NEGOTIATING SPACE: CRITICAL RACE COUNTERSTORIES OF FIRST-
GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS OF COLOR

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Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership

by
Amy Huijeong Lee
San Francisco, California

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Negotiating Space: Critical Race Counterstories of First-Generation College Students of Color* by Amy Huijeong Lee, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at San Francisco State University.

Helen Hyun, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor, College of Education
San Francisco State University

Barbara Henderson, Ph.D.
Professor, College of Education
San Francisco State University

Christine Sleeter, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita, College of Professional Studies
Cal State University Monterey Bay

NEGOTIATING SPACE: CRITICAL RACE COUNTERSTORIES OF FIRST- GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS OF COLOR

Amy Huijeong Lee
San Francisco State University
2011

This phenomenological study uses critical race theory to explore counterstories of four first-generation college (FGC) students of color who attend selective universities. In a post-affirmative action context in California, institutional focus on students of color has moved toward supporting FGC and “educationally disadvantaged” students as a response to legal challenges to race conscious outreach and admissions. Although students of color are included in both these demographics, a colorblind approach appears prevalent in supporting students.

This study introduces the concept of “displacement” as the dislocation FGC students of color experience in the highly disruptive shift in Discourse and values between home and college. Displacement is impacted by social identities including FGC, person of color, LGBTQ, and undocumented residency status. In the absence of intuitional support, students mostly drew from community cultural wealth and on third spaces to negotiate displacement. My research also builds upon the concept of transformational resistance, suggesting it is not a singular or pure space, but can be enacted with other forms of resistance. This research has implications for policy and practice including the potential to inform policy by providing a window into the post-affirmative action culture of California’s elite campuses and documenting the deleterious effects of race-blind admissions polices and programs on underrepresented students. It also includes leadership implications to look critically at the role of disciplines such as Ethnic Studies; to prepare faculty and staff to be responsive to students’ converging experiences with racism, sexism, heterosexism, and xenophobia; and for administrators and faculty to be explicit and intentional in the inclusion of undocumented students in campus diversity actions.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

Helen Hyun, Ed.D.
Chair, Dissertation Committee

May 3, 2011
Date

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Chapter One: Purpose of the Study

My own personal, academic, and professional history has been guided by the power of stories. When I took my first Asian American Studies class as a freshman at UC Berkeley and read *Strangers from a Different Shore* (Takaki, 1989) I was struck by the inclusion of the everyday person's voice into history. Takaki's book had a very clear agenda: to challenge the erasure of Asians and Asian Americans in United States history by weaving together fictional literature, poetry, historical documents, and biographies. These biographical stories then became critical stories that named and simultaneously challenged racism. At that moment, reading this book at a university gave me the permission to believe that my experiences, my self, and my family history mattered beyond the confines of my small life. From that point forward, I became increasingly interested in listening to, documenting, and analyzing the stories of my parents, my self, as well as those around me. These critical stories helped me better understand how the intersections of race, gender, class, and language demand for the existence of cultural third spaces that can resist dominant ideologies of equal opportunity and colorblindness. This exposure was powerful and fundamentally changed the way I listened to people and thought about the way that stories of marginalized people can be silenced or heard. I carry this respect for stories wherever I go, including this research where I present the counternarratives of Teresa, Orlando, Adam, and Cecilia.

Problem Statement

Research on first-generation college students (FGC) and students of color is overwhelming quantitative and focuses on academic outcomes. Research indicates that FGC students are at a distinct academic disadvantage compared to their peers. In addition to negotiating the standard difficulties of other college students, they must navigate more academic and social transitions (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). According to the 2003 Beginning Postsecondary Students study, 27.1% of FGC students in four-year universities do not persist in any form of post-secondary education: double the rate of non-first generation college students. FGC students also enter college with less preparation for coursework. They tend to come in with lower skills in reading, math, and critical thinking (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Additionally, while in high school, these students complete fewer college-preparation courses, AP/IB courses, or college courses (Choy, 2001). Because FGC students are likely to come from lower income families and from communities of color, it can be reasoned that they generally attend schools with fewer academic resources and less access to quality educational experiences (Cammarota, 2004; Fine, Burns, Payne, & Torre, 2004; Orfield & Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2001).

FGC students who are also students of color face the additional challenge of navigating a racially charged environment. On average, students of color are more

likely to report a discriminatory campus climate, sense more prejudice from faculty and staff, and are more likely to report negative in-class experiences than were white students (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Ongoing racial discrimination lessens student commitment to their college institution (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996) and students' goal of college completion (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Naturally, these factors can impact persistence in college and lead to lower graduation rates overall.

