States as a whole. She assumed that the values stated within the Statue of Liberty were still valid today to guide citizens and the community college to welcome visitors and immigrants and not just for returning US-American citizens.

the first day of class we were talking about immigration laws, because that was around the time when that whole thing was going on with Mexico and I said that America was a melting pot and that we should take a different approach because there was a lot of people in class speaking out about how they should just go back to Mexico ... and I felt offended because my family’s not ... doesn’t really originate from America ...

Noelani sought to remind her classmates of these ideals and values, but she was surprised not only of the actions of her classmates but her teacher as well. Whereas the previous professor, Dr. Louise Bentley, affirmed, welcomed, and motivated Noelani, this

professor invalidated, unwelcomed, and discouraged her. Classmates' values, and the passive professor, were deterrents to wholesome dialogue that comes from intercultural competence.

the worst thing, was that she didn't say anything about it so it was like demotivating to me because I didn't really want to come to class after that ... and ... there was one other minority in the class and he was like too afraid to speak out. And that was actually like from his ... he was like a ... half Mexican and half White and he was offended too, but he was too, like, scared to say anything ... Noelani did not respond well to this contradictory experience. She started to miss

classes, failed to prepare well, and seriously considered dropping out of college.

I was self-destructive and I was really hurt that that even happened, because it was just so ridiculous for me to even admit ... think that that would happen to me like when I went to college and then it happening to me was even more ridiculous ...

Fortunately Noelani had another professor who helped her see a more positive choice. Noelani appreciated Dr. Blair Bentley's approach that included discussions of class, race/ethnicity, and gender (male or female) within a safe-learning environment for all students.

Yeah ... your self-esteem ... but it has a lot to do with self-image ... like how you ... how others seeing you in a certain way can make you see yourself a lot differently ... and so for me, it kind of seemed like I was already gonna not do as well as I should so I kind of like gave up and then when I took Dr. Blair Bentley's class like I realized that I could do a lot better because I am ... I'm not stupid ... (laughs) and so I could do a lot better but it was hard for me to get past that and motivate myself to get through the rest of college, because after I took that course I was kind of just coasting ... but what I really liked was how he talked about race, I guess, because that's something that really bad to talk about but I think it's something that needs to be talked about at APCC just because there's a lot of discrimination there and I think it needs to be addressed ...

Noelani attempted to seek justice, but she shared that it did not succeed.

Apparently administrators responsible for dealing with discrimination held her

accountable for the incident; the victim was blamed. Noelani experienced the opposite of care when she expected to be defended or protected.

I tried to seek justice because I felt like it's obvious [professor] was screaming at me ... I don't know why [administrators] wouldn't have asked my classmates "did this happen?" that would have been so simple, why don't they you know say, well what impression did you get out of all ... you know what happened that day ... I should have just dropped the class ... In the future I will not ... I will just, you know, if I get past that drop date where I don't get a refund or whatever I will not ... I will not, EVER, lend any merit to anybody who behaves that way, regardless of their position, anymore ... ever ...

Noelani referred to Dr. Blair Bentley's class to contrast her contradictory experiences. Though Noelani did not totally recover from her negative experience she was able to move on because of the care imparted by Dr. Bentley.

Who Dr. Blair Bentley is, what he stands for and what he does are all so admirable and commendable. I'm glad I had the opportunity to speak with you about him, because if nothing else, I will take the experience with me. Dr. Bentley is a great leader and inspiration. I appreciate him making the class setting safe for all. I think our learning environment is enhanced and we are all learning so much more with just that single stance he took alone. As well as, enlightening me about social justice and validating my feelings on how things are supposed to work. I back down because it was clear to me that I count for nothing as long as I'm a student. The damage was so much more severe when my proactive stance was scoffed at. Although I was not the "Professional" and had no control over anything in the classroom, somehow as a "student" I had control over when this professor would blow up at me. I just hope that everyone evolved learned some sort of lesson, so that others do not experience the same. Anyways, these are things that happen in life that one does not easily forget, so I will take this entire experience with me, to include Dr. Bentley's inspirational qualities and hopefully someday find the courage to make a difference.

Noelani shared one more positive example of care from her APCC experience. In this example an APCC senior executive helped a student find a specific classroom in a convoluted campus layout. She was clear of her expectation that everyone should be

ready to offer a helping hand when called upon. A personal commitment to provide timely help was included in her definition of care; the strong should serve the weak.

I don't care if you're the president, you're the chancellor, you're the vice president, if you see somebody in need, at that moment in time, they need you, they need your help ... and it doesn't, you don't go, "well my secretary will help you out or my ... I'll get somebody to get back with you ..." You get up and you take them ...

Email to: Drs. Bentleys:

Race is a concept we run from. Nobody wants to be known as a racist, so we hide from the subject. I don't think it's that people don't understand, but that they are afraid of saying something that could be construed as racist. They are afraid to see the Others' point of view. That occurs on all sides of the subject [on race]. Understanding is difficult to come by.

It's good to know that there are those who do believe there is a way out of this wilderness of ignorance.

Professor Richard Cornelius, PhD (pseudonym)
All Peoples Community College

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Chapter Four described my findings and analysis for each composite pseudonym that represented one or more participants. After I had completed sharing the participants' experiences, feelings, and responses, I reflected how I might interpret their stories and answer my research questions. While conducting the interviews I recognized the similarities of my participants' obstacles and experiences, yet each one was also unique. My many reflections extended over months led me to three themes: critical, spiritual, interculturalism. These three themes allowed me to emphasize their similarities while simultaneously enunciating their uniqueness and exceptions. I recognize that my interpretation is one of many interpretations that exist. I further recognize that all research is political, but my methodological framework built analytic integrity (Hatch, 2002).

Throughout this chapter I will use these three themes. I wrote of my research biases (see Prologue and Appendix B), but these themes (critical, spiritual, and interculturalism) were inductively derived from, and grounded in, data (Hatch, 2002). I derived other themes, but did not elect to highlight them. These three themes were more inclusive, provided a more holistic understanding, and represented the complexity of the data than other derived themes. Finally, my participants can be better understood by these themes. Each of my participants, represented by composite pseudonyms, was unique, yet their obstacles, experiences, and responses can be commonly understood through these three themes. After all there are reasons that the umbrella terms, underrepresented population or EEC, are used to profile these students.

I begin this chapter with participants' demographics and then provide definitions for each theme. These definitions are then used as an interpretive framework to answer my research questions and connect to the literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2. I answer my four research questions using the four structures as headings described in Chapter 4: structural systems, dominant ideology, lifeworld, and care. I then summarize the study; revisit the overview of the problem and the methodology; highlight the major findings; address triangulation, future research, and limitations; and close with concluding remarks.

Demographics

While Table 1 shows the demographic information for each participant who is germane to this study; this information was collected during participant interviews. I have identified each participant's demographic data by the composite name. Therefore, the reader will see Jason identified several times with different demographic data, representing one of the participants who forms the Jason composite. In this way Jason's composite group can be recognized.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Participant # and pseudonym	Gender	Personal Identity of race/ethnicity	SES	Age in Community College	Obstacles
1 Jason	M	White	Low	Non-traditional	Childhood poverty; emotional wounds (fatherless, divorced, veteran); poor K-12 education; first-generation; Class issues (poverty as CC student); ADD, Narcolepsy, PTSD; age
2 Jason	M	White	Low	Traditional	Poor K-12 education; first-generation; poverty; multiple moves; Class issues (poverty as CC student); emotional wounds (father)
3 Jason	M	White	Low	Traditional	Poor K-12 education; first-generation; poverty; Multiple moves; GED; Class issues (poverty as CC student); emotional wounds (father)

Participant # and pseudonym	Gender	Personal Identity of race/ethnicity	SES	Age in Community College	Obstacles
4 Noelani	F	Asian-American, White	Middle to Upper-middle	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; first-generation; emotional wounds; Class issues (poverty as CC student); multi-cultural; age
5 Desári	F	Latina	Low	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; poor K-12 education; childhood poverty; first-generation; mother-with-children; class issues (poverty as CC student); age
6 Juan	M	Latino, Latin@	Low	Traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; first-generation; emotional wounds (racism); poor K-12 education; gang initiate; expelled from middle and secondary schools
7 Desári	F	White, Latina	Middle	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; childhood poverty; first-generation; age

Participant # and pseudonym	Gender	Personal Identity of race/ethnicity	SES	Age in Community College	Obstacles
8 Brandon	M	African- & Native-American	Low	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; Childhood poverty; first-generation; poor K-12 education; learning disabilities (dyslexia); emotional wounds (fatherless, veteran); age
9 Noelani	F	Asian-American, White	Low	Traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; first-generation; childhood poverty; multi-cultural; class issues (poverty as CC student); emotional wounds (fatherless, poverty); “Whiz kid” syndrome
10 Desári	F	Latina	Low	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; Childhood Poverty; first-generation; mother-with-children; class issues (poverty as CC student, welfare); age
11 Noelani	F	Asian-American	Low to Middle	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; first-generation; mother-with-children; multi-cultural; age

Participant # and pseudonym	Gender	Personal Identity of race/ethnicity	SES	Age in Community College	Obstacles
12 Stephanie	F	African- &Native- American	Low	Non- traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; first-generation; poor K-12 education; childhood poverty; class issues (poverty as CC student); mother-with-children; wounded veteran; age
13 Krista	F	White & Western European immigrant	Middle	Non- traditional	First-generation; poor K-12 education; childhood poverty; immigration; being “White” with expectations; natal western European language and culture
14 Juan	M	Latino	Middle	Traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; immigration from Spanish speaking country; speaks Spanish

Participant # and pseudonym	Gender	Personal Identity of race/ethnicity	SES	Age in Community College	Obstacles
15 Krista	F	White	Low	Non-traditional	Childhood poverty; emotional wounds (divorced); class issues (poverty as CC student); poor K-12 education; mother-with-children; age
16 Krista	F	Native-American & White	Low	Non-traditional	Poor K-12 education; class issues (poverty as CC student); health; age
17 Krista	F	White & Native-American	Low	Non-traditional	Poor K-12 education; first-generation; mother-with-children; wounded veteran; class issues (poverty as CC student); age
18 Noelani	F	Asian-American	Middle to Upper-middle	Traditional	Southeast Asia; “Whiz kid” syndrome; multi-cultural

Participant # and pseudonym	Gender	Personal Identity of race/ethnicity	SES	Age in Community College	Obstacles
19 Desári	F	Latina	Low	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; poor K-12 education; childhood poverty; first generation; mother-with-children; class issues (poverty as CC student)
20 Stephanie	F	African- & Native-American	Middle to Upper-middle	Traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; negative stereotypes
21 Krista	F	White	Low	Non-traditional	Foster-care; childhood poverty; poor K-12 education; emotional wounds (foster-care, poverty); first-generation; mother-with-children; age; class issues (poverty as CC student)

Participant # and pseudonym	Gender	Personal Identity of race/ethnicity	SES	Age in Community College	Obstacles
22 Stephanie	F	African- & Native-American	Low	Traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; childhood poverty; poor K-12 education; emotional wounds (racism, death of parent); class issues (poverty as CC student)
23 Juan	M	Hispanic, Latino, White, Native American (Mexican American)	Low to Middle	Non-traditional	Ethnicity/Racism; childhood poverty; poor K-12 education; emotional wounds (racism, divorced); class issues (near poverty); age

All 23 participants fit the profile of the underrepresented population, that is, each had one or more of the following characteristics: poor, first-generation, experienced foster-care, Asian-, African-, Latino/a-, and Native-American, and finally welfare-mother with children. They were all students at APCC. Out of 23 participants 13 were experiencing poverty as a community college student while 15 were non-traditional age. Nineteen participants were first-generation, while four participants had parents that had at least some higher education experience. All of the participants commenced their higher education at the community college; 11 are currently enrolled in a 4-year institution; 4 have already graduated with a BA/BS degree; and 7 already have been accepted to a 4-year institution or plan to apply. Only one participant is not currently planning to earn a

4-year degree because of finances, but this, too, could change. The fact that all began their higher education experience in a community college is similar to those presented by Cohen and Brawer (2003). However, what is strikingly different is the number who are planning to attend, now attending, or have already graduated from, a 4-year institution; 22 out of the 23 is an uncommonly high ratio for community college underrepresented population students transferring/graduating, or planning to transfer, to a 4-year institution.

Definitions

I recognized that I will be using critical spiritual interculturalism in a peculiar way. Since each word has multiple connotations and interpretations, I will first present definitions to clarify my usage. I will use the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* for the first two words and for the last word I will use *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia* because the *Oxford* dictionary did not list interculturalism. Wikipedia used the term intercultural competency, which is what I mean when I use the term interculturalism. I will finish with my modifications to these definitions that are in harmony with my reflections and my participants' voices. The definitions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Definitions for “Critical,” “Spiritual,” and “Intercultural Competence”

Term: Main Entry	Part of Speech	Definition
Critical	<i>adjective</i>	Involving or exercising careful judgment or observation; nice, exact, accurate, precise, punctual; occupied with or skilful in criticism.
Spiritual	<i>adjective</i>	Spiritual home (with no religious connotation), a place or milieu, other than one's home, which seems especially congenial or in harmony with one's nature, or to which one feels a sense of belonging or indebtedness; of persons: standing to another, or to others, in a spiritual relationship.
Intercultural competence	<i>noun</i>	Basic needs are sensitivity and self-consciousness: the understanding of other behaviors and ways of thinking as well as the ability to express one's own point of view in a transparent way with the aim to be understood and respected by staying flexible where this is possible, and being clear where this is necessary; it is a balance, situatively adapted, between three parts: knowledge (about other cultures, people, nations, behaviors...), empathy (understanding feelings and needs of other people), and self-confidence (knowing what I want, my strengths and weaknesses, emotional stability).

My use of *critical* has to do with the careful, exacting identification of injustices, oppression, and inequities, as these impact the objective of achieving social justice or promoting emancipatory aims (Schram, 2006). This achievement is accomplished through action, advocacy, and/or empowerment.

Spiritual and spirituality plays a significant part in adult learning theories and higher education discourse (Tisdell, 2001) where *spiritual* is not well-defined but is generally accepted as having three components: to know oneself, to develop an ethic of care, and to know the Other, In this study, the Other is the underrepresented population. I further use spiritual leadership theory that is defined to be “comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (Fry, 2003, p. 695).

To understand my use of the word *interculturalism* (that is, intercultural competence) I used Deardorff’s (2004) work. Using intercultural experts to define *intercultural competence*, she found 44 key elements that primarily concentrate on communication and behaviors of a person functioning in an intercultural context. Since a community college is recognized as a diverse environment, I believe her definition is applicable. She noted that one element, “the understanding of others’ world views,” was the only element that received 100% agreement (Deardorff, 2002, p. 185). I now highlight those elements that most directly relate to a community college. This will be done in two parts; the first part is more broad components while the second part will be more specific elements of intercultural competence.

The broad components include: (a) “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes”; (b) “ability to shift frame of reference appropriately and adapt behavior to cultural context”; (c) “adaptability, expandability, and flexibility of one’s frame of reference/filter”; (d) “ability to identify behaviors guided by culture and engage in new

behaviors in other cultures even when behaviors are unfamiliar given a person's own socialization"; (e) "good interpersonal skills exercised interculturally"; (f) "the sending and receiving of messages that are accurate and appropriate"; and (g) "transformational process toward enlightened global citizenship that involves intercultural adroitness (behavioral aspect focusing on communication skills), intercultural awareness (cognitive aspect of understanding cultural differences), and intercultural sensitivity (focus on positive emotion towards cultural difference)" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 186).

The specific elements of intercultural competency are: (a) "understanding others' world views"; (b) "cultural self-awareness and capacity for self-assessment"; (c) "skills to listen and observe"; (d) "general openness toward intercultural learning and to people from other cultures"; (e) "flexibility"; (f) "skills to analyze, interpret, and relate"; (g) "tolerating and engaging ambiguity"; (h) "deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others')"; (i) "respect for other cultures"; (j) "cross-cultural empathy"; (k) "understanding the value of cultural diversity"; (l) "understanding of role and impact of culture and the impact of situational, social, and historical contexts involved"; (m) "withholding judgment"; (n) "curiosity and discovery"; (o) "learning through interaction"; and (p) "ethnorelative view" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 187).

The above definitions help elucidate my themes, interpretations, and this chapter. These themes are a lens through which I microscopically and macroscopically view my structures in Chapter 4. After much reflection of possible themes, these three—critical, spiritual, and interculturalism—helped me understand my participants better and integrate their life-stories with mine.

Research Question: Structural System

Through Table 2, I reveal my cross-composite analysis of how my participants experienced APCC's structural system and answer my first research question: *How is the structural system, which was set up by administrators, faculty, and staff, experienced by successful, underrepresented students? How did the structural system limit or grant access to underrepresented students?* I also reveal how my participants processed APCC's structural system through critical, spiritual, and intercultural themes. I exemplified how Bourdieuan theory exposes hierarchies, hegemonic domination, and limits or grants access to APCC's underrepresented population (Horvat, 2003); Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership theory intrinsically motivates (or demotivates) APCC's underrepresented students through calling and membership; and how Deardorff's (2004) intercultural competencies embrace (or the lack thereof excludes) difference, empowers emancipation, and transforms APCC's stakeholders and their respective environment. Table 3 includes a sampling of interview excerpts to demonstrate how I linked the data through these three themes.