The majority of research on FGC students seeks to understand variables such as student academic preparedness or social involvement in relation to college graduation or persistence rates. However, there is limited literature on how FGC students of color negotiate the highly racialized and classist climate on college campuses to find a sense of place in college. This research draws upon critical race theory (CRT) and postcolonial theory to understand how FGC students of color describe and negotiate their experiences in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the intersectional experiences of FGC students of color. The approach in working with FGC students has largely functioned under the guise of colorblindness. In 1995, the UC Regents passed SB 1 and SB 2, ending affirmative action practices in student admission and in hiring practices system-

wide. A year later, California voters passed Proposition 209, which amended the state constitution to prohibit the use of affirmative action in public education, employment, and government contracting. Post-209 educational programs that were once affirmative action programs changed their focus to “educationally disadvantaged populations,” which includes students who attend under-performing schools, are low-income, or are FGC (*New directions for outreach*, 1997). Students from these communities are disadvantaged by the educational system and deserve to be served equitably by public education. However, students of color who are also members of these communities experience a compound disadvantage that is distinctly different from that of their white peers.

Proposition 209 has contributed to a culture of silence and inaction in regard to issues of racial inequity. The provision amended Section 31 of Article I of the California Constitution to read: “The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.” The law does not mandate a so-called colorblind approach to working with students. However, this has been a consequence of the law due to trepidation of reprisal and potential litigation.

In my eight years working in programs for “educationally disadvantaged students,” I witnessed practitioners’ fear to consider the role of race in the delivery of

service. Within my organization, department, and division I consistently heard people at all levels make statements to the effect of, “We can’t talk about race or we’ll get in trouble.” By muting the significance of race, post-secondary institutions and their well-intentioned practitioners contribute to the racial oppression of students of color by denying their everyday realities. The counterstories of FGC students of color reveal the continuing salience of race and challenge the colorblind approach to working with FGC students of color.

Research Questions

The following questions guided my inquiry into the experiences of FGC students of color: How do first-generation students of color negotiate academic and social challenges in four-year colleges? What role does transformational resistance play in the persistence of FGC students of color?

This qualitative phenomenological inquiry explored the following propositions: (a) FGC students of color are marginalized by academic Discourses that support the idea that education is a property of whiteness. Therefore, FGC students of color may struggle with the demand to deracinate themselves upon entering college; (b) FGC students of color seek and create counterspaces or third spaces that sustain their motivation for college; and (c) Transformational resistance may help students negotiate race and generational status in a manner that affirms their identity as FGC students of color.

Theoretical Framework

The power of story has been foundational to my work as a college counselor. The students I worked with were all first-generation college students and overwhelmingly students of color. As an educator in pre-college preparation, part of my work was to help prepare my students for the college essay—an autobiographical essay that must say something moving or significant about the applicant's life. My students all struggled with this process. Students consistently said they had experienced nothing worth talking about. This self-silencing reflects the absence of voices like theirs in dominant culture. I pushed and guided them through the college essay to help them to get into college, but also to produce something that legitimizes their experiences as young people of color. Over time, incredible stories emerged. These started as stories of hardship, but were transformed into proud stories that demonstrate resilience, resistance, and resourcefulness. At a time when my students--FGC students of color--felt increasingly intimidated and undeserving of attending a four-year college, the writing process helped validate and affirm their pursuit of higher education. Ultimately, students realized that they were pursuing college *because* of where they came from, not *despite* where they came from. My work was deeply rooted in helping my students shape, name, and tell their stories as young folks who live in the margins. I strived to challenge the dominant notion that college is an opportunity for escapism from their community/ family and supported them in navigating institutional barriers and

individual gatekeepers.

In hindsight, much of my academic and professional work can be framed through critical race theory (CRT). CRT challenges and deconstructs prevalent notions of meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality. It is frequently characterized by five tenets (Dixson & Chapman, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002): (a) intercentricity of race and racism—or the belief that racism is endemic and central to the experiences of people of color. CRT also examines the intersectionality of race with other forms of oppression such as sexism and classism, (b) challenges dominant ideology including claims of objectivity, colorblindness, and equal opportunity, (c) has a commitment to social justice, (d) draws on the counter-narratives of people of color based on the belief that the experiential knowledge of people of color is critical to understanding and dismantling racial oppression, and (e) draws from multiple disciplines such as ethnic studies, sociology, women's studies, and history to better investigate and understand the effects of racism.