Table 3

Structural System

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Jason	I've tried having discussions with other teachers and you know, they will take the time to talk to me, but they won't take extra time to help me out or if I have any other questions. And they won't go out of their way to do something. You know, to really help them succeed. And I feel that's what [a specific teacher] does. In high school, because we moved so many times, like a lot of credits didn't transfer, so I actually had to drop out and get my GED because I would have been like two years over and it just would have been way too late for me to get a diploma. So I just like, well I know I know a lot of the things and I was just getting cheated out of credits because of moving and I just really felt it was unfair. The four year or possibly even go on to a Master's afterward. But, but you know ... it seems like a fair amount I've heard, don't just stop at your associate's degree. Anybody can get an Associate's degree in just about anything, it's pretty easy and a lot of people do it. So that's not going to separate you from the crowd. You want to get something a little bit more. You want to do something more than average.	She was teaching the class, and it was her perspective. She wasn't very open minded. And ... I think to be a good teacher you need to be open minded and try to connect. Because you know that's what I mean by essentially be take it or leave it, is trying to connect, and she didn't have that connection or their interests ... I just ... one thing that is cool about being here is that ... I mean I remember when I showed up for that first day like it was yesterday because I don't want to say it was traumatic, but it really was but ... I'm not a person that generally feels uncomfortable in situations ... I'm willing to pretty much take on a situation or challenge without letting it spook me very much, you know ... and sometimes I get nervous or whatever, but I'm still willing to try and ... and I've never quit anything in my life that I can think of ... I've failed at some things, but I've never quit, and I think about that and I think about how big that mountain looked back then and now I'm near the top, you know, and even sometimes other students you know, come to me for help with me, math lab, or ask me questions about resources or something, because I seemed to have picked up a lot since I've been here. And that kind of makes me feel good.	I'd say [community college name] is a good place to start off for college because it will open your eyes to the experience of college and also open your eyes to you know what you want to do in life. I never thought much of college, I always thought college was a money scam, I was like you know, give me ten years OJT, or give me 4 years OJT and send some guy to school for four years and I'll be the better employee, you know. I don't need that, I just need to know how to do the job. And now I see it much different ... I didn't know how much I didn't know, until I went to college. College showed me how much I didn't know about things that I thought I knew about.
Brandon	So when I started grade school, okay, my teacher was appalled that I couldn't count, nor was I familiar with the alphabet. So she immediately assumed that I was handicapped and she, she removed me from the	APCC placement test identified my problem and instructors here were totally awesome, they actually helped, they worked with me like [teacher's name] did. I wanted to learn and those ... and they saw that, and they	I recall taking one [math class] which helped me a lot and [my teacher's] concept of teaching helped me a lot. And I learned more in [his] class than I did in my entire K-12 time in school. Just in that semester that you know,

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	regular classroom and ... and ... placed me with a handicapped student who was physically and mentally challenged. And I just felt cheated, like deprived, like everybody else were from a home that received basic education, teacher molded and gave them the necessary knowledge and guidance ... in their education to become successful and ... I was feeling as if I was just produced in a mold in such a way to be a failure and end up in the criminal system, being incarcerated ... for crime ... I was like, I was produced to be a criminal ... I need to pursue my Bachelor's because if he was going to hold that associate's degree over my head as a disqualifier, then I was going to show him that I can go further beyond [him] and get a Bachelor, and let [him] see that I'm a much better person than [him]. So ... I went on to transfer to a four year college [name] ...	were willing to work with me, okay? They knew I had a weakness and ... what was good about my classes that I was surrounded by people who had the same problem. So I didn't feel out of place. Okay. Because you know, if I was struggling with the math, and at that level, everybody else in there they were struggling math, too. So we all learned together and the learning was reinforced ... a certain method that [teacher's name] used, and other teachers, instructors used in order to ... to ... to facilitate learning, which really helped. Being told that I was a loser. Being told that, you know, the school system has given up on me, feeling like a failure knowing that I ... I'm a ... you know, coming from a broken home and mom couldn't read and write, okay, no one in the community really cared, and now the school's saying that I should leave 'cause I'm wasting their time. So, after crying, I walked back in to the class that I was scheduled to be in and I decided to stay instead of dropping out even though I knew that it was useless and ... and ... it could have been a waste of my time, but I for some reason I just refused to drop out.	just overshadowed my entire time in school. Period. From kindergarten to the 12th. No, no ... some of the classes you had to work in groups, okay, and some of the students did not welcome me, did not want me in their groups ... you can look at their expression, facial expression ... and ... you know ... I mean, granted, the ratio of White/Black students even now, I mean, is still predominantly White students in the college where you only have a small percent, maybe less than one percent of Black students, and even less of Black males. I, I mean, out of the three years I was here at [community college], I would say that the most I've ever seen as far as Black males maybe one or two other, you know, Black ...
Juan	Well, they were like ... they were all like at first I really thought like, I felt scared, you know, I was like, "damn" this university or college ... I feel like [nervous] ... like everyone ... like is above me know. But then when I started like going to classes and everything, everyone was just normal, just like me ... just trying to learn something for the future ... Like ... it wasn't like, like creepy, like, like going crazy all the time, or like guitars, you know, all		Oh ... that was ... that was kinda hard ... but I really like the principles and things, everybody was completely going like English [college level]. Like I had to start from like [lowest level] and up, you know, and then like the first class, well it was really hard, 'cause I didn't really know how to write an essay, you know, my focus in high school was like like learn English and get all your classes right ... and like learning how to write papers that come last 'cause talking

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	over like high school where it was just something like different, you know, it was like matureness ... Oh, like my professors ... including [a professor] ... it was, like people just ... and like they understand where you're coming from, too ... like in ... for example in [4-year university] they would be like "oh, you're just another student" because the class is so big. But in [community college], the classes, like the classrooms are so small that like people get to, you know to, get to know you better, you know. And you get to have like more connection with the teachers or professors ... And then ... you know he wasn't doing this in a malice way, it was just, you know, he was trying to know first hand and when I saw him afterwards, I told him, "you know what I had for breakfast today? I had yogurt, bananas, and I drink green tea ..." And then he's like, "yeah [Juan] I was just using you as an example, that you know, just because you're Hispanic doesn't mean you eat tacos everyday or any of their ethnic foods ... " Well, that wasn't necessarily bad, it's just ... you know, expectations and everyone laughed. They knew I was being sarcastic, I don't eat that everyday ... and it's just kind of like ... what ... why would he think of that to ask me ... I mean I understand he didn't just ask about Hispanics, it's just why would they just eat that ... and I kind of thought, maybe it's just ... you know ... back to what you said, stereotyping ... you know ... yeah ... I admit, Hispanics are very devout ... the majority of them are devout Catholics ... I say yes ... but that doesn't necessarily mean they're all you know, down on their knees praying		and communicating was the first step ... it was hard. They just thought it was cool ... you know, coming from over there ... but they always asked "why?" from [country] to [state]. And I just told them that it was because I wanted to learn English and all that ... and yeah ... I think, think I made more friends that way. (sigh) ... well ... (pause) well (laughter) I had a ... well back to if I had any ... you said White students ask me any questions ... well I actually had a professor, this was my [a particular class], he was talking about logic and with logic stereotypes. He said ... you know ... I'm trying to remember ... he's talking about how if you're Asian, do you eat Asian food. And then, are you Black, do you eat, you know ... what they ... people perceive what they eat, just like Asians ... and then he was talking about Hispanics and well he asked if there's any Hispanics in this room, well the majority ... well most probably the one, I know the only minority in there and he was like "[Juan], do they really eat you know tacos every day" are they really all devout Catholics. And I told him, "yeah, all the time. And I go to church every single day" ...

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	to God with the Rosary ... I mean, yes, they're religious ... yes ... but that doesn't mean they all are ... (laughs)		
Desári	I guess ... ummm ... just feeling really kind of scared when I first got there because I didn't know what to expect and I was kind of afraid to fail ... so I guess that would be my most memorable ... I remember even having dreams, like I would [go] up to class, and, in my dream I would not be prepared, like I wouldn't have my books, or something like that ... just really weird things like that ... so ... I kind of felt like anxiety I guess ... the first year ... I was just afraid to fail and just didn't feel like the odds were really for me. I don't know if administrators have just ... at a college like [the community college] ... have in any way remember what it was like to be that age and coming to school. I mean, I saw kids there signing up with their parents by their side, that's how young these kids are when they come to [the community college]. And I don't know what the assumption is ... I know we're supposed to be adults by that time and we're supposed to be able to take care of ourselves but ... yeah it's a big cold world and there's a lot of paperwork and a lot of confusing rules and a ... high ... you know a cost involved for a lot of people. I would try to go to the instructor and he was just like, well, you know ... that's you know pretty much how it is, you know ... that's the nature of the beast ... I think that's what he had said ... he used ... I just remember going in his office and having to withdraw and just crying you know because I didn't want to withdraw but I didn't feel	One of them was a [specific content] class and [this class] is not one of my strong subjects so you know I don't know a lot of the [course] that most people know because I ... I was never taught it, I guess. So, in this class, well I was starting to feel overwhelmed, and that was part of it, but the one thing that really turned me off was I asked a question in class and he like turned it around and completely humiliated me in front of everybody about it. And so, I ended up dropping the class. I don't feel like I got noticed very much there outside of my classrooms, or even inside the classrooms ... again, I just think I felt ... I felt like except for in [one] class where we did a lot of interacting, the whole time I was at [the community college] I think it was more as if I was just invisible. Yeah ... especially since after I got my job at the [administrative center] I would ... there would be students coming in, just barely signing up for school so I would, you know, try to help them ... tell them it's not that bad ... you know ... some of the other staff there that worked in the [another administrative] office weren't as helpful so ... they'd come over to our office ... and they would tell us these things so we would try to help them. I just think there's a lot of opportunity there for the staff you know to be helpful and not expect everyone that walks in the door to be completely up on how it all works ...	I just felt like some professors weren't as understanding as others ... ummm ... for example, like my first semester ... in my [specific content] class, the teacher made us stay late and right at that time I had to pick up my kids from school and she made us ... certain people that you know she wanted them to re-do a particular assignment, and I'm like, well ... "my kids ... I have to pick up my kids" ... and she was like, well that's a personal problem and you need to learn how to manage your time ... You know, nobody ever made me feel like I belonged, but they didn't make me feel unwelcome. They just didn't make ... I don't feel that anybody on that campus in any you know in any paid position on that campus ever reached out to me ever, except maybe Professor Blair Bentley ... none of the counselors, none of the other teachers I had there ... not even the person in the coffee shop. Nobody ever seemed to care one way or the other that I was there ...

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	like ... I didn't feel like I would have succeeded ... I guess they look at me and they don't see somebody that would be that smart I guess. ... I don't know ... maybe I didn't dress like them or ... talk like them ... I kind of knew people had their racist ways but ... never actually had to deal with it so much at one time in one place ... Well one instructor actually in particular, who's pretty well known ... I don't know if I should mention his name or not, you know I took a class with him because I had heard from other students he was really great, and everybody loved him, so I was like, wow, I'm going to take this class and then when I did, I didn't see that from him, what everybody else, seen. So I felt like ... yeah like he just pretty much kind of was like you know would look at me kind of like when I would ask questions or whatever kind of like I was bothering ... him. And ... I mean I don't know if it was because of appearance or whatever, but he seemed to give like the little petite, cute, little White girls more ... more help, more attention than I felt I was getting. Even though I'd be raising my hand just as long ... I would kind of get brushed off ... I mean I would sit in the front row ... so it was a big class but I always sat in the front row, I always you know, never late kind of thing ... so ... it kind of changed my view on this person ...	I just always felt kind of bad that there wasn't much of a community there to speak of, you know, that they didn't have active, social, you know, things going on ... and that things they did have were poorly attended ...	
Stephanie	And I realized this when I took him ... in the class and he makes a statement um ... mentioning how it used to be back in the olden days when African-Americans couldn't	One, either risking my grade ... um ... two, because of my own personal life and personal experiences, I'm ... I can't handle the strain of doing that ... there used to be	I think the classes should be a bit more diverse ... um ... I've always kind of wondered what if all these people from the east coast came over and moved to the

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Krista	date White people, or we couldn't do certain things, and White people were in charge, and the statement he made was kind of encouraging all the other White students to get back on gear, like why are they not performing as well anymore and I ... that was when I realized this guy doesn't even see me as being a part of his class. He doesn't even know that I'm here.	a time when I was ... very vocal (laughs) about the way I was treated or if I felt like I deserved a better grade I would speak up immediately ... um ... but because I can't handle the emotional aspect of it ... I would say I'm physically stressed out ... I'm really just ... I can't ... like I can't ... I physically can't do it so now I just do what I have to do to alleviate my stresses, and that is get my grade and ... I would like to be somebody in the future, after I ... you know, get past my struggles and make it ... to come back and change certain situations for other people ... She told me well, why are you in this ... class? Did you take a placement test? Who's ... class are you in and I ... that hurt me because like I came ... I was really just trying to get out of high school, I didn't want to finish school, I didn't want to be in school any more. ... they made me feel like I didn't know it and couldn't know it, and so now [the subject] is really, really hard because I don't have the confidence I walked in the room with, it's not there, at all ...	west coast and all the people from the west, you know, in like a mass integration ... you know, I'm sure it would shock a lot of people ... but I think that's kind of what needs to happen in order to start like a change immediately, is to just dump ... you know ... a thousand minorities at the campus ... I think the only time I've ever actually felt oppressed was in my [content] class. Because ... he made it ... and I confirmed this later after the class, but he made it seem like if the White kids were not acting up to par, like he felt they should have been and they weren't going to pass his class or succeed where he wanted them to, then I could not and I will not ...
	The Bentleys engage the class. I mean, they make the content interesting even if it's a topic you don't find interesting, they make it interesting, through various methods, you know whatever methods they have up their sleeves, whatever teaching styles they happened to have ... they make the class interesting, they engage everybody. They get the class laughing ... this doesn't sound right but there's great teacher chemistry with the students, or with the co-teacher. And that right there, the chemistry between the students and the instructor, if there's no chemistry there, and that's not the right word, but I think you know what I mean ... like a connection or	You know, there's a lot of envy that can be felt among others when you see what they have and you don't. It's hard ... it's hard to see people that have whatever they want and knowing that if I buy two or three shirts that you know, each month, that I'm not going to have money for groceries at the end of the month. I can't do that ... The [foster homes] when I was little, the earliest ones I remember seemed nicer, you know, there would be a family and sometimes ... they had their own children, one or two and that's when me and my sister were placed together and those	I would say, one of the most things that really struck me the most, is the amount of help that people are willing to give me. I mean, all I have to do is, you know, go say "this is the problem" not necessarily the problem I'm having but you know this is my situation and people have been more than happy to help me. I went to [APCC] and ... spoke to somebody about getting in part time, I don't remember who I spoke to but they were very helpful and ... ah ... let me know all my options and everything. I honestly did most of it by myself because things are so spread out there.

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	you know you just ... you feel right ... you're comfortable with that teacher. There was a couple of times when I was really struggling being at school ... I just was discouraged and it was very difficult ... when I started school my son was [age], my daughter was barely [age], and ... I was going to leave, I had [content] professor that was very anti-military and very nasty and very discouraging and he did not like me and I couldn't ... do anything right in his class. There is a girl in my class, she was African-American and ... there was racism and sexism in the class and [the professor] ... The [administrative] office is awful, awful over there ... You can't ever get a hold of them, number one. They're impossible to make an appointment with. I mean it just felt helpless because there was nobody that listened ... I wasn't in there because I had done anything wrong, um ... I had a bad ... bad mother ... and ah ... it just felt like um ... people looked down their nose at me because I was a trouble maker, I mean I had to have been a trouble maker, right, I was in foster care ... I think it may be more the instructor because we don't have that interaction; [a teacher] just kind of overwhelms us with the amount of work. I mean it is ... it's a very interesting subject but I'm just not getting anything out of it. I'm not even sure what happened, he ... he was not a nice man and he was ... there is a girl in my class, she was African-American and ... he was ... I don't think he's even there any more ... but	seemed not too bad ... It's still very expensive ... and ... you know they ... I guess there's a some kind of help with day care help that you can get, and a couple of my friends get that through the county, I guess ... but if not, then it's ... it's very expensive, it's over \$30 a day, even at the lowest pay scale ... um ... and then they don't have it at the downtown campus. Dr. Blair Bentley has always, always been there ... had an open door policy with me, so ... and I still talk to him regularly. And as I was going through my divorce ... I was open about it when I found out that I was going to get divorced. You know, and I had some fantastic professors that were there for me and they didn't, they didn't give me the easy road, per se, but they were there and, [name] she was my [language] professor at the time and she ... she ... she said "I know what you're going through and I'm going to keep you busy." And I just ... it seems like because I sought out the help, I got it.	The instructor kept saying, "this is stuff you did in high school" ... and I ... I ... I mean, what do you say, that was fifty kids ... fifty people in the class ... it was the biggest class I ever took there as well um ... and when he said stuff like that, "this is the stuff you should have learned in high school", because I asked questions ... what can I say, I didn't go to high school? In front of all these people? ... I think that Dr. Blair Bentley was the only teacher that I've ever had that has brought up ... ummm ... race and diversity and actually talked about it ... Even ... even like in my younger school years, never, that was never brought up because there's just a really taboo thing to talk about ... I fit in the middle of everything. That's what I feel like. I feel like I identify with many different cultures, aspects, socio-economic classes ...