The primary argument in CRT is that race and racism are central to systemic oppression and sustain the maintenance of hegemony (Giroux, 1983; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso). In this study, I use CRT but also draw from a Latina/Latino critical race theory perspective (LatCrit). LatCrit addresses issues that intersect with Latina/Latino community such as language, immigration, ethnicity, and culture (Yosso, 2005) and is concerned with Latina/Latino pan-ethnic

coalition as a part of its social justice framework (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In this study, I specifically draw upon the use of intersectional locations from a LatCrit perspective.

I also include post-colonial theory within my theoretical framework. My research assumes the perspective that communities of color in the United States live in an internal state of domination and exploitation (Tejeda, Espinoza, & Guitierrez, 2003). Post-colonial theory assumes that the logic of colonialism continues to exist and that the struggle for power is persistent (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1987). In this struggle, those who have been colonized are active agents in remaking the culture of both colonized spaces and also colonizer spaces (Spivak, 1987). Post-colonial theory and CRT share a perspective that people from marginalized communities can challenge dominant narratives and that social justice can be achieved by the actions of those who are oppressed.

Furthermore, in post-colonial discourse, the idea that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputed. It engages in the deconstruction of dominant and rigid renderings of culture by interrogating issues of power and essentialism and considers the opportunities of third space and interstices as a possibility for expanding ways of knowing (Bhabha, 1994.). Again, in this manner post-colonial theory connects to CRT, as both assume that dominant and deficit narratives of marginalized communities are not an essential truth of these communities.

Finally, I also interpret CRT from a post-colonial strategic-essentialist perspective (Spivak, 1987). That is, I use CRT not to assume that it can explain the totality or essential truth about the experiences of people of color in the United States, but to present counternarratives as an organizing and research strategy for social justice. Strategic essentialism entails that marginalized communities, while differentiated internally, temporarily render and present their experiences in a simplified and cohesive manner as a strategy for achieving justice. Spivak (1987) herself later critiqued this phrase saying that is mostly employed with disregard for strategy and thus becomes permanent essentialism. I believe that CRT's use of race as intercentric, paired with an intersectional and interdisciplinary analytical perspective allows for strategic essentialism while upholding the heterogeneity that exists in the experiences of communities of color.

In many ways, CRT is a reconnection to my initial educational engagement -- CRT studies respond to one of Ronald Takaki's often asked questions, "How do you know, you know what you know?" CRT counterstories centralize the experiences of people of color to understand our racial past and present. It works as a way to subvert the epistemic logic of racial and educational policies that currently function absent of the experiences and interest of people of color.

Whose Story Counts?

Critics of CRT may allege that the use of counterstories is too narrow and subjective. However, CRT draws from the belief that what has been deemed by dominant society as an objective, desirable truth in fact privileges the experiences of white people or tells the story of people of color from a white, mostly male and heterosexual, gaze. Feminist and postcolonial writer and historian Emma Pérez (1999) wrote “My commitment to history also moves me to see it with another ‘I/eye’: the ‘I’ which was often denied in the writing of history, where subjectivity was once unacceptable yet inevitable” (p. 7). Her statement draws attention to the fallacy of objectivity. Whether we choose to privilege one story over another in our rendering of history or in educational research and how we determine what is true and authentic is based on our values and beliefs and is thus ripe with subjectivity.

CRT emerged from the field of Critical Legal Studies (CLS). Early CLS scholarship focused primarily on legal precedence, especially the early relationship of property rights and human rights (Harris, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). CRT theorists pulled away from CLS, as they felt a legal analysis was restrictive in analyzing racial injustice (Delgado, 1988). I believe, however, that a CLS analysis of how the U.S. legal system has valued the stories of white people as authentic and objective can support CRT’s emphasis on the importance of counternarratives and counterstories of people of color.

I also choose to turn to legal history to describe the attempts to silence the truth of communities of color, as I believe from a layperson's perspective we often assume the legal system operates beyond the reach of human bias. I will instead demonstrate how the system has functioned in a manner that has promoted white stories as an objective truth, thus perpetuating white privilege and upholding systems of domination.

Take for example the Black Codes, a series of legislation passed in the southern states post-Civil War. Black Codes secured the privileges of whites by controlling the physical and legal of actions of former slaves. Freedman and freedwomen had restricted labor and migration choices. In many states, Black Codes also barred blacks from filing suit or testifying in legal cases, thus rendering their lived experiences as illegitimate. Although the phrase Black Codes most often refers to southern legislation immediately following the end of the Civil War, the legal tradition of Black Codes existed prior to the antebellum south which drew upon previously existing laws from northern states (Birnbaum & Taylor, 2000).