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Noelani	there was racism and sexism in the class and he ... the grading was off ...		
	Sometimes I felt like a fly like in their glass of milk ... I don't know (laughs) that's like the best way for me to explain it.	I don't know, I guess I just feel like it was really oppressive because it made me look at myself from their eyes ... so I made me see myself as not being able to succeed because I was looking at myself through their eyes ... that I wasn't going to be anything, ever, because ... because of who they saw me as ... and ... I didn't really have the power to change that until I started looking at myself differently ... and not facing that because I realized that I shouldn't be basing it off of the way that they see me because there's going to be a lot of people in life that want to see you fail and then there's going to be a lot of people that want to see you succeed.	Well people say, "oh, are you Chinese or Japanese?" and I go, no ... and they say "what?" and I go, I'm neither ... and they go "oh, you're not Asian?" and I go, you know there's more than Chinese and Japanese, buddy ... but I don't take it offensively. I know that it's ... it's you know, if somebody doesn't have exposure to [country], they don't know what [ethnicity] would be ... we're a very small country and we don't have as much money as Japan, we're not as big as China ... so, I do mention that "oh, I'm [ethnicity]" and they go ... "oh, like from North Korea?" and I go, "no ... 'cause then I don't think I'd be here ..."
	There were a lot of kids like speaking out towards me and I was kind of offended that [the professor] just like kind of let it happen right in front of her.	I was self-destructive and I was really hurt that that even happened, because it was just so ridiculous for me to even admit ... think that that would happened to me like when I went to college and then it happening to me was even more ridiculous ...	yeah, ... what if I had blonde hair (laughs) you know, what if I dyed my hair blonde ... (laughs) but ... ah ... but yeah, so I get that sometimes ... I tell them, stereotypes are wrong and even when they're positive, even when it's "oh you're Asian, you're good at math" because then you have placed an expectation on this person and they may not be good at math, but they're not going to say anything, especially to a tutor because if you're assuming they're good at math, you know, with the African-American male, you can't say "oh, well you're African-American, you gotta be great at basketball" you know? And it's like, I've never played basketball ... you know, I have friends who are African-American and they go, and they're tall, and the tall African-American, oh you've got to play basketball. And they go, "actually, I play basketball" or "I hate sports" and then, oh my goodness, revelation
	I just felt like it was discrimination ...		
	... with their needs, you know, with the classroom ... and you know like I see some of the students who are taking the [development content] class and I love [software system] and I love [another software] I think they're wonderful programs ... but when you force students to use it ... and they've never seen a computer before, it's not fair. You didn't even tell them there's a computer pre-req ... so if you say all the [content] classes have pre-reqs, fine, but at least they know, there must be a computer thing in there, you know? So I think that my experience is that we've gotta get past this ... shoving education down everybody's throat ...		
	Well, the thing about APCC is like I really didn't know who to ... go to about it ... they have a multicultural or diversity center and it was hard for me to ... I don't even know where that is, pretty much ... and ... I just really didn't know who to go to, the department chair or the dean and I didn't know if there was a department chair ...		
	the worst thing, was that she didn't say anything about it		

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	so it was like demotivating to me because I didn't really want to come to class after that ... You'd think that a the community college level all of the faculty and administration would want to give everybody a chance. Whether you're student, staff, whatever it is and you know, because we have great success stories ...		... you know? I think that the main thing that I would change at APCC is ... I would make their ... 'cause I realize that their core values do include diversity ... don't they?...and so I would make it really important that all of the professors, instructors, people at every level of the organization uphold those to the fullest. Because I really lost a lot of faith in APCC after reading like their core values and their mission statement and I was like, "wow, they talk about it but they don't practice it."

Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani shared experiences with APCC's structural system in common with other underrepresented populations. These experiences were contradictory in that they were welcomed and unwelcomed, wanted and unwanted, and mentored and ignored by APCC's structural system. During the interview my participants developed their stories by highlighting and describing their experiences. In turn, through my holistic critical lens I developed a commentary to present their stories recognizing, however, that my commentary does not overshadow their stories.

In these structural system experiences, all participants experienced social injustices based upon at least one issue of class, race/ethnicity, and gender. Each participant decided which issue to highlight and how to describe it. Participants knew when they experienced an injustice or an affirmation. They all acknowledged their positive structural system experiences, but they were equally willing to state their negative ones. During their highlighting and describing they revealed that they were

status strivers, that they were accumulating or expending cultural capital, and that they maintained or transformed habitus in different ways (Horvat, 2003). Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani successfully moved their higher education to a 4-year institution, breaking a barrier many first-generation students face who began their postsecondary experience at a community college (Striplin, 1999).

As a status striver Jason pursued a career with significant economic rewards and transformed his habitus with the help of multiple mentors (Horvat, 2003). Brandon achieved entrepreneurial success and Stephanie sought a medical career that provided distinction. Juan, a Latin@, successfully moved his higher education to a 4-year institution, breaking a barrier many Latin@s face when they begin their postsecondary experience at a community college (Sólorzano et al., 2005). Juan also followed a pattern in literature that Latin@s who attend Catholic secondary schools more often complete college (Garcia & Bayer, 2005). Juan demonstrated his status striving by gaining cultural capital in order to pursue a fulfilling career. Desári and Stephanie dedicated themselves to completing doctorates in medical or education degrees to distinguish themselves, while Krista's and Noelani's status striving lead them to careers as college professors or corporate human resource executives. For each participant, education was a means to a desired end.

Through these structural system experiences, all participants either witnessed or experienced spiritual attacks to their personhood. Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, and Noelani experienced exclusion through educational structures and practices as predicted by Critical race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Jason, Brandon, Desári, Krista, and Noelani experienced spiritual attacks based upon class (Horvat, 2003).

Structural attacks for Juan, Krista, and Noelani were based upon intercultural (or intracultural) incompetence of the dominant culture since they were bi-cultural, born in another country, persons of color, spoke a foreign language, or had immigrated (Deardorff, 2004; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). All participants' identities were under attack by the structural system that challenged their calling and membership as examined through Spiritual Leadership Theory (Fry, 2003). Some of the participants admitted that they were not yet ready to challenge White privilege and domination, while others individually sought justice like Brandon, Stephanie, and Noelani by individually speaking out.

Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista and Noelani shared how a teacher-mentor, part of APCC's structural system, guided and influenced them in their educational experience that set a foundation for future success. They also shared counter examples that weighed on them heavily such as expensive childcare services, work study fiascos, and racist and sexist experiences. APCC's structural system was contradictory for the underrepresented population (Moore, 2006). Quotes by Brandon, Krista, and Noelani underscore the positive structural system that a community college can offer to the underrepresented population while their quotes also expose the contradictory aspects of APCC.

Research Question: Dominant Ideology

Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani had to cope with the dominant ideology. Through coping they developed a pattern of thinking in order to survive their APCC experience. Table 3 is my cross-composite analysis of how my participants coped with APCC's dominant ideology and answers my second research

question: *How did successful, underrepresented students learn forms of reasoning that challenged dominant ideology as conducted by administrators, faculty, and staff? How did they question social forms that ideology justifies? How did they question cultural forms that ideology justifies? How did they question political forms that ideology justifies?* I reveal their forms of reasoning through critical, spiritual, and intercultural themes. I used Bourdieuan theory (Horvat, 2003), spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003), and intercultural competencies (Deardorff, 2004) to expose false ideology, personal attacks to participants' meaning and purpose, and ignorance of intercultural (or intracultural) issues. Table 4 includes a sampling of interview excerpts to demonstrate how I linked the data through these three themes to accomplish this exposure.

Table 4

Dominant Ideology

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Jason	I'm currently unemployed. I have tried so many places, but in today's economy, it's like ... it's really hard to get a job. But, in a way I kind of feel that it's ... like I need to focus on school and it's ... if it were meant for me to have a job, I would have one. It's not something I'm comfortable with wanting to share with other people that much ... so it's kind of something I feel like, you know, I feel like I haven't done my part, to this point, and that's why I'm in this situation and so it's something I'm ... I don't know, I guess it's a little embarrassing on some level, that I really don't want to ...	I never met my father. I know his name that's about it. ... Never heard from him. Don't know much about him. My mom ... I'm the only child from that relationship. Her and my father were never married ... My mom is ... never had any college ... ummm ... she's always been like a waitress or a cook or she used to ... she used to work as a civilian for a military contractor. But she's a cook and has been for several years.	I have to arrange my schedule around what time I can be at the house for [a younger brother]. What time I can babysit and you know, that's like, it's ... so it's sort of like put some stress on you know, as far as, like the ability to do some of the work in class because I have to watch my little brother and ... and ... things of that kind. We had to get tires on it because one of the tires had gone out and so it was time to get like an all new set of tires because there was no way they could actually fix that tire ... so ... and the spare tire we couldn't keep on there for a long time, so we had to get new tires and my mom, she, like she has most of the bills to pay and like I contribute a monthly

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
			bill as far as that. I usually contribute like with the tire situation, I pretty much, I bought the tires for the car ...
Brandon	No, no ... some of the classes you had to work in groups, okay, and some of the students did not welcome me, did not want me in their groups ... you can look at their expression, facial expression ... and ... you know ... I mean, granted, the ratio of White/Black students even now, I mean, is still predominantly White students in the college where you only have a small percent, maybe less than one percent of Black students, and even less of Black males. I, I mean, out of the three years I was here at [name of community college], I would say that the most I've ever seen as far as Black males maybe one or two other, you know, Black ... I have always, for the most part, just been me ... you know ... and ... and being a Black male, you know, you do feel the tension and you do see you know how they group and just want to talk to each other and then when they see that you're trying and that you are carrying your weight, they become more receptive and open up but you have ... you definitely have to prove yourself and that's ... over and over again, you know ... that was quite common for me to prove myself ...	And I just felt cheated, like deprived, like everybody else were from a home that received basic education, teacher molded and gave them the necessary knowledge and guidance in ... in ... in their education to become successful and ... I was feeling as if I was just produced in a mold in such a way to be a failure and end up in the criminal system, being incarcerated ... for ... for crime ... I was like, I was produced to be a criminal ...	Now, my mother could not read and write and she was all about you know having to work in the fields back in [state], therefore she wasn't able to teach me, or my other siblings, how to read and write as well. I never knew him, he divorced my mom when I was three years old, okay. There were no father figures in my life. No mentors in my life. No male figures, period. It was a family of [large number for a family], [number] girls who are older than me and one brother, a younger brother of course, and me.
Juan	yeah ... I was just nervous like in the beginning because it's something different, like I don't really expecting ... and I just adapt to it, you know, it was ... Well, I ... just like ... you just went like day-to-day. I didn't do anything, I mean just, like, everyday, like ... one day was just I took two people, like I made new friends ... you just ... I just fit in ... I don't know ... I really didn't do anything ... I just went like I was supposed to go ...	[I] should not be here, in college, today ... ummmm ... I was expelled from middle school and high school. The reason being, years ago, I was a very different person ... I acted differently, I dressed differently, I acted to what my peers expected of me as a standard. And ... unfortunately a lot of that, I think a lot of Hispanic youth get into ... and ... hmmm ... I was supposed to be a gang member, years ago. I'm	I'm from [country], with [another country] parents and something about them is uh ... they don't know English ... yeah, they don't know ... I mean they're learning now, but they ... they really don't know any ... and I've been here for about five years now ... so and ... Spanish is my first language. I remember I was talking to my friend, [name] at the time, who is African American, you know since

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	I just ... you know I just try to do what everyone else does, you know. ahh ... middle class college student, currently, and as to identify myself, I don't really like terming myself Hispanic because I think that people have certain expectations of me, maybe the way I act ... maybe the way I should act or what I should speak and I really ... it's not that I frown upon it, it's just I'd rather not go into that ... (hesitating) ... I guess, well, since most people see me and say if they ever have an ethnicity question, I guess I'd have to put Hispanic 'cause when they see me, physically, that's what you are, so, it has to be that ... It's kind of like with me ... I want to be different. I don't want to be [Juan] he looks Hispanic he must do this, he must talk like that, he must speak that language, but it's kind of like I want to do things a little different. I want to be unique. I don't want to be ... you know ... since [I am this] that, he has to, you know, do this or act like that ... And you know, because the color of my skin, I'm kind of tannish, people think, you know, you're Hispanic, hey, you must speak that ... but it's kind of like, "no, I'm American" just like ... a naturalized citizen here, I was born here ... I'm American ...	... those guys aren't expected to get out of high school. You don't even have to finish high school, it's just you work, you go with your other peers and you do whatever ... I guess you can say, expected activities, but yet, illegal activities expected of you ... I mean, they want you to do these things to which they think is a standard and how you should live because you identify with us ... this is the standard, this is the norm. Everyone else isn't ... and I guess when I lived in [a southern state], I was ... when I went to a school that was primarily minorities, it's just ... in a way I felt comfortable there, living that lifestyle ... and that you know, who cares about education. Just and the school was full of it ... I guess you could say that the school was full of guys definitely didn't care about education, was more so as ... recognition and also what your other peers expected of you ... this is the life you live, this is how you should live ... and after I was expelled I went, well, my mother searched for you know another school to go to and every high school I went to in that district they told me, you know, under this regulation of the expulsion, you're demanded to go to this alternative school. And after going there, I learned that it was college preparatory and that the expectation of everyone is to graduate high school and go to college. You go here to prepare for college and eventually go to college after you're done here. This is what we expect of you. And also, on top of that, you're expected to learn all this ... all these theologies and also religion. You're expected to go to Mass two times a week, we want you to pick these morals, and I thought to myself, there's things	we're both minorities, we discuss, you know, how we deal with everyday life situations ... or even how we talk. I mean, she mentioned to me how her Black friends expect her to talk, you know, how other Blacks do, you know, all this slang ... and you know, urban and she told me how "you know what [Juan], that's how they speak, but I speak proper ... I speak the standard" and that goes back to how I mentioned the White standard. Because they set how you talk ...

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
		called morals? There's also education and why do you need education? And from what I learned there, all the staff had at least a Bachelor's, if not a Master's or PhD. You know I saw successful people that taught there ... you know, they graduated high school, they got their degree at least and I saw that they're successful people because they wanted it, they strived for it, they worked for it ... and I told myself, you know what, this old high school I went to, they didn't inspire you to get that ... They ... they don't have expectations of you ... over here they're saying "when you graduate, we want you to go to college ... " and I told myself, wow, that's pretty high but yet, that's pretty promising ... And after ... just after going there you know I picked up all of these things and I just dropped my old me and, yeah ... I was ... I was a very happy person after [that] ...	
Desári	But that's just an example I think of a similar situation of a kid today that you know, the way I felt at my college, you know, I had this huge issue but I didn't feel like there was anybody I could talk to about it and obviously he didn't either. I just remember a conversation in class about ... about where there was a White male student who was you know, sort of raised his hand and said "I'm a White male and I feel like I've been ... everybody holds everything against me because I'm White" (laughs) and I just thought, you are so young ... and you haven't lived yet. I mean ... he just ... I could understand where he's coming from, but it is just so not the same thing for somebody like that ... and ... and then they feed picked on when other people point it out ... but it's ... it's not the same ... but you know, other	I'll tell you the truth, bottom line ... [the local area] was no happier to see me than anybody at [the community college] or [specific] campus. I tell ya ... when we ... every experience we had in the first couple of years coming here was ... it was as if people just looked at us and said, "You're from [western state]- go home!" It was the most unwelcome I have ever felt in my life.	This sounds really weird, but I had never been around that many White people ... and I just felt like ... I don't know, I just felt really out of place there ... I didn't feel right at home at first, I guess ... I mean that may have been my own culture shock kind of thing, but it was like a little mini-culture shock for me when I first started going there ... It was around the time when they were really starting to come down on the immigration laws and stuff like that ... and ... umm ... actually a speech class that I was in and an [specific content class] that I was in ... we had some debates and some of them got pretty heated and after the fact I don't know, like, these students that I actually you know got into semi-confrontations with in class ... umm ... I don't know, I

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	than that conversation, I don't think I have ever observed anything negative and part of the reason for that is that there just aren't a lot of minorities at that campus. At least it didn't feel like it to me.		guess I didn't actually see them that way, they seemed really nice and then after I kind of seen how they really felt, I mean I kind of felt like, wow, this is how they look at me, like I don't belong here ... like you know, my parents should have never came here ... kind of thing ...
Stephanie	Stereotypes are bogus, I think, so ... and I don't fit the stereotype for I guess the typical African-American person, if there is one ... I'd like to make it ... so that students are more noticed and that you don't have to be an extrovert to get the attention, you know? So that ... I don't know ... so that students who need, you know, to be cared for and need somebody to pay attention to them and make sure that they're doing okay, get that, so they can finish and they can make something of their lives, I guess. That's what I'd like to see ... Instead of it just being you know, everyone for themselves or ... just the normal go with the flow, whatever, you know ... do your own thing ... where you end up you know, who knows ... Well ... try to be normal. I mean I guess I don't really, I don't really care, I'm pretty much just me. If a professor, if I think a professor is a ... I don't know, I'm going to say I'm never mean to professors, I really respect my professors and I respect what they do, you know, but, I think if they're being unfair or ... if they're ... if they're you know doing something I might think is not cool or something like that, I have subtle ways of inserting that I feel like it's not cool. Hasn't affected my GPA so far ...	It's what we think, what society thinks, is acceptable ... it's okay for people to fall through cracks, I mean ... I might not think so, but society just thinks it's going to happen, so why do anything about it ... you know ... whatever, they'll find a way to make it work ... I guess, but ... no! you know, if they're making an effort let's do something to make sure they keep making an effort because some people you know, this is their first time ... I mean, going to a good school where they have to ... put in some time, put in something that they're not ... they're not completely used to and they might get discouraged or you know they might have things going on that they just feel like nobody understands it, it could be anything ... but ... I guess it should ... maybe if there's like a mentors or ... maybe if your advisors knew you or if there's a way to make that happen, it would be easier ...	But I haven't walked down the halls and gone, "I'm the only black kid here" I haven't felt that way ... maybe I should ... but ... I mean I don't judge ... I don't see my race having anything to do with what I'm capable of so ... which shouldn't matter what I'm doing in the sea of White people as long as I'm accomplishing my goals, I guess ... I don't know ... We moved into just a predominantly black area and I got kind a claustrophobic, I guess, and then immediately my dad got a better job and we ended up moving up to the [specific locality] area and that was a predominantly White area and I remember in like middle school and high school I used to wear a jacket all the time and I'd never take it off. And it was because I felt claustrophobic (laughs) again ... um ... in the ... I didn't ... I didn't realize I was different until I made that transition, because when I was first in the Black community they didn't really accept me there because I didn't listen to rap music and I didn't recognize my color, and I didn't act the way that they wanted me to, and then when I moved to the White community I wasn't White, I wasn't accepted there either, so that's when I started to notice, and put together all um ... my experiences of racism throughout my life ... um ... and so now I guess ... like I try to ignore it and just put it past me, but every once in awhile I'll have incidences

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Krista	I don't know ... you know over here there's very much an open door policy of "come and see me" and I mean, there was that there, but there's not really ... the office hours and the approachability wasn't like it is here.	I've never been very good at [course content] and I've struggled with [it]. And actually, I started at the bottom of the pile so to speak with [lowest level content course] and I had Mr. [name]. That class I actually aced [the content] for the first time in my life and enjoyed it and actually learned it and retained that information. It was the same for [next level] with the same instructor and then I had [third level] over the summer with [name] and that ... was not as easy as the other two ... but I still passed ... passed it with a pretty good, high B, and then I went to do [4 th level] ...	... that remind me, you know, the world's not a happy place.
	But I think that, that I pushed myself into the spotlight, though, whereas a lot of people don't know how to do that. And I made sure I was known, I made sure I set meetings, I networked with my professors, I said what am I doing right? What am I doing wrong? What do I do to become successful? I used tools that I had, not necessarily that I learned anywhere, I just figured out ... to get ahead ...	I'd consider myself a spiritual person. ... A lot of people gasp if you admit that out loud. ... but I am very spiritual. I see God in everything ... and in my children's eyes ... but having a historical ... view point I see the holes in religion and realize that religion is made by man and not, not that I judge those who do it, because I understand what other people will find in the solace of religion, and I think that's what people need.	
	I build on my strengths ... my resistance has changed since as my education goes on. ... I know my strengths now and I've shaped my strengths.	I had to reevaluate what was important in life, and what was important was to make sure that my children, number one, that they don't know that we're impoverished, because we are ... you know. And they don't know that. And that's the most important thing to me is that they don't feel like they're missing anything.	
		... prayer ... a lot of prayer ... and I really think that's where most of my strength has always come from ... But I think you develop a strong will when you're in	

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
		business and I'm sure that's where a lot of that came from.	
Noelani			And I don't know why it's like the only really significant thing that I remember, but it was when I was taking a class with [name] and basically the first, the first day of class we were talking about immigration laws, because that was around the time when that whole thing was going on with Mexico and I said that America was a melting pot and that we should take a different approach because there was a lot of people in class speaking out about how they should just go back to Mexico ... and I felt offended because my family's not ... doesn't really originate from America ... like Japanese people and my family, [birth country] people, my family and so are not all from America. My mom came over here from [birth country] so I was ... I was like really offended with that and so I was like, "well, we are the melting pot so we should probably act like it ..." and then from that day forward, there was just a lot of stuff that went on and right after I made that comment, there was a student in my class that told me that I should go back to [birth country], or wherever I'm from.

All participants developed a pattern of thinking in order to survive their APCC experience. This pattern of thinking was a coping mechanism for participants to deal with an obstacle. At times the obstacle's source originated in an APCC faculty's or administrator's false ideology.

Jason felt pressure from the dominant ideology around the lack of personal financial and social achievement (Horvat, 2003). Jason believed that he should be more fiscally sound at this point in life, yet he had faithfully served his country in the military and was honorably discharged with a partial disability. Jason also felt he needed to provide for his family's needs (tires for a car), unlike middle- and upper-class students who sense no such burden. The literature states that there are significant parental and family issues that the underrepresented population experiences that are not experienced by the dominant group (Striplin, 1999). Thus the dominant ideology found at APCC obstructed the ability of non-student stakeholders to correctly perceive and understand Jason's and other underrepresented populations' predicaments. For Jason, APCC's dominant ideology was an injustice because the dominant ideology was an attack on his self-worth as demonstrated by his embarrassment to even discuss his economic status with his peers. He also demonstrated his self-initiative value by seeking employment at "so many places," unfortunately without success.

Jason's identity, an aspect of spirituality, was steadily transforming from that of his birth-father and -mother. He was there for his children unlike his father and he was pursuing cultural capital unlike his mother. Jason was also experiencing an intercultural crisis that was different than other middle- and upper-class students. His work load required serving his parents by babysitting his younger brother.

Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, and Noelani coped with dominant ideologies that were class, race, and gender based. These ideologies were not related to APCC, but were realities that they had to cope with while in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. However, these educational foundations did impact their community college

education. The critical incidents that occurred at APCC were their negative experiences, which were based upon racial ideologies within the classroom, whether these experiences were directly related to a faculty or indirectly through a faculty pedagogical choice to use small groups. These negative experiences were attacks to their spiritual and cultural well-being. Their method of resistant thinking drove them to persevere, to overcome, and to succeed as incredible odds weighed against them. They also compared their plight with the dominant White, middle- and upper-class, mono-language, and privileged culture. Their resistant thinking included the ability to embrace APCC administrators and faculty who mentored them and scaffolded their learning by recognizing and respecting their past and appreciating their identities. When Brandon's, Juan's, Desári's, Stephanie's, and Noelani's spiritual and intercultural identities were affirmed and learning appropriately scaffolded, they were able to move on to achieve their goals. They had a safe learning environment; students were validated, welcomed, and encouraged; and there was a connection between students and the teachers (Parks, 2000; Rendón, 1994; Tisdell, 2003).

Juan and Desári had to develop ways of thinking to cope with the dominant ideology of speaking English and to account for immigrating to the United States from a Spanish speaking country. Juan conversed with an African-American student to discuss "how we deal with everyday life" to meet the dominant ideology, "the White standard." The reality that the underrepresented population found it necessary to discuss ways of coping is foreign to the dominant culture because the dominant culture defines and maintains the standard (Horvat, 2003).

One participant's family had emigrated from Western Europe when she was young. Because she was White, the dominant ideology expected her not to have academic problems, but she was caught in two White worlds, the White United States and the White Western Europe, without being wholly one or the other. She was torn because her parents were torn between two cultures. She shared: "I spent quite a bit of my life going back and forth to Europe because my parents felt extremely torn ..." Noelani, being from Asia, also experienced emigration issues. She confronted the dominant ideology by reminding the dominant culture of the ideals found on the Statue of Liberty and the reality that the United States was a melting pot. The confrontation brought her rebuke and an exhortation to move back to her birth country.

One false ideology is the myth that poor people must abandon their current values, relationships, and networks and adopt an entirely new set of values, relationships, and networks from the middle- and upper-class (Payne, 2005). Jason and Juan found that they were able to maintain their former relationships and networks as well as add new relationship and networks while at APCC.

Another false ideology held by APCC's administrators and faculty was the inability to see needs in order to serve the underrepresented population. Jason's values enabled him to see how to best serve first-generation students during their early days at APCC. Since he experienced those difficult first days, he was more apt to see and then respond to a first-generation student's needs. This was also true for Desári and Stephanie; they were quick to help rather than leave students feeling abandoned or confused.

Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani found ways to resist the dominant culture's false ideology, but were unable or uncertain how to transform the

environment. When the faculty and the administrators were able to support and affirm participants' meaning and purpose (Fry, 2003), and were knowledgeable of cultural differences (Deardorff, 2004), all participants were able to achieve their goals. When the faculty and administrators failed to do the same, the participants were overwhelmed and considered dropping out of APCC. The participants selected self-defeating or conformist resistance in order to cope with the dominant ideology, leaving the LatCrit option of transformative resistance for some possible future date (Sólorzano & Bernal, 2001).

Research Question: Lifeworld

Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani have unique lifeworlds, yet their lifeworlds also shared much in common. Their lifeworlds include all the skills, values, and attitudes set within their environment. Table 4 is my cross-composite analysis of the underrepresented population's lifeworld and answers my third research question: *How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of capitalist ethics? How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of market forces? How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of bureaucratic rationality?* As before, I will examine their lifeworld using my three frames: critical, spiritual, and intercultural. Critical will examine issues related to social justice; spiritual related to identity and care; and intercultural whenever the issues are related to intracultural or intercultural.

Table 2

Lifeworld

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Jason	I think I'm really behind the power curve for somebody ... an equivalent person to me would be. I've you know I've just started attending college two years ago and I don't have any retirement ... anything set up for retirement yet and I'm nervous about that. And I'm really unsure of my future because I don't ... I mean I have some skills but not ... they're not your typical skills where you can just walk in somewhere and get a job. Most of the time it would require me to travel or something and I really don't want to be away from my kids anymore because I did too much of that in the military. Part of the reason I got out. So I just ... I see myself as really behind the power curve. I don't see myself as a very accomplished person. Yeah ... not like let society take over for me. You know, I make my own decisions and I am the person who I am because of my experiences. And so, I am not going to let my bad experiences like hold me back from who I want to be ... I'm not where I should be in life, as far you know job security, I don't have any job security. I don't really have a job know, I'm a work study and a full time student. And I go to school through vocational rehab from the military from being, through disability in the military. And ... I am a disabled vet as well. And ... I just think that at [age] years old, I'm going to be [age] this month, you know I should be secure in a job. I should be able to support my kids and my ex-	I'm not sure what ... what I'm going to do with my degree, yet. You know which road I'm going to take once I get it and I have a little bit of time to decide that. I would be nice to find some way to be self-employed and use my degree in that way. ... But yeah, I believe that it will put me into a better financial situation. A more secure future. I would just use it to help others, in general. Now it's kind of hard, because, it's over this past year or whatever when I lived in [state], you learn a lot of whenever you're on your own, you learn a lot of who you can really trust and who people really are. And I definitely feel that it is ... it's ... you realize that some people will use you, to get what they can out of you. Instead of using you, or not necessarily using you, but being your friend just because you're a friend, you know, and knowing that you'll be there for them no matter what.	... just speaking for myself when I go back to when I first walked in that it would have been nice to have had somebody that would recognize, "hey, this guy's never been to college" Maybe we just need to take him by the hand and sit him down and explain to him what does all this mean, you know, when you're here. Why you're here. This is what's available to you, you should be considering this, you know. Maybe you're not sure what career. Let me show you what kind of things we offer and what that means, you know.

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	wife, you know ... better than ... I should be able to give them more than I do, you know. But, I pretty much live paycheck to paycheck now and I don't have a lot. I'm just ... I don't live lavishly, I just wish I was in a better position ... security ... financial ... you know maybe own a house by now.		
Brandon	There's been no one to watch over the Black male student at all ... then there's no ... there was no mentor, there was guidance in terms of ... of ... seeking help if you needed help with any situation. If you were struggling, you know ... you're basically on your own, okay. And whatever the situation or the course of study may have been, I mean you had to take not just an extra step, leaps and bounds and in the instructors face and say "listen, you know, I need help." I'm failing, I'm you know, I'm lost and I had to do that over and over and over again, okay, and I just wouldn't go away, okay. I just refused to accept things. But for those that are ... that ... that ... that were sinking, they sunk, and they just ... they were just weeded out, okay. Now it's totally different [today] ... okay ... you have an avenue to take. There's an individual within the college now that's multi-racial [retention] person that you can go to that will help people of color and people in general, or the African American male who needs help and that help is there for him.		
Juan	I felt both 'cause really people ... there's many kind of people. Sometimes they like you, sometimes they don't ... so ... I mean sometimes they just like ... like they want to be your friend, sometimes they hate you 'cause you are whoever, whatever ... Well like, I really didn't notice cause ... probably like ... like maybe		Not really. 'Cause I'm kind of like, like shy ... but ... I don't like, in [community college] it's so ... such a small class that like you get to like [unclear] everyone, you know, you get to like be around everyone so everyone just ... but you would not be afraid to ask questions if you need to ... but still, I'm a little afraid, so I try to not

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	you might be different, like cultures ... 'cause ... I don't want to be racists, but maybe like Black people have more attitude to things ... so they show you their attitude ... they show you the way they feel. But White people are just like, whatever ... and they don't really like put attitude to things ... I guess ... so that's ... maybe that's why I just never felt it ... cause I mean if someone is like, really like bothering me, like all the time, you know, I will have an attitude ... but, I'm a pretty cool guy, you know, like I don't try to look for trouble or ... but I mean, if they look for me, I'll try to ignore them, but if I can't ignore them, I'll just face them ... Well, the price is a big thing ... I mean a huge thing, 'cause I mean people don't wanna really pay anything extra if they can just pay less for the same class ... plus ... I'm sure they will learn more 'cause the classrooms are like limiting ... it's not like [4-year public institution] you go to a class and there's like 150 students ... you're like "dang, what am I doing here" and you couldn't even like talk to the teacher 'cause if you like wait for the end of the class you have class in ten minutes and there will be like twenty people ahead of you to talk to him, you have to wait to office hours and it just gets complicated. But here, you can just go on and talk to them ...		ask questions ... but if I really have to, I just ask them ... There were like different groups, you know. Like the ... I don't want to say like weird, but ... different, you know? The different group or the cool guys or whatever ... which is why ... there was more like, I don't know, like everyone was in their own like area. Like if you have friends who always met at the front of the cafeteria, so, you just be there and ... it wasn't like ... I don't know, like, the population was just normal, you know?
Desári	So my father was born in [western city], in [year]and lived there all of his life. ... my mother was born in [mid-west state], her parents had immigrated from [Spanish-speaking country] and ... worked as laborers on farms in [mid-west state]. And ... after her parents lost two children to pneumonia, because they lived literally in a little shack out in the snow, my grandfather said "I'm not	Because I mean I know a lot of the professors or whatever, faculty, ummm ... are really into the Christian kind of thing and, I don't know, I think that kind of makes their view on life a little different, and on people in general. I mean not for everybody. It's kind of a general statement but ... maybe a more diverse staff I would say.	Actually a girl had mentioned how she really hated it when she goes into like a [retail outlet] and she hears people speaking Spanish and she knows that they're talking about them. And I'm like ... you know I told her, you know, that's really paranoid for you to think that they're talking about you ... they're just speaking their language that they speak, you know ... if

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	going to have any more babies die from the cold” and so they moved from [mid-west] to [western city] and my grandfather never did anything more lofty than work as a dishwasher in a restaurant on [historical site]. That was the ... extent of his skill level. And so my mother was born into a family of seven children. And she was the second oldest and so she really pretty much had to take care of all of her younger brothers and sisters. I think a lot of people felt like they’re smarter, maybe ... or they would be surprised when I would do well on something or do well in a class. Because I mean I’ve pretty much been an A/B student, mostly As ... but ... I would get like ... like oh wow ... like surprise ... it’s like why does it surprise you if I’m smart or whatever ... like they don’t ... I guess they look at me and they don’t see somebody that would be that smart ... I don’t know, like people were surprised that I would do well and I just kind of felt like, well, a little bit offended.		somebody was speaking in Russian in the store are you going to like automatically assume they’re saying bad things about you, you know? She just really hated the fact that she goes places and people are speaking Spanish and she would think that they were talking about her. Which I thought was really silly. Ethnicity ... and ... I don’t know ... maybe I didn’t dress like them or ... talk like them ... so yeah, I think it was based mostly on appearance ... like they would kind of look at me like, wow ... and then I have like this tattoo on my hand when I was ... since I was 13 or so ... so people would kind of look at it and then kind of look at me and so ... yeah I would kind of ... maybe just my appearance ...
Stephanie	I’d like to make it ... so that students are more noticed and that you don’t have to be an extrovert to get the attention, you know? So that ... I don’t know ... so that students who need, you know, to be cared for and need somebody to pay attention to them and make sure that they’re doing okay, get that, so they can finish and they can make something of their lives ...	I am African-American female I mean ... racially, I’m mixed ... but, I grew up in a very not diverse town so ... you know, I’m not really ... I don’t really think I’ve been exposed to you know the different cultures I might come from necessarily, so, that’s hard for me to answer ... ummm ... (long pause) ... I don’t ... I don’t really know I mean ... racially, I’m mixed ... but, I grew up in a very not diverse town so ... you know, I’m not really ... I don’t really think I’ve been exposed to you know the different cultures I might come from necessarily, so,	Then my third memory um ... was when I met probably, I probably wouldn’t still be going to community college if I didn’t meet her ... I met her my first summer here, my first semester here and we had two classes together and she was ... I noticed her because she was crying ... she just ran out of the room crying, it was [specific] class and the next day I saw her in my [other] class and I asked her what had happened and we were discussing the [situation] and it really from then, it formed a bond and just to be able to talk to somebody else that understands how you can feel differently and to have somebody that cheer you on I guess and you cheer them