The legally sanctioned practice of eliminating non-white testimonies or stories also extended to the West coast. In *People v. Hall (1854)* the California Supreme Court freed Hall, a white man, by overturning a murder conviction. Hall was previously convicted and sentenced to death for the murder of Ling Sing, a Chinese miner. Three other Chinese miners had testified to the killing, which led to Hall's conviction. However, the Supreme Court extended California's existing exclusion that "No black or

mulatto person, or Indian, shall be allowed to give evidence in favor of, or against a white man” to *People v. Hall* by interpreting “Indian” to include anyone of the “Mongoloid race” and by applying “black” to refer to any non-white person (Ancheta, 1998). In both the Black Codes and *People v. Hall*, it is clear that historically, courts deemed white testimonies and experiences as the only ones that could be reliable or free of bias. Therefore, the historical legacy of silencing the truths of people of color have served in the interest of white people

Let me turn to the topic of affirmative action. I use this example neither to support nor challenge affirmative action as an effective policy, but rather to focus on how preserving whiteness was central to the legal discourse around the issue. In his article “Innocence and Affirmative Action,” Ross (1995) explored the power behind the recurring theme of “innocence” and “victimhood” in a range of affirmative action court cases. In *Regents v. Bakke* (1978), the Supreme Court upheld that race could be used as one factor of many in admissions decisions but could not use quotas. Although Bakke has been cited by proponents of race-based policies, Ross concluded that Justices based their rulings on ensuring that whites are not innocent victims of affirmative action. Take for example, Justice Powell’s opinion in which he wrote that “innocent persons... [are] asked to endure... [deprivation] as the price of membership in the dominant majority” and that the court could not “inflict such harm” by “forcing innocent persons... to bear the burdens of redressing grievances not of their making” (Ross, 1995, p. 54). Ross

found that even in court cases that upheld affirmative action, Justices invoked the rhetoric of innocence to set limitations to their endorsement of affirmative action.

White stories are given an enormous amount of weight, even when quantitative data invalidates these stories. Statistical accounts show that white women have been the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action (Taylor, 2000). By extension then, white men who have married white women have also benefited from an improved quality of life. These benefits are passed down generationally to their children. Therefore, white people are not “innocent victims” of affirmative action, but rather unintended yet direct beneficiaries of this policy (Aguirre Jr, 2000). Despite this, individual stories such as a white neighbor’s daughter who was not admitted to a top college despite having straight As were central to focusing public discourse on affirmative action (Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn, & Arrona, 2006). These stories were also the basis for lawsuits that contributed to the dismantling of affirmative action (Ross, 1995; Taylor, 2000).

This brief legal history has established that our nation is built upon and continues to be shaped by individual stories. However, these stories have overwhelming been white and served in the interest of preserving white privilege. My research and other CRT studies seeks to counter this history by amplifying and validating the lived experiences and stories of people of color. These counterstories are introduced as new evidence for interrogating systemic and institutional oppression.

Key concepts

Several key concepts give structure to my research. Connections between these organizing concepts provided powerful ways to enrich my findings.

Discourse

Gee (2001) described Discourses as identity kits that are made up of social practices that are reflected in the way individuals “talk, read, write, think, believe, value, act and interact with things and other people” (p. 39). Therefore, it is how groups enact a worldview to communicate with others. Discourses are contextually derived and are privileged according to their context. When Discourses are linked to education, they have strong political implications such as power and distribution of social goods and contribute to the reproduction of systemic inequity. This concept will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Third Space

Theoretically, third space exists between the “first space” of home and community and the “second space” of more formal institutions such as school (Moje, et al., 2004). When Discourses between first and second spaces are dramatically different from each other -- one privileged and the other marginalized-- this can result in a powerful demand to assimilate or resist, to choose one over the other. Third space can counter this demand and serve as a place where the process of domination is disrupted (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha contended that through the contestation of domination, a

hybrid identity or new subject-position can emerge to challenge the validity and authenticity of essentialist cultural identities that are otherwise used to dehumanize people of color. According to Bhabha third spaces can be “a productive space that births new possibilities--it is interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative” (p. 178-179). He celebrated these interstitial spaces as places of empowerment. Although third spaces can be places of opportunity and possibility, it is important to acknowledge that they exist as a response to multiple forms of domination.

Displacement

In this study, I introduce the concept of *displacement* to describe how students experience the difference in Discourses and values between home and college.

Displacement builds upon the concept of space—physical, geographical, or social spaces-- which is often used by critical scholars to situate their research. Spaces can be examined in the context of social locations or how identity markers such as race, sex, language, or immigration status are privileged or oppressed based on the dominant cultural values. Displacement describes the experience of a subject when her space shifts from a first space to a second space that depends on a vastly different Discourse. This shift results in a disruption of a subject’s view of self, values, and reality. Displacement is grounded in the concept of third space. Displacement can be considered the domination and dislocation that happens before, outside, or absent of third spaces as individuals seek to orient themselves in a new space. Therefore,

examining displacement focuses on the experience of disarray and devaluing between first and second spaces.