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
		that's hard for me to answer ... ummm ... (long pause) ... I don't ... I don't really know ... Not that I've heard of...so...but...I mean I guess I don't really know where I come from. I knew where I grew up, but my heritage, I don't...I kinda know where the bits and pieces come from...I know that you know that I'm part Native-American, I know that I'm part African-American, I know that I'm part...Caucasian, you know. I know all of that, but I don't...I don't know all the different aspects of all those different cultures, I guess ...	on. And so I'll never forget when I met her and um ... she's a big part of my life. So I started working and I was confronted by an [employee] who said the only reason why I was [hired] was because I was Black (laughs). And when she said that, I felt my role was to explain to her that wasn't the case. I felt like I had to explain myself. And I found that she just kept on. There were just little things here and there and I had ... and then people started to get on her bandwagon and I found myself having to prove myself constantly through just words and apologies and I got tired. I got tired and I just stopped. And then it stopped. Because I also believe that, that in which you resist will persist and I just kept resisting ... and I said, you know what, I'm not going to resist this anymore, I'm just going to let it go. I am a little more than half Native-American. I'm a mixture of [Nation] and [Nation] Indian and ... my parents are both dead. They've been dead for many, many years. Twenty-two ... I believe. ... I am divorced. I live on a disability income, which is not a lot ... My mom was mostly Indian; my dad was part Indian, part Mexican, and part German. He dropped out of school in ninth grade. My mother dropped out when she was I think in eleventh grade.
Krista			
Noelani		I'm a pretty strong person but to me it wasn't really about protecting my self-esteem, it was more about I guess right and wrong for me ... I don't know, I just felt like somebody needed to say something and so I kind of felt like I was in my right in doing so and because it is a college it supposed to be more liberal and you should be able to share opinions without having them ... a	APCC is overwhelmingly Caucasian ... Well, from where I was coming from, it was kind of ... it was like ... weird ... it was really, really weird because ... I moved here ... shortly after, well I just moved here maybe a year and a half ago ... but in [a city], and I know the demographics probably just like way off, it's probably like in one instance, like graduating from the high

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
		majority like turn against you for that ... so it wasn't really so much about protecting my self-esteem, because I didn't really lose any of my pride or my dignity, it just made me like rethink ... uh ... kind of rethink going to college ...	school I went to, and also the community college I went to over there, like it was really, really diverse ... and though it was mostly of ... like Asian origin, like to me Asian is not just one set defined thing, there are differences (laughs) ...
		I would describe them as oppressive ... I would ... ummmm ... there's ... there's nothing like wanting having the motivation to want to learn new things all the time and then kind of seeing that the door's only open for certain classes ... certain people ...	I have two sides to seeing things differently ...
		I don't care if you're the president, you're the chancellor, you're the vice president, if you see somebody in need, at that moment in time, they need you, they need your help ... and it doesn't, you don't go, "well my secretary will help you out or my ... I'll get somebody to get back with you ..." You get up and you take [care of] them ...	I didn't actually fit in very well because I remember that was back when I was going through like a stage, like a ... where I dressed more "urban" I guess I would say ... and ... it really just kind of like made me stick out like a sore thumb and I guess my experiences there ... I've tried to dress more like the other students so I fit in more ...

Each participant was a status striver who tactically and creatively adjusted her or his plans to obtain their economic and educational goals (Walpole, 2007). Jason, Stephanie, and Krista were planning medical or professional careers. Brandon had already achieved his goal as an entrepreneur and Noelani had plans to become a corporate executive. Desári was seeking a professional career in the service industry as a translator, while Juan was planning a career as a military officer. Every participant understood the importance of higher education to achieve their desired goal. Krista and Noelani had plans to earn at least a master's degree, while Jason and Stephanie were planning a medical or professional doctorate. All participants were at various stages of embodying

the internal character and temperament of their respected careers. All participants could point to their objectified state by their books, computer, or other related instruments and soon they would include the institutionalized state with their degree and credentials, if they had not already graduated (Horvat, 2003).

All participants struggled during different stages because APCC's structural system either limited or hindered their access to educational resources, the dominant ideology challenged their well-being, or their needs were not recognized or were not addressed in a timely manner. Each participant demonstrated fortitude and endurance by persevering to obtain their goals. I now address the skills, values, and attitudes of my participants. I coded my data with the purpose to describe to the reader what kind of people comprise the underrepresented population. I did this to honor Moore's (2006) concern that community college teachers do not recognize the tremendous assets that non-White students bring to the classroom. I provide three sections titled Middle-Class Values, Authentic Self-Assessment, and Personal Character as coded by me in this order.

Middle-class values. All of my participants wanted to distance themselves from negative stereotypes. They aspired to many middle-class goals, for example, good employment opportunities, home ownership, the ability to support their families without financial concerns, and sending their children to college (Jennings, 2004). Krista was able to purchase her home at age 20 and able to financially support her young family after emancipation from foster-care. Her current house payment is less than most people have to pay for rent today. Desári had also accrued money for a down payment for a home. Other participants either owned a home or were preparing to purchase a home.

Education was important to each participant. Each was postponing her or his desires and luxuries in order to achieve their educational goals without accumulating too much debt. They were aware of the dangers of debt and were fiscally frugal over budgetary items: food, clothing, housing, utilities, and automobile expenses. Their education was to provide an opportunity for them to achieve financial security for themselves and their children. They were aware of the value of money, dedicated to a future of financial liberty, and had already developed a positive, industrious work ethic and ambitious goals. They were sacrificing now in order to achieve their American dream.

I noted their character as having self-initiative, being assertive, being risk takers, adaptable, and willing and able to negotiate when necessary. Jason, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani were aware of the demanding education ahead of them in their chosen field of engineering, medical, dental, and professional doctorates. They were dedicated to their goals and motivated to achieve them. They believe that it was within them to achieve success; it was their personal responsibility to achieve success. To achieve their dreams, they were able and willing to connect with others including those who are different. They were sociable in spite of negative life experiences, such as poverty, homelessness, foster care, and discriminatory encounters over class, race, and gender.

Authentic self-assessment. Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani were dreamers; not day-dreamers who wasted their time just dreaming, but rather they were doers. I appreciated their authentic self-assessment. Krista stated that she knew her strengths and weaknesses; each of them did and lived within their limitations and

assets and found other resources to help them. They assessed themselves accurately and planned accordingly. When they had an academic struggle in a gatekeeper course such as mathematics, English, and sciences, they found a tutor, used the learning centers, or developed study groups to overcome their weaknesses. They faced their academic, social, and fiscal fears and did not allow these fears to thwart their achievement. My participants were proud of their achievements: National Honor Society, degrees, personal recognition awards, and scholarships. They believed that they belonged in college and demonstrated it. They were articulate; they overcame racism, sexism, personal limitations, and to access resources. They remained positive human beings who were transformed by APCC and were able to transform some of the APCC teachers who allowed themselves to be taught by a student. Stephanie pointed out especially Dr. Louise Bentley, who was transformed by listening to a young African-American woman. Jason and Brandon transformed Dr. Blair Bentley by having profound conversations about class and race issues. When hallway and classroom leadership listen to students, especially to the underrepresented population, they allow the potential to be transformed.

Personal character. Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani allowed their negative life experiences to mold their character rather than becoming embittered. They could become offended, but not easily so. They forgave more than they had to be forgiven. They believed in justice, that people were generally good and well meaning, and believed, like Jason, in “the law of attraction:” that good comes to people who sow good. They were not naïve, but rather wise and discerning. They did, at times like Jason and Noelani, believe that teachers should be open to student ideas and to provide a safe learning environment, but found out that not all do. They were respectful

while seeking justice, though not always receiving justice in return. They saw how APCC could help the first-generation students sooner so that the students would not be so confused and overwhelmed during their first days. They were caring and quick to serve another like Jason, Brandon, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani who witnessed an injustice and attempted to comfort the victim.

They were appreciative and thankful for everyone who helped them along their academic journey; they voiced their “Thanks!” and shared their appreciation during their interviews. They were resilient after experiencing loss, unnecessary obstacles, and numerous frustrations. They overcame a broken down car like Krista, or debilitating poverty, racism, and misdiagnosis of a learning disability like Brandon who is now an entrepreneur. All participants who were first-generation overcame serious lack of cultural capital to achieve their dreams of graduating with degrees in science like Jason, history like Krista, and pre-medical like Stephanie. My participants were just, self-aware, and caring people who understood critical, spiritual, and intercultural ideas. They defended their lifeworld by their inner character and by pursuing critical, spiritual, and intercultural ideas.

Research Question: Care

Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani individually defined care, yet they each contributed their own unique emphasis. Table 5 is my cross-composite analysis of the underrepresented population’s perspective on care and answers my fourth research question: *How have, or have not, administrators, faculty, and staff demonstrated appropriate care, (that is, addressing the felt and real needs) for the successful, underrepresented students in the hallways and classrooms of a community college?* Care

will be examined by my three frames: critical, spiritual, and intercultural with critical aspects of care including justice issues; spiritual will focus on identity and self aspects; and intercultural will focus on difference, cultural, and relationships across ethnicities.

Table 6

Care

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Jason	But everybody in the math lab is like really helpful and they're all there until, like, they're not going to put you down or belittle you because you're in a lower class, they're there to help you, so it's cool ... Because they don't look at me with like judgment necessarily. They come with a helping hand ...	The good things that I like about APCC is, I think that most of the instructors I've had have been very accommodating, welcoming, they're generally warm people. They're willing to help. And I like that the classes are kind of small so that you can ... you don't seem to get lost in a classroom. The positive things I'll remember is I probably have one of the greatest bosses I think I've ever had. She's very understanding. She's always willing to offer suggestion or help any way she can you know. She's accommodating and she tries to really help out ... I've had some really great instructors. Dr. Louis Bentley is one that's going to stick in my head forever. I think her class is very interesting and ... her thinking is a little bit outside of the box and that intrigues me ... I also had a bad experience with another supervisor and ... I wouldn't say a co-worker, but a worker in a different department that worked alongside of us. I didn't know that there was an issue until ... I wouldn't say I got in trouble but I couldn't work in that office anymore and I didn't know why. Because their supervisor wouldn't say why. Just said, you know, they don't want to work with you. And so, I	My teacher has always made the time, to make it available and I really appreciate that. I knew he was going to take the time to be there for me. And one thing I've like, really liked about the class is, or about the school, is the fact of like, you know, I can just approach the professors or anything about a situation that I have. ... I think that most of the instructors I've had have been very accommodating, welcoming, they're generally warm people. They're willing to help. The positive things I'll remember is I probably have one of the greatest bosses I think I've ever had. She's very understanding. She's always willing to offer suggestions or help any way she can you know. She's accommodating and she tries to really help out ... to be a friend, you know. And not ... not in lieu of being a boss, you know, she's very willing to help, she's not just ... show up and work and do your thing and then go home, take care of your problems when you're not here ... she's not that kind of a person. So I think she's a great boss.

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
		couldn't work there. I really feel that [my teacher] is ... there for the students. Caring ... is really important. It shows that people are there for you to help you. ... Care I think is important but only to the extent if they know you. But I do believe care is definitely important because you should just care for everybody, no matter like who they are because they can somehow, one way or another, maybe you know down the road, they can somehow be in your life and But Dr. Blair Bentley seemed to be able to put ... to put a picture with a lot of what we did and we seem to get a little bit extra when we're talking about you know, those of you who are going on to engineering, this, this, and this ... and that for me was good. Because he was willing to give a little more than just what you're supposed to. affect you somehow. So you should always show care no matter what.	
Brandon	No, no not the whole environment is caring. You've got some instructors that they only care about their paycheck, they don't care about the student, you know. They, they ... just some and maybe it's ... I would say as for the environment, this faculty that actually care, I'm going to say 85% do care ... okay, you know ...	I couldn't stand teachers ... I mean for a long time, prior to enrolling here at APCC, I could not stand teachers, or instructors, period. You know. I thought they were arrogant and you know, and they reminded me of someone that screwed me, so yes, but ... as I became educated my concept and my way of thinking changed ...	Let me tell you what won me over ... okay ... it was that [White instructor] ... He approached me and the students of color, He erased that from the equation. He was there to teach. He doesn't look at color. He looked at the individual, okay. And he looked at what he could do to help an individual okay and removed the color barriers, okay. He didn't see a Black male, He didn't see a Black female or an Asian female, or whatever. Okay, he saw an individual, okay. That's what won me over ... and ... we ... equally looked at each other as individuals, without color. Okay. I saw him for who he was and judged him, based on who he was and what he had done for me, okay, he provided me with a quality education. I really ... I was impressed with his

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
			methodology of teaching. How he reinforced his teaching methods with students going to the board and to write out their homework problems and which identified at any point, or at that point, if there were problems, then it was a collective effort to help that individual to resolve that problem. His class came together to help that individual. He bridged the gap to help the individual. You know, but he made it possible for us as a class to work together and to share knowledge. He put strong students with the weak students. He paired us up that way and then allowed us to go to the board to explain, to show our knowledge, our understanding that “yes, I do know how to do this.” Okay ... that’s what won me over. Oh yeah ... there’s been no one to watch over the Black male student at all ... then there’s no ... there was no mentor, there was guidance in terms of ... of ... seeking help if you needed help with any situation. If you were struggling, you know ... you’re basically on your own, okay. And whatever the situation or the course of study may have been, I mean you had to take not just an extra step, leaps and bounds and in the instructors face and say “listen, you know, I need help.” I’m failing, I’m you know, I’m lost and I had to do that over and over and over again, okay, and I just wouldn’t go away, okay. I just refused to accept things. But for those that are ... that ... that ... that were sinking, they sunk, and they just ... they were just weeded out, okay.
Juan	I felt both ‘cause really people ... there’s many kind of people. Sometimes they like you, sometimes they don’t ... so ... I mean sometimes they just like ... like they want to be your	Oh, like my professors ... like they understand where you’re coming from, too ... like in ... for example in [4-year institution] they would be like “oh, you’re just another student” because the	

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	friend, sometimes they hate you 'cause you are whoever, whatever ...	class is so big. But in APCC, the classes, like the classrooms are so small that like people get to, you know to, get to know you better, you know. And you get to have like more connection with the teachers or professors ... The way we teach, also, what they can give to the student. Because I understand so many professors at the college I'm going to there full time, they may not give as much time but I have professors here at [community college] who told me the same thing, but yet they just throw their time at me. They want to see me, even though I want to see them, they want to see me more than I want to see them. It's just at my other school, it's more like I have to make an appointment, I have to, to see them. Or, I have to see them on their time ... over here, just walked to their office and come on in ... I'll help you ... (deep breath) Well even though I've a few years left, I'm at a 4-year institution that can be unforgiving. It can be, and it cannot be ... but say if I was able to graduate with a four year degree at [community college], I wouldn't say that ... I would say they'd give me options, they'll be there when you need it ... she helped me with everything and you know assured me that everything was going to be okay ... she would give us extra help because being that I was a high school dropout I didn't ... I mean I never learned how to study, I just was really behind on everything ... some of the other staff there that worked in the [administrative] office weren't so helpful ... In Professor Blair Bentley's classroom, I don't know ... in that [content] class when [he] introduced at the	

Desári

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
		beginning of the semester that we were going to have to write some papers and that we were going to be in these teams, these groups, and have to interact, I was SO disappointed ... I was just like, oh I can't believe that I've got to take this ... class and then I have to sit and you know, do this interactive stuff ... I work so much better on my own, I just ... I don't want to have to do this, I don't think it has its place in [content class] ... I was just so ready to just sit there, be invisible. And expecting to ... not that I wanted to, but I expected to. Because that had been my experience. But ... I wrote a paper towards the end of the semester, it was just the best experience of my life in a classroom. It was so much fun to be ... you know, [he] kind of had to force me to get together with my little group and do things but it was such an enriching experience. And so, that's the way I was cared for, I think, out of that entire experience at [the community college] campus was the fact that somebody ... when I know he met resistance from all of our faces when he introduced that. That [he] just kind of stood there and said, "that's too bad, that's how it's going to be in this class and really, you're going to enjoy it" and then it created a little community, and we did care for each other. If somebody didn't show up for the class, we would call them and find out why they didn't come. And we would get together on the weekends and study. We did our own little study groups. That never would have happened. I would have continued being invisible in that class as much as any other if it wasn't for that. And I don't mean we got together to study when we had to do our presentation. I mean, we still got together to study. And we would sit and we'd help each other with problems. We'd call each other up and we'd email each	

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Stephanie	I mean people who aren't strong, might not be able to support themselves ... they don't know ... am I doing a good job you know, does this even matter? Like what ... like ... does anybody even care that I'm doing this? How am I going to make a difference ... if they don't ... if they can't tell themselves that they're making a difference, they need somebody to help them and guide them, and let them know, yeah ... this is good what you're doing, embrace education and ... more than that, you know, it gives them somebody to look up to, you know, they might not have anybody to look up to. Like when I was in high school I didn't feel like ... I didn't look up to my parents that was for sure, you know we were just ... from elementary school, you know, it's not normal ... umm ... and so I tried to find teachers I could look up to, that I respected, and those teachers were the ones who cared, you know? Those teachers are the ones that I want to make proud. The other teachers are the ones that I want to prove wrong, you know, so ... I think it's very important.	other. It was just a great experience.	
		She knew I was weak in my writing ... but she was right there, to say this is how we're going to do it ... and she would let me turn in drafts and she would go through and edit and give it back until I was able to produce an A paper. That was called "love" I can't put it any other way ... because who has time? WHO HAS TIME? She took the time. So I will never forget that ... I will say ... that the transformation may have come from her taking the time to get to know me as an individual. And when she did, she learned a lot about being African-American ... I've felt wanted you know, I like it when my professors stop me in the hall and we talk, you know, about anything, about football, you know ... there's a professor here we just ... haven't taken a class with him in years and we'll still just [take] five minutes and chat about football you know and last Sunday and what happened or you know professors that I stop by and tell them what's going on you know and what's been happening ...	One of them was while I was a student here, and while I was a student I was in a [content] class with [Professor Bentley] and we were assigned to read a book on a different culture and write a report. And I knew I could not do that. I knew that it was going to take me longer than the semester to read those hundred pages of a book, or any book, and I knew that I could not formulate my sentences very well. So I was very intimidated and I was ready to drop out of the class. But my instructor said, "I have every bit of belief that you can do this." She believed in me, and she didn't just say it, she actually showed me and reminded me of the things I had done in her class that was a success. She also told me that she understood my struggles. Not as a ... from a White perspective, but really looking into my struggles because she got to know me as a person. So she gave me a book called [title] ... oh my gosh ...
		I probably wouldn't still be going to community college if I didn't meet [a new friend] ... I met her my first summer here, my first semester here and we had two classes together and she was ... I noticed her because she was crying ... and the next day I saw her in my [content] class and I asked her what had happened and we were discussing the teacher and it really from then, it formed a bond and just to be able to talk to somebody else that understands how you can feel different and to have somebody that cheer you on I guess and you cheer them on.	

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
Krista		And so I'll never forget when I met her and um ... she's a big part of my life.	
	I don't remember what happened, but one of the girls, who was pregnant, had a miscarriage, and it was due to the stress in the home and then somebody came in and checked it out and realized that there's no way that these people should be caring for kids ... they had their own fridge, we had a separate fridge ... their fridge was locked, we weren't allowed to touch it ... they had good food, we had our food (laughs) ...	I didn't feel comfortable in the class and ... it wasn't so much that I didn't feel welcome, I just didn't feel like I fit with the group ... it was like I was just kind of like the odd man out so to speak, but I wasn't necessarily unwelcome ...	if I have something input ... valuable input to the class they stop ... you know, they'll let ... let me give it you know, say, you know this ... contribute to the class if it contributes to the class ...
	... because the people that didn't finish high school are going to be easily deterred from college, because they already feel like, I couldn't even make it through high school, you know, so things like that ... that could be all it takes, like a person could be having a bad day you know and hear something like that and that's completely discouraging ... well I didn't get this in high school so maybe I don't belong here ...	They engage the class. I mean, they make the content interesting even if it's a topic you don't find interesting, they make it interesting, through various methods, you know whatever methods they have up their sleeves, whatever teaching styles they happened to have ... they make the class interesting, they engage everybody. They get the class laughing ... through, there's great ... this doesn't sound right but there's great teacher chemistry with the students, or with the co-teacher. And that right there, the chemistry between the students and the instructor, if there's no chemistry there, and that's not the right word, but I think you know what I mean ... like a connection or you know you just ... you feel right ... that teacher feels like it's the right teacher or you're comfortable with that teacher.	You know it's a community college and one of the things that I've learned and discovered about community college is it's incredibly diverse ... it really really is ... I mean you have people from all colors, all races, all ethnicities that all combine together to make this incredibly diverse, very interesting group of people, and you know, I've got friends from all age ranges, but I ... and I've never really felt oppressed because each person's an individual and from what I've seen, all the teachers treat each ...
	It was probably a mixture of foster care and my mom, there was no encouragement to do anything better than what everybody else in the family had done ... All I could do was work fast food, kind of ... but at that point, I couldn't even afford to go to college ...	I think it's that ... internal, it's more of an internal conscious that you feel ... it's that internal gauge that the love that you feel and I remember reading this quote that said "God is the measure by which ... God is the tool by which we measure our pain" ... that always stuck with me, you know. A lot of people try to blame God or blame whatever their higher power is when things are wrong and I don't believe that's correct. I believe in being grateful in what I have. I think that ... and being thankful and that's what my	... so it's pretty exciting, it's been really exciting ... after the first class that [content] class, and I think it was ... just learning that there's more than just this tiny little piece of earth that I've been living on ... was like enough ... I wanted to learn ... I felt ignorant ... I'd never felt so ignorant, because I surrounded myself with people that were on my level, you know what I mean, and I'm not saying that they were ... they weren't bad people by any means, they were just at a lower educational level and ... that was okay, but when I had to go and interact with other people, I was intimidated, because I had no clue what was going on. I didn't know what was going on in [nearby major city], much less Africa, you know ... and this class was like, wow, there's ... the world is just so huge and I haven't gotten to see any of it ... and you know, I might never get

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
		spirituality is ... it's being grateful for what I have and seeing that something helped me to get to where I am. I'm not sure what it is, and I'm okay with that ... [The just-the-teachers] were ... they ... they came in, they taught the class, and they left ... there wasn't a lot of ... dialog ... it wasn't ... they weren't unfriendly, or friendly, they just had a job to do, they were good at it ... and when it was over, it was over ... but then there's other teachers who, you know you could stand and talk to or even confide in or whatever ... and you know you have a something a little bit more than just a teacher ... I don't know that they're at a higher scale, I don't think that they're better teachers necessarily, but they're just different kind of people. They have more people skills I think than just teaching skills.	to see it, but at least I'm going to know what's going on, and I'm going to be able to tell my son, you know, what's going on ... when he asks me what's going on, I'll be able to help him, you know, and I think it was that [content] class that just made me want to know what was going on, and from then, I was addicted ... I ... I ... I really had no clue how much I had missed out on until I started ... and I was [age] years old? And had no clue ...
Noelani	Who Dr. Blair Bentley is, what he stood for and what he did are all so admirable and commendable. I'm glad I had the opportunity to speak with you about him, because if nothing else, I will take that experience with me. Dr. Bentley is a great leader and inspiration. I appreciate him making the class setting safe for all. I think our learning environment is enhanced and we are all learning so much more with just that single stance he took, alone. As well as ... validating my feelings on how things are supposed to work. Anyway, these are things that happen in life that one does not easily forget, so I will take this entire experience with me, to include his inspirational qualities and hopefully someday find the courage to make a difference. I don't really think that a lot of people had a very good understanding of compassion	You can analyze yourself better ... and maybe ... you can say okay, well ... I like what's happening here because I understand what's happening, what are the reasons for it, and that makes sense and maybe you want to try to apply it to your own life and ... and to also, ummm ... kind of relate to the other person because maybe you find something in someone else's culture and you say, oh, this is kind of similar, or different to my culture and you can actually try to connect with people that way. I think a really really interesting thing that people can get from that is that not only that you can connect people with your similarities, but also by your differences, which is you know, something you don't think about, but it's possible. I mean like I talk with friends and we're always like, we're always like exchanging	You can analyze yourself better ... and maybe ... you can say okay, well ... I like what's happening here because I understand what's happening, what are the reasons for it, and that makes sense and maybe you want to try to apply it to your own life and ... and to also, ummm ... kind of relate to the other person because maybe you find something in someone else's culture and you say, oh, this is kind of similar, or different to my culture and you can actually try to connect with people that way. I think a really really interesting thing that people can get from that is that not only that you can connect people with your similarities, but also by your differences, which is you know, something you don't think about, but it's possible. I mean like I talk with friends and we're always like, we're always like exchanging different things like "oh, in our culture we do this, this,

Composite	Critical	Spiritual	Intercultural
	and I say that in the nicest way about people at APCC because a lot of them are coming from wealthier families and they didn't really have a hard life, like I did so ... I think ... I just think that they're really, like, privileged people that maybe don't think about things as much in depth as maybe some of us do. Yeah ... and there was just like a lot of comments like that ... like look at what she's wearing and I kind of felt like it ... to me it was a lot like high school 'cause things were so ... 'cause class was such an issue. 'Cause usually in college I think that a lot of us are poor ... to have an understanding of what other people are thinking and to also to be able to judge people's actions appropriately ... because people do things based on how they are raised and also on how they view the world and if you just like ... and if you just judge something or if you kind of try to organize it in your mind from your own perspective, you're not getting the entire picture, which is where like some sort of miscommunications happen or misunderstandings about people ... happen ... and even extreme cases stereotypes about other people there was a lot of times where I'd hear students say, they'd like point out what someone was wearing and laugh and be like "oh that person must be one of our poorer students" ...	different things like "oh, in our culture we do this, this, and this" or something like that and then they'll say, "oh yeah, but in mine we do this ... or we do other things" or something like that and then you kind of understand each other more and you connect on something that makes you different, which I don't think a lot of people think about sometimes, but it's really, really fun to talk about ...	and this" or something like that and then they'll say, "oh yeah, but in mine we do this ... or we do other things" or something like that and then you kind of understand each other more and you connect on something that makes you different, which I don't think a lot of people think about sometimes, but it's really, really fun to talk about ... there's nothing ... yeah ... there's nothing more oppressive to me than that ... there's like ... there's nothing ... there's nothing that feels that is so hurtful to do to a student ... I don't think that there's ... there's a lot of things that go on on a college campus ... but I don't think that anything is worse than the discrimination that can happen ...

Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani each contributed to the combined definition of care by their lived experiences. Their joint lived definition, as

opposed to a theoretical definition, noted aspects of justice, ideals, and negative examples (critical); self, identity, and character traits (spiritual); and difference, cultural, and ethnicity (intercultural and intracultural). Though each contributed their individual definitions without being aware of the others, the joint lived definition ended in a consensus through these three themes. Jason and Krista provided aspects that emphasized class; Brandon and Stephanie emphasized justice, difference, and intracultural; and Juan, Desári, and Noelani emphasized intercultural. But all contributed to the three themes of critical, spiritual, and intercultural.

Jason stated that tutors in a learning lab were there to help. These tutors would “not put you down or belittle you because you’re in a lower class,” whether that meant a lower level math class or social economic class. Yet Krista did not find the same learning lab so helpful, but rather abusive. The learning lab like other administrative and academic offices yielded contradictory experiences for the underrepresented population. A safe-learning environment was an expectation of all participants whether they stated a positive experience or provided a negative example. Every participant expected constructive criticism, but expected that criticism to be offered graciously within the bounds of justice and charity. Brandon, as others, insisted that care is the measuring stick for justice. Jason could not imagine a learning environment where care was absent; he could not imagine life without care being a focal point.

Participants used phrases such as “just a teacher,” “just-the-teacher teacher,” “when [the class] was over, it was over,” “they only care about their paycheck,” or “like or don’t like” to distinguish an ordinary professor from a caring one. Brandon described his repetitive attempts to seek help when he did not understand course work. He

concluded that those students who did not pursue help were simply “weeded out” of APCC. All participants experienced the student-professor separation as explained by Rendón (2005). Stephanie explained her concern for justice this way: “I mean people who aren’t strong, might not be able to support themselves,” which echoed Brandon’s observation of students being weeded out. She expected that the strong should serve the weak based upon the context. Brandon, Stephanie, and Noelani experienced discrimination at APCC that was resolved in differing degrees of understanding and justice. Each participant experienced limitations and stereotypes as viewed from class, race/ethnicity, and gender lenses. Too often participants were measured by externals such as clothes, ethnicity, and tattoos.

Care, from a spiritual perspective, is experienced by the underrepresented population when they sense harmony between their self and the environment of the classroom or hallways of APCC. They sense that they are called to, and belong in, APCC and function as a vital member in relation between themselves and other APCC stakeholders, whether those stakeholders are administrators, faculty, or other staff and students. Jason expressed that he belonged in the learning center because he was not put down, nor did he experience judgment or negative comments by the tutoring staff. He was in a safe learning environment. In other words, Jason’s self and identity were safe. All participants appreciated the commitment and the time offered by a few faculty and administrators for mentoring, tutoring, and just being connected. Jason and Stephanie specifically noted the requirement of care to be knowledgeable of whom they were and their predicament. Knowledge lead to understanding and then the administrator or faculty accommodated the help required accordingly. Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie,

Krista, and Noelani were all transformed, but so were APCC's administrators or faculty who cared for them.

Care required meeting the participants. By being sensitive, the administrator or the faculty was able to meet the needs of the participants. Stephanie stated that one faculty "knew [that] I was weak in my writing ... but she was right there, to say 'this is how we're going to do it.'" Each participant had someone at APCC who provided an example or model to look up to.

Care, through an intercultural competence lens, involved embracing and accepting difference based upon intracultural and intercultural differentiation and class and ethnic variation. In order for middle- or upper-class administrators and faculty to demonstrate care, they had to understand participants' different worldviews, communicate effectively and appropriately to participants, and to shift their frame of reference based upon the participants' context. Here is how my participants experienced care based upon this intercultural lens.

Jason was from a different economic class than his professor, but he used descriptors like "my teacher always made the time," "I can just approach the professors," "accommodating welcoming, they're generally warm people. They're willing to help" to define his meaning of care. Brandon provided an extended quote about a White professor who effectively reached across intracultural and ethnic variation. In doing so Brandon clarified his meaning of care that implied a mutual reaching across differences because he, too, had to desire and participate in that bridge building experience.

Desári wanted to be invisible in one of her classes, but Dr. Blair Bentley drew her into using small groups that ended with positive results. She said: "it was just the best

experience of my life in a classroom.” She witnessed and experienced how diverse people cared for each other and looked after each other’s needs. Desári was not aware of her need for diverse others, but Dr. Bentley sensed this unspoken human need, resulting in a mutual transformation of students and the professor. Stephanie provided an example of a female White professor, Dr. Louise Bentley, who “believed in me; someone who was different.” This experience also led to a mutual transformation of student and professor.

By allowing Krista to contribute to the classroom environment her professors affirmed that she was welcomed, belonged in, and recognized as an asset to the classroom. However, the opposite was experienced in another class. She stated that “I don’t feel comfortable in the class and ... it wasn’t so much that I didn’t feel welcome, I just didn’t feel like I fit with the group.” This lack of fit was experienced by Krista as an injustice. Yet Krista, in still another classroom experience, was encouraged to see how large and interesting the world was and was stimulated to excel to a higher academic level. She was not taught to reject her natal world, but rather to accept and love both her natal world and the new world by learning to care for people of both worlds without an air of superiority or judgment.

Noelani provided a practical application of intercultural care. She stated that “You can analyze yourself better ... and maybe ... you can say ... I like what’s happening here because I understand what are the reasons for it.” Noelani believed that people could connect by similarities and by differences. She captured the idea of a comparative searching that recognizes the “common human needs across cultures and of dissonance and critical dialogue within cultures” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 260).

Summary of the Study

I have previously stated that the purpose of my study was to critically examine community college structures, ideologies, and how the underrepresented population experiences and then develops the necessary forms of reasoning to challenge this domination and oppression (Brookfield, 2005). Critical theory was selected as the methodology in order to understand and then challenge the perpetual reproduction of social, political, and economic domination. To understand this reproduction one must research the ways that dominant ideologies educate adults to accept the current order when it is not in their best interest. So, for example, an underrepresented community college student needs to understand how the curriculum, pedagogy (delivery of the curriculum), and the outcomes of curriculum perpetuate his or her own domination. An underrepresented adult learner could ask, “How do the current curriculum, pedagogy, and outcomes perpetuate my own social, political, or economic domination that is not in my best interest?” After achieving such insight the student must challenge the domination and work to reframe these social constructs. Similar questions could be asked by the underrepresented population to understand and then challenge the administrative structures, bureaucratic rationality, and ideological forces that exist in the community college.

Overview of the Problem and Methodology

The community college has been defined as “*any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree*” (emphasis authors, Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 5) and is generally an open-access higher education institution (Dougherty, 2001; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). The basis of its existence is

credited to the general belief in the United States that every individual should have an opportunity to achieve her or his full potential including the potential of multiple chances for success (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). As such, the community college is often the first choice for a diverse population (Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996) and, in particular, the underrepresented population (Davies, Safarik, & Banning, 2003).

Community colleges often pride themselves in their teaching abilities, emphasis on smaller class sizes, flexible schedule and format of classes, and support systems in place to further academic success. Whatever the students' motivation and goals may be, community colleges advertise that they are there to serve those students' goals without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, or economic class (Dougherty, 2001; Moore, 2006)

The APCC promoted itself as providing all students a fresh start, an opportunity for a degree or certificate, or just a chance to better or enrich a person's life. The community college's website emphasized the reality that their students come from all walks of life, age groups, and educational/socio-economic backgrounds. Indeed, this community college, as other community colleges, is locally providing convenient access to higher education at the lowest cost (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Moore, 2006). Such a comprehensive community college would serve the local area population by offering programs that balance the three traditional roles of transfer, vocational, and community education (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Community college researchers emphasized that these are competing realities; therefore, if the community college privileges one role over another, it will fail to meet the diverse needs of its students who are seeking opportunity and greater social mobility (Horvat, 2003; Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). Scholars have also noted that a comprehensive community college would need to

wrestle with the reality that minority groups are over-represented in community colleges in order to properly serve this population. Community college leaders must recognize and deal with these realities on a daily basis to properly serve all constituents (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Davies et al., 2003; Moore, 2006; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

What happens when a community college's administration, faculty, and other staff cannot recognize, appreciate, and use the different skill sets that the underrepresented population brings to college? The answer is that the underrepresented population fails to survive and thrive in the community college (Rendón, 2002). Stage and Manning (as cited in Rhoads & Valadez, 1996), highlighted six weaknesses of the traditional approach to working with students.

- 1) The traditional administrator, faculty, and other staff expect the underrepresented population to change.
- 2) Those who are diverse among the administration, faculty, other staff, and students and already in the institution must be responsible for any new students of similar backgrounds.
- 3) The underrepresented population must adapt to the traditional, dominant culture.
- 4) The traditional approach expects to help only the identifiably diverse students.
- 5) The traditional approach fails to provide equitable educational opportunities to all students.
- 6) The traditional approach failed to educate those of the dominant culture about their culturally diverse colleagues.

The failure of underrepresented students to survive and thrive in the community college is the problem or tension that the literature brings to this issue. Rhoads and Valadez (1996) characterized their critical multiculturalism perspective as one that “combines the conditions of cultural diversity with the emancipatory vision of a critical educational practice borrowing from feminism, postmodernism, and critical theory” (p. 9). They sought the transformation of higher education institutions, which are currently characterized by monolithic centers of power, to democratic centers that reflect existing diverse cultures and perspectives. It is from this critical theoretical perspective that this paper is written, with a refinement that I called *holistic critical theory*. This perspective includes not only the ideals of democratic institutions, the embracing of multiculturalism, and the values of emancipatory empowerment, but also the universal need of spirituality and the transforming work of interculturalism. Holistic critical theory is situated within critical theory, critical multiculturalism, and feminism. Wherever there is oppression, in whatever form it may take, this critical perspective seeks to expose it and to holistically liberate people from it. Oppression within society could be related to class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and even spiritual oppression.

Major Findings—Expected and Unexpected

In Chapter 4 I presented the voices of my 23 participants by using seven composite pseudonyms Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani. These composites represented the intertwined realities of the poor, first-generation, those who experienced foster-care, Asian-, African-, Native-, and Latin@-American students, and finally welfare-mother students with children. These voices were presented using four structures: structural system, dominant ideology, lifeworld, and care to understand

how my participants experienced APCC. In this chapter, I integrated the seven cross-composites to answer my research questions by using three themes: critical, spiritual, and intercultural. My use of the four structures in Chapter 4 and the three themes in Chapter 5 are not the only ways to understand the data. Alternative interpretations could have been achieved by other researchers, but my integrative approach expands critical theory (CT) and critical race theory (CRT), including LatCrit, into a more holistic critical theory. However, unexpectedly I also discovered that LatCrit basic assumptions and analytical skills were applicable to western European and Asian immigrants to the United States. These non-Spanish speaking immigrants experienced similar oppression and domination and attacks on their lifeworld as Spanish speaking immigrants.

I found that the underrepresented population did not challenge their domination and oppression except as individuals (see Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani), never as a group. In one experience Noelani was left isolated during classroom domination even though there was another minority who recognized the oppression. In general, the underrepresented population wanted to complete a course and a degree in order to move on, waiting till the future to confront APCC's oppression and domination. Participants wanted their course grade more than relief. I believe it was the "fly-in-a-glass-of-milk" effect that caused this result; there were too few minorities on campus to challenge APCC's structural system and dominant ideology that resulted in attacks on the underrepresented population's lifeworld; they did not see a way to safely and successfully confront APCC's administrators and faculty.

I discovered that the rational approach of critical theory was effective to discern the perpetual reproduction of social, political, and economic domination, but it lacked the

tools to analyze the spiritual and intercultural attacks on the underrepresented population. I found that that CT, feminism, CRT, LatCrit, and multiculturalism would be more effective for critical analysis by adding the assumptions of spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003) and interculturalism (Deardorff, 2004). Each participant, across all underrepresented population profiles, expected and wanted a caring environment, but realized during their APCC experience that that was not the case. The environment was not always caring, welcoming, or validating, and the classroom and hallway leadership were not always characterized as personable, approachable, and warm. The underrepresented population experienced real threats to their person, identity, and their lifeworld that their dominant culture counterparts did not experience. Jason experienced the need to financially support his family, which is not common for middle- and upper-class students, but is very common for African-American students (Charles et al, 2004).

Stage and Manning (as cited in Rhoads & Valadez, 1996) highlighted six weaknesses of the traditional approach of working with the underrepresented student population. I found all six weaknesses and discovered a seventh. I will now address these six weaknesses in separate paragraphs.

First: Unilateral Change

My data confirmed Stage and Manning's (as cited in Rhoads & Valadez, 1996) first weakness. The traditional administrator, faculty, and other staff expected the underrepresented population to change. I found that those participants who were culturally different expended the necessary energy to "fit in" and did not expect the classroom and hallway leadership to embrace their cultural difference. Jason, Brandon,

Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani experienced transformation, but unexpectedly only Jason, Brandon, and Stephanie shared a mutual transformation with a faculty or administrator. All participants recognized caring people in APCC's structural system, but few witnessed a mutual transformation that included the classroom and hallway leadership. Brandon, Stephanie, and Noelani attempted to use the hallway leadership seeking justice, but were instead rebuked and rejected. Noelani stated that she would never again seek a just remedy, but would rather resign herself to her fate until some potential future date for justice. The status quo substantially won, save for a couple of exceptions.

All participants' methods of resistant thinking drove them to persevere, to overcome, and to succeed while incredible odds weighed against them. They also compared their plight with the dominant White, middle- and upper-class, mono-language, and privileged culture. Their resistant thinking included the ability to embrace APCC administrators and faculty who mentored them and who scaffolded their learning by recognizing and respecting their past and appreciating their identities. Apart from a few mentoring administrators and faculty, participants were left to survive as best as they could. Brandon stated it best: "But for those that ... were sinking, they sunk, and they just ... they were just weeded out."

Second: Current Diverse Staff Serve

The traditional approach as practiced by administrators, faculty, and other staff expects diverse non-student stakeholders to be responsible for any new students of similar backgrounds. During the period of my research, APCC hired an African-

American man to specifically address the needs of African-American male students. There was no expectation for professional development of White administrators and faculty in order to effectively address the diverse needs of diverse students. The hiring of one man was the sole plan to improve retention and graduation rates of young African-American male students. I also discovered the willingness of my participants to help and scaffold learning experiences for students of similar backgrounds because these students' needs were left unaddressed. Jason, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, and Noelani specifically reached out to other students even across different socio-economic and ethnicity differences. They were motivated to serve out of their strength because there was a need, a weakness that was not being effectively addressed. Jason had developed a mental plan for what he would do to better serve other poor and first-generation students.

Third: Diverse Student Adapt

The traditional approach expects the underrepresented population to adjust to the traditional, dominant culture. I discovered through my interviews positive and mutual transformational experiences by Jason, Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani. In these instances an administrator or a faculty was transformed by allowing his or her diverse student to serve as his or her teacher. A mutual transformation of teacher-student was realized.

Fourth: Identifiable Students Help

The traditional approach by non-student stakeholders expects to help only identifiably diverse students. Jason's identity, an aspect of spirituality, was steadily transforming from that of his birth-father and -mother. He was there for his children

unlike his father and he was pursuing cultural capital unlike his mother. Jason was also experiencing an intercultural crisis that was different than other middle- and upper-class students. His work load required serving his parents by babysitting his younger brother. Since Jason was White his needs were not readily identified and therefore not readily served by unaware faculty and administrators. Thus the dominant ideology found at APCC obstructed the ability of non-student stakeholders to correctly perceive and understand Jason's and other underrepresented population predicaments. Some of the participants admitted that they were not yet ready to challenge White privilege and domination, while others individually sought justice like Brandon, Stephanie, and Noelani by individually speaking out. In Brandon's case he repetitively sought help while Stephanie and Noelani sought administrative help to no avail.

Fifth: Equitable Opportunity Failed

All participants through their structural system experiences either witnessed or experienced spiritual attacks to their personhood. Brandon, Juan, Desári, Stephanie, and Noelani experienced exclusion through educational structures and practices as predicted by CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and LatCrit (Sólorzano & Bernal, 2001). Jason, Brandon, Desári, Krista, and Noelani experienced spiritual attacks based upon class (Horvat, 2003).

Expectedly they also shared counter examples that weighed heavily on them, such as expensive childcare services, work study fiascos, and racist and sexist experiences. APCC' structural system was contradictory for the underrepresented population (Moore, 2006).

Sixth: Dominant Culture

Anecdotally I observed student affairs personnel informing dominant cultural students of the cultural differences within APCC student body. They support multiple student clubs that raise ethnicity consciousness and appreciation as well as special interest group celebrations that also raise ethnicity and gender consciousness. However, there has not been a consistent and concerted effort to educate the dominant culture administrators and faculty concerning culturally diverse colleagues and students. I have written of the exceptional Drs. Blair and Louise Bentley who are aware and do embrace difference, but this appears to be more a function of their content training and personal values than a result of APCC's professional development plan. Even APCC's employment of a multicultural expert did not include additional professional development plans for the dominant culture to better serve its diverse students. I would imagine that all community college websites recognize and embrace diversity and state that the faculty and administrators are there for all students no matter what walk of life, age group, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and educational/socio-economic background as does APCC. Yet this valid marketing approach from the school's website and advertising literature must be matched by a corresponding commitment to serve the students it attracts.

For example, I wondered how many administrators and faculty knew Jason well. Jason, who is White, felt a dominant ideology pressure concerning the lack of personal financial and social achievement (Horvat, 2003). Was Jason's reality ever known by APCC non-student stakeholders and then correspondingly they modified their curriculum and pedagogical approach to incorporate Jason's needs? I do not know except for what my participants told me about their experiences with Drs. Blair and Louise Bentley.

Dominant Culture Sugar Coats

I found something beyond the six weaknesses of the dominant culture. I found that the dominant culture “sugar coats” the current status of their diverse students. Spotlighting successful students is a useful celebration because it affirms the best in a community college and discovers how the community college is most effective as noted in appreciative inquiry (Yoder, 2005). My concern is not celebrating the successful underrepresented population, but the practice of celebrating a few giving an impression that the community college is effective in serving all underrepresented populations. The sugar coating is the celebration of the one at the expense of ignoring or hiding the failures of the majority. Celebrate the one with a comprehensive and a committed plan to celebrate the majority. It was Noelani who believed that values, attitudes, and behaviors should be consistent with APCC’s published statements.

Anecdotally I discovered during my research phase in a conversation with a faculty member that this faculty did not expect any changes in the treatment of the underrepresented population until this population decided to confront the dominant culture with a public demonstration. Another faculty member refused to discuss the idea of making race/ethnicity a discussion within the classroom with me, though he is recognized as a great humanitarian by other faculty. In general, the voices, needs, and positive attributes of the underrepresented population are either ignored or have become invisible to the dominant culture. They are left, as Brandon stated, to be “weeded out.”

I uncovered inconsistencies with other researchers as well. Desári, Stephanie, Krista, and Noelani all aspired to middle-class accomplishments such as home ownership, good employment, the ability to support their families, and sending their

children to college. Krista shared that she purchased her home at 20 years of age. Jennings (2004) discovered that having a child ignited these women's interest for additional training and education for several reasons; Desári, Stephanie, and Krista all spoke of this reality for them as well. Moore (2005) spoke of the positive character traits of African-American male students that typically are ignored by community college professors. I wrote extensively on this in three sections titled Middle-Class Values, Authentic Self-Assessment, and Personal Character.

I was impressed by each participant by how they faced their obstacles and past wounds to achieve their desired education and career goals. They assessed themselves accurately and planned their futures accordingly. If they had an academic struggle in a gatekeeper course such as mathematics, English, or science, they found a tutor, used the learning centers, and/or developed study groups to overcome their weaknesses. They faced their academic, social, and fiscal fears and did not allow these fears to thwart their achievements. All of my participants allowed their negative life experiences to positively mold their character rather than becoming embittered. They could become offended, but not easily so. All 23 participants taught me; each one became my teacher.

Implications for Action

There are many practical applications for professors and administrators alike. I will wait until a future date to write extensively about this, but now I will summarize key ideas. I would recommend implementation of: holistic critical theory as a methodology to continuously research the underrepresented population until it has achieved an equitable opportunity; appreciative inquiry to develop APCC into "a 'leaderful' community college" to fully implement its core values (Yoder, 2005, p. 47); spiritual leadership

theory that has been woven into the fabric of APCC values and behaviors so that what is advertized is also that what is; intercultural competencies as a standard for all employees in order to know, understand, and appreciate the lives of all APCC stakeholders (Deardorff, 2004; Moore, 2005); and an employee relational development program instituted where race/ethnicity is authentically discussed whereby the dominant culture better understands its racialized lives, privilege, and unfair advantages (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Practical Implications for Professional Practice

There are several practical implications for professional practice that administrators and faculty should pursue. A foundational implication is that every non-student stakeholder individually and corporately cultivate values, attitudes, and listening skills in order to hear and understand what the underrepresented population is saying. Let APCC's student affairs personnel and faculty work together to pursue specific curricular changes so that class, race/ethnicity, and gender are not excluded or forbidden topics from any department including departments that are typically more positivistic such as mathematics, science, technology, and engineering. All students need to learn about culturally diverse others and all stakeholders, including the surrounding community college area, need to know, understand, and implement critical, spiritual, and intercultural values as defined here. Let the surrounding economic, political, religious, and social leaders encourage a radical change in its citizenry.

Further Research

There are many directions that researchers could direct their attention from this point. I sense that a Friendly Disentangling Method might be effective to prompt some

administrators, faculty, students, and surrounding area citizens to embrace difference, especially across class, race/ethnicity, and gender (Spears, 1998). Research could be conducted to determine what experiment might be used to move the community college and its surrounding area towards better integration, where the strong would serve the weak across any definition of difference.

I envision holistic critical theory research where a researcher would interview administrators and faculty like Drs. Louise and Blair Bentley who could share their values, attitudes, and how they cultivated their anti-racist, anti-sexist, and embracing actions. This research could unlock recruiting methods and professional development keys for human resource departments where future employees and current employees embrace the different Other.

I would seek advice from the underrepresented population using holistic critical theory to discover the best teaching and leadership practices. I would also use holistic critical theory to discover other profiles of students who are underrepresented and underserved at APCC, such as those who have physical, emotional, and learning disabilities that are not apparent. Although I could not in this project conduct research exclusively on one profile of the underrepresented population, I envision a critical theory research using one profile. In an entirely different direction, I envision using holistic critical theory to examine a religious institution to expose oppression, domination, and contradictions.

I was not effective in my attempt to use focus groups. I envision the use of holistic critical theory in conjunction with focus groups to study oppression and domination. Perhaps more data would be revealed using focus groups.

Historical Triangulation

APCC is situated in a western state metropolitan area with a population of more than 500,000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts³ (2008), the metropolitan population is comprised of approximately 7% Black, 1% Native-American, 3% Asian, 13% Latin@, and 74% White. APCC's population is represented by 52% women and 48% men and is approximately 11% Black, 2% Native-American, 4% Asian, 10% Latin@, and 67% White non-Latin@. APCC was created in the late 1960s and a report concerning the status of minorities was written 20 years later. My research was conducted 20 years after this report. APCC was conceived as a college that was to be culturally pluralistic, ethnically diverse, and within an instructional atmosphere that fostered multiculturalism (Moore, 2005).

The immediate purpose of the report⁴ was to survey the needs and treatment of ethnic minority employees and students on the APCC campus. According to the report, this was the first attempt to catalog problems, recommend resolutions, and position as part of the APCC's strategic plan. The problems listed by the report were numerous and the campus environment was strained. The adhoc committee who wrote the report was

³ Due to commitment to confidentiality, this report will be referenced as U.S. Census Bureau. (2008). *US Census: State and County QuickFacts* Retrieved February 22, 2010 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/allpeoplescity>

⁴ Due to the commitment to confidentiality, this report will be referenced as Minority Affairs Committee All Peoples Community College. *A report on the status of minorities at all peoples community college*. All Peoples City, AP.

formed because the original and official task force lacked ethnic minority representation. This report was initiated in response to the marginalization, limited access to power structures, and limited career and economic opportunities within APCC for minorities.

The problems described were numerous and critical, spiritual, and intercultural in nature. The critical problems were the lack of: accountability to local, state, federal stakeholders; equitable opportunities for advancement; sugar coating practices that focus on the superficial minority enrollment percentages without corresponding substantive retention and graduation rates; and the sugar coating of an announcement to employ a minority recruitment and retention specialist, who within a year was reduced to part-time status. Spiritual problems were the lack of: a fair, respectful, and mutual employment environment (environment was described as hostile); equitable career opportunities across the career hierarchies, but were instead clustered at the lower economic end; and positive attitudes and diligent efforts towards minority recruitment. The intercultural problems were the lack of: a vision for the future that predicted minorities becoming the majority population; understanding and appreciating the voices of the ethnic minority; and the ability to embrace cultural differences within the community college culture, curriculum, and practices.

This report is in congruence with the current APCC environment as previously described in Chapters 4 and 5 and in agreement with Moore's (2005) national historical community college account. Access and limitations to preferred APCC careers, positions of power, and support structures were based upon race/ethnicity. The practice of sugar coating administrative practices also existed.

Limitations

Research limitations are the “limiting conditions or restrictive weaknesses” of a particular study (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007, p. 16). If any limitations occur during the study, I am responsible to duly note them (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007; Roberts, 2004). I will describe my limitations by using four categories: Topical, Methodological, Personal, and Design.

Topical Limitations

My first major restrictive weakness of my study is that I delimited my population under study to successful underrepresented population, that is, my purposeful sample effectively eliminated the voices of the underrepresented population who enrolled at APCC, but failed to accomplish their certification, degree, or original intent. I cannot speak for them since I do not know what they would have to say. At best I could only conjecture. Secondly, I could not choose one underrepresented population profile to study. My unwillingness to select one voice could have diluted the voices for every other profile.

Personal Limitations

I desired to use focus groups, but my inexperience and lack of appropriate peer assistant preparation rendered the process largely ineffective. I cannot say declaratively whether or not that if I was more capable in the use of focus groups that this research would have achieved better or more data rich information. Therefore, my analysis and conclusions would have been impacted. My interview skills were limited by my ability to question, listen, and understand; these shortcomings subsequently limited my participants' responses and my ability to collect data. My analysis ability limited my

ability to make credible decisions including what data to include, prioritize, and highlight. As noted earlier in Chapter 5, my four structures and my three themes limited my conclusions and understanding. Other researchers could have analyzed the data differently.

Methodological Limitations

Certainly my holistic critical theory perspective is another limitation. This theory limited my research questions; personal awareness, understanding, and perceptions of the environment (APCC students); and framed the whole horizon of my research, that is, holistic critical theory bounded my research and prevented a total inductive study. As noted earlier, critical theory is interpreted by some as a politically biased methodology (Hatch, 2002). I attempted to describe my biases before embarking on my data collection and analysis, but my biases did impact my work.

Design Limitations

Each of my design decisions limited my research in some known and unknown ways, but particularly my four research questions limited data collection and then analysis. Especially Question 3: *How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of capitalist ethics? How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of market forces? How did successful, underrepresented students learn to defend the lifeworld against the intrusion of bureaucratic rationality?* A committee member, Professor Bruce Hall, noted during my proposal defense my strong anti-capitalistic perspective. This limited my ability to see other dimensional threats to my participants' lifeworld such as

spiritual, identity, and cultural. Certainly my participants were able to depart beyond my research questions' original boundaries to include issues that they experienced.

My volunteer participants limited the study by limiting what they shared or by refusing to reveal and discuss issues related to my research questions. I have no way to determine the potential impact this could have had on my data collection, analysis, and conclusions. APCC constrained my purposeful sampling procedure by refusing to send a global email to all underrepresented population students who matched the profile. I have no way to determine the impact of this administrative limitation; perhaps there was none. The time frame of my data collection, spring and summer, did limit who I spoke with and who I did not. Unrecognized time and personal constraints and my ability to relate to my participants could have limited what they shared.

I am not aware of other limitations, which imply there are other limitations that I have not described. I am human, a finite fallible human being. The reader must decide whether I have made a credible case for accepting my data, findings, and interpretations. I believe in my conclusions; it is now the reader's turn to decide whether I have made my case.

Concluding Remarks

Colorado State University School of Education's Community College Leadership program has transformed me through critical, spiritual, and intercultural ways. I am a mathematics instructor; without apology I love (theoretical) mathematics. My teaching has been transformed: I learned of privilege, power, and difference and experienced praxis as a teacher. This praxis included critical thinking, spirituality, and intercultural competence. My critical thinking changed to include social justice because I recognized

my privileged status and imparted privilege to those who lacked; I shared power by lowering the power differential in my class and achieved a more democratic classroom; and those who were different from me taught me and we achieved mutual praxis critically. My colleagues and students have been great teachers and I became their student. My spirituality changed to include a greater awareness of difference because I recognized how gifted the Other was and submitted myself to the Other's wisdom; I shared grace and received grace in return; and those who were different embraced me and we achieved mutual praxis spiritually. My intercultural competence changed to include greater consciousness because I recognized the relativity of culture and adopted the Other's worldview; I shared dialogue and received dialogue with mutual understanding; and those who were culturally different accepted me and we achieved praxis interculturally. There is a greater sense of peace and harmony with self, Others, and culturally, but not balance and that is okay. I live out of balance because my time, focus of attention, and personal affairs cannot be divided equally. However, I live in the moment and in this moment I am wholly there.

The past five years' experiences have provided me a holistic view of the human experience through the critical, spiritual, and intercultural lens. I have experienced an increased motivation towards action to achieve transformative praxis in more spheres in my life, not just my personal sphere of family, friends, and new acquaintances, but also within the community college, state, and country. However, I have substantially failed to extend and multiply my personal praxis to others in my community college, state, and country. In resistance, I may change geographic locations, but not surrender on my multiplication effort to realize praxis. Somehow there must be a way to engender the

human experience across and within cultures. There must be a way to encompass the Other, replacing archetypal rejection, while simultaneously avoiding the use of force to achieve praxis and the assumptive deficits of Others in order to recognize mutual strengths and weaknesses of individuals, communities, and cultures. Surely praxis that is achieved critically, spiritually, and interculturally is useful to higher education and specifically to community colleges, and not just for me personally.

Through my subjectivities, lifeworld, and ideology I understand leadership is more about serving than dominating. I express it this way: the strong should serve the weak. Classroom and hallway leadership are serving, and this serving is critical, spiritual, and intercultural. This serving seeks justice, removes oppression, and establishes freedom. This serving quests for personal knowledge, develops a personal ethic of care, and embraces the Other; it encourages communicative action, seeks mutual understanding of individuals within intra- and inter-cultural communities, and ends in mutual transformative praxis. It is not a utopia, however, for there is no end-state, but expanding possibilities for awareness of oppression, the Other, and praxis. Each praxis is located on a continuum with no end point for which a person could rest and stop changing and experiencing praxis. It is a mutual lifesong instead of a swansong for the one who is weak.

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APPENDIX A BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

TITLE OF STUDY: Community College as a Life-song or Swan-song for the Underrepresented Population: A Holistic Critical Theory Perspective

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Timothy Davies, Ph.D.

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: David L. Wolfe, M.A.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being asked to participate because of your life experience and who you are. We assure you that the researchers and interviewer do not have a negative bias about race/ethnicity and socio-economic class, or accept any type of sexism in higher education. We are simply interested in learning more about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences that you have had at Pikes Peak Community College (community college). We want to know not only how you were welcomed, validated, and encouraged, but also if you experienced any racism, sexism, and other negative incidents while at community college. The source of your positive or negative experiences could be from any administrator, faculty member, or your classmates. We are interested in hearing the stories you tell about these issues.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The researchers for this study are from Colorado State University (CSU). The Principal Investigator works in the School of Education as its Director. The co-Principal Investigator is a student completing a doctoral degree from the School of Education and the Community College Leadership department at CSU and is also a current mathematics faculty member at community college.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This project is about how the underrepresented population experiences higher education. We want to learn whether these experiences affirmed you and therefore you were encouraged; or debilitated you and therefore discouraged you. We want to learn if you experienced racism, sexism, or any other negative stereotypes. The research questions explore how a student from the lowest economic class, a first-generation student, an African-American, Asian-American, Native-American, Hispanic, or a single mother-with-children experiences community college.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The researchers plan to interview you. Your participation in this study will involve 2 interviews. Each interview will last about 1 hour. To aid you, we will find a location that is mutually convenient for you and the interviewer. If you need help with your children in order to participate in an interview, a child care center will be provided at no cost to you.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

Initially you must decide whether to be interviewed one-to-one (you and the interviewer) or in a focus group setting (you, plus several other students, the interviewer and his assistant). There will be a focus group composed of students from the lowest economic class, of first-generation students (first in their family to attend college), and one focus group that will be composed of students from a variety of backgrounds including those that experienced foster-care. There will be specific focus groups composed only of African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native-Americans, Hispanics/Latino/as, and single mothers-with-children.

Each person will be asked to complete 2 interviews. Initially the questions will be asked so that the interviewer will get to know you. The interviewer will then ask about questions concerning your identity, ethnicity, gender (being male or female), and socio-economic class and how you were impacted by administrators, faculty, and other community college staff. The second interview will clarify any issues or questions that you or the researcher may have. Once the results are written, you will be given a copy of the findings. If you disagree, you can add your own interpretations. These can be added next to the researcher's comments in the final research report.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You may choose not to do the interviews at any time if you feel upset. The researchers are interested in hearing your stories, not causing any emotional pain.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable efforts to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. Some people may feel concerned as a result of talking about class, race, or sexism. The researchers realize that talking about these issues may distress some people. You could feel sad, cry, and wish your situation was different than it is, or have other feelings. These feelings may surface in the interviews and might also last after the interviews are over. If you feel concerned or emotional about what you share or about the way things are, please let the researchers know. The researchers care about the emotions that arise as a result of the study and have referrals to counselors so that you can talk about how you feel and reduce any distress.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There may be no direct benefits to participating in this project. However, our experience is that some people have a rewarding feeling from helping with this kind of study. Having someone to talk to about your experiences may feel good. Someone who listens carefully without judging you or what has happened in your life can also feel rewarding. Some studies show that it is possible to gain insight as a result of interview research. You might gain insight into your situation. Any insight could also benefit your family and other classmates who share similar experiences. With your help, we may better understand how people make meaning of events in their lives. We may also learn more about what affects

make community colleges as they are. This information could help us help other students like you in the future.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this research project will not cost you any money. If you want to speak with a counselor as a result of any thoughts or feelings you have during or after the interviews, the interviewer can give you a list of counselors. The cost of seeing a counselor will be up to you. Some of the referrals will have a sliding fee scale for lower cost services.

You should also know that the researchers will not speak with anyone about the information you share. We will also not identify you in any way as a participant in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep confidential all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. No one will know about your participation in this project. Only the researchers will know the answers you give us.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information and what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records. Your name and research records will be stored in different locked areas. Also, your name will not be used on any of the research materials. Instead, fake names (a.k.a. pseudonyms) will be assigned or selected by you to the data for each person who participates. The list with your name and the fake name as well as the audio tape of the interview will be destroyed once the interviews are complete so that no one can identify the information you tell us in the interviews.

The information you give us will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study. Even if we do this, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. You will have a chance to see the results before the project is completed. If you have different thoughts about any of the findings, you can ask the researcher to have your comments added alongside the researcher's to appear in the final report. Your name will not appear with these comments, so your identity will still remain private.

In order to protect the privacy of what you share, we have received a special certificate, called a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). According to the NIH, with a Certificate of Confidentiality researchers cannot be forced

to disclose information that may identify you, even by a court subpoena, in any federal, state, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceeding. We take this to mean that the Certificate of Confidentiality is like a legal firewall against a subpoena, protecting the information you tell the interviewer. This certificate greatly minimizes the chance we will have to share the information you give us. According to the Certificate of Confidentiality, no information can be shared with others that would identify you as a participant or that would link you to the information you share in the interviews. This means that we cannot share the information you or others provide during the interview with attorneys, family members, or counselors. You can choose to give information to others about your participation in this research if you want to. You can also choose to give written permission to the researchers to disclose your research information to others who you designate, in which case we cannot use the Certificate of Confidentiality to protect the information you share with us. If you consider having us release your information to others, please talk with us about this ahead of time so we can explain your rights and the limits of confidentiality with you. The information you share with us in the interviews is not to be used for litigation purposes.

You should know that even with a Certificate of Confidentiality there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to authorities if we believe you have physically or sexually abused a child, or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

The researchers can stop your participation early for two reasons. First, if you do not show up more than three times for a scheduled interview or if you cancel a scheduled interview more than three times, you may be removed from the study. Second, the purpose of this research is to gather information to understand students who experienced community college negatively and how they responded to this experience. Even with the protection from this certificate, if a community college administrator, community college attorney, or member of a court contacts the researchers or requests the information you gave during an interview, you may be removed from the rest of the project to further protect you.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

As a way to thank you for the time you devote to this project, we will give each participant a \$15 gift certificate to enjoy a special dinner at a family restaurant.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, David L. Wolfe, at 502-3284. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Please do not put any pressure on yourself or anyone else who participates to say certain things to the interviewer. Each participant should be able to speak freely during the interviews, without any outside pressures. Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 4 pages. [The original was only 4 pages due to margin formatting.]

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff

APPENDIX B SELF-REFLEXIVE AND IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES STATEMENT

The purpose of this appendix is to fulfill Hatch's (2002) recommendation in his second step of conducting political analysis. This step requires the explication of my ideological positionings and the identification of various ideological issues that I see in the context under investigation. This is an extension to what I wrote earlier in the section titled Prologue (which I will not now repeat). I now proceed with this explication and identification process.

My name is David Wolfe and as a researcher, I am a critical Christian spiritualist, or in yet another way to express my identity, I am a holistic critical theorist. By this I mean that I pursue social justice to some degree in any and all contexts in order to rectify, prohibit, or end oppression based upon race/ethnicity, class, gender (that is, sex being male or female), sexual orientation, and other biases, negative stereotypes, and assumed superiority founded on religious/denominational, personal, familial, cultural, or other forms of difference that exclude, reject, and mistreat people. Power, as noted earlier, is used to survive, overcome, subdue, and dominate. I believe that power is distributed inequitably among people and societies and that oppression occurs when an individual, a group of individuals, or a society uses power to gain or maintain privilege at the expense of others who have less power. In contrast I believe that those individuals, groups, and societies who have greater power in a particular context ought to use their power to consider and serve not only their interests, but also the interests of those with less power and privilege.

I further believe that the strong should serve the weak, with definitions of strong and weak based upon the context but related to academic, fiscal, socio-economic, political, psychological, spiritual, or any other human measurement of difference. I further believe that an injustice occurs when one places or leaves another in servitude, an inferior position.

I value and consider all people and cultures precious and worthy of respect and consideration regardless of the measure of their power and privilege. Anthropologist Awasu (1988) listed the broad categories of power that people and cultures have pursued: mana, force, power; human and human systems; materialism, humanism, and secularism; nature (sun, moon, stars, sea, earth, light/fire); spirits (e.g., human, animal, witches, demons, goblins, angels, gods); and High God. It is beyond the scope of this appendix to describe in full the definitions and implications of these terms, except only to note that people and cultures have and still pursue power based upon these categories. I believe that in order to understand domination and oppression, power must be considered holistically which potentially includes all of the above categories.

Because of these beliefs and values I am defined as a neo-Marxist, feminist, and holistic critical theorist with my preference being critical Christian spiritualist. Based upon these ideological predispositions, I expect to find the following ideological issues and contradictions in the community college under study. These ideological issues and contradictions can be summarized into categories of class, race/ethnicity, sexism, and spirituality. In each of these categories the oppression can be described as, or results in, limitations to and exclusions from career and other life choices; personal attacks such as being ignored, neglected, or other social abuse; being viewed with a deficit lens, that is,

an individual is negatively stereotyped as lacking integrity, perseverance, fortitude, self-control, and/or good will; and finally, a cultural bias based upon a presumed superiority, a general insensitivity and unkindness towards minorities, and/or (false) ideologies and myths.

In summary I expect to find: hegemonic power structures that privilege White middle- and upper-class heterosexual males; racism, both individual actions that are actively and passively racist as well as institutional racism; limitations and hindrances to the educational and career opportunities for the lowest economic class that prevent an individual's achieving her/his full potential; patriarchal issues; the underrepresented students not being treated equitably; underrepresented students lacking a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership because administrators, faculty, and other staff fail to validate them; certain ethnic, class, and gender-based groups do better than others in education because administrators, faculty, and other staff perpetuate their biases, negative stereotypes, and assumed superiority; underrepresented students and minority administrators, faculty, and other staff feel "out of place" within the dominant White culture; underrepresented students who must not only learn the dominant cultural system, but also maintain their own natal, cultural competence; and how the underrepresented students challenge dominant ideologies.