Community Cultural Wealth

Yosso (2005) conceptualized community cultural wealth as a CRT challenge to Bourdieuan interpretations of cultural capital. Rather than looking at communities of color from a deficit and culture of poverty perspective, Yosso outlined community cultural wealth as the multiple forms of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are possessed by marginalized communities that often go unrecognized. She identified at least six forms of capital that contribute to community cultural wealth: aspirational capital; linguistic capital, navigational capital; social capital; familial capital; and resistant capital. Yosso argued that the qualities of these capitals are heavily interdependent upon each other and often intersect. It is through this strength that communities of color persist despite institutional racism.

Transformational Resistance

Delgado Bernal (1997) first introduced the construct of transformational resistance as one form of resistance behaviors by Latina/Latino students. Drawing upon resistance theories, CRT, and Critical Latino Theory (LatCrit) to expand resistance theories, Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) described those who possess transformational resistance as holding an “awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination” (p. 319) and “demand(ing) change

in an oppressive environment. Delgado Bernal (1997) delineated two forms of transformational resistance: external and internal. Both share a conscious critique of domination and a motivation toward social justice. External resistance, however, involves overt action that does not conform to social and institutional norms. Internal resistance, on the other hand, may appear to conform to dominant norms but are in fact subtle actions meant to challenge domination. The subtlety of internal resistance requires a deep knowledge of the individual and her/ his motivation and values. Although internal and external transformational resistance may look different, at the heart, they are shared by *conscientização* or critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) in which people perceive and then take action against social, political, and economic contradictions in society.

Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this study, FGC students are defined as those who self-report their parents' highest level of education as less than a four-year degree from the United States. Students of color are defined as those who self-identify as Asian American, Latino, Native American, and African American students, including multiracial or multiethnic students. I use the phrase students of color rather than "non-white" or "minority students" as the former defines the group in a deficit frame and the latter defines the group in a subordinate frame. Additionally, the phrase "students of color"

emphasizes the common experience of living in and negotiating a white supremacist society.

Scope of Study

This study sought to provide insight into how FGC students of color experience four-year colleges. Participants in this study attend selective Research I universities in California, none of which are minority-serving institutions. The participants and I have a long-established relationship. From a phenomenological perspective, this level of rapport served as a benefit in that personal knowledge and subjectivity emphasize the importance of personal perspective.

Because this study takes a phenomenological approach, I do not suggest that my findings can be generalized to a larger population. However, all participants identify as Latina/Latino. Therefore, these findings may be transferrable to other Latina/Latino students. Throughout the study, when possible, I draw connections to their specific experiences as Latinas/Latinos and other times suggest when and how their experiences may be theoretically transferrable to other students of color.

Significance of the Study

The primary significance of this study is that it uses critical race counterstories to examine the intersection of FGC student and students of color experience. Compared to studies that look solely at race or FGC status, these narratives provide a more sophisticated understanding of the educational equity issues FGC students of color face

as well as a deepened understanding of how students grapple with oppression and resistance. The participants in this study are all Latina/Latino FGC students who attended the same under-resourced and under-performing high school which had a high Latina/Latino population. Although the participants share this experience, their experiences are also differentiated by their U.S. residency status and sexuality. Therefore this study allows for a rich intersectional analysis of participant experience in higher education.

The counterstories of these students have significant implications for leadership, policy, and practice. In a so-called “post-racial” era, the findings suggest that educational institutions are complicit in maintaining and cultivating an environment of social oppression by their absence of action. This is evidenced at all levels from policies to practice. This has implications for leaders to look critically at their own institution’s policymaking and programmatic response to policies such as Prop. 209 and its effects on declining enrollment for students of color, particularly those who are low-income. It also challenges leaders to examine the role and treatment of disciplines such as Ethnic Studies; to prepare faculty and staff to be responsive to students’ converging experiences with racism, sexism, heterosexism, or xenophobia; and for administrators and faculty to be explicit and intentional in the inclusion of residency status in campus diversity policies and actions.

This research also has several contributions to theory. It introduces *displacement* as a theoretical tool to understand how participants experience the difference in Discourses between home and college. I describe this as a struggle and disorientation when being repositioned in the larger social landscape. My research also builds upon the concept of transformational resistance. I suggest that transformational resistance is not a singular or pure space, but can be enacted with forms of internalized oppression or conformist resistance.

Summary

In this research study, I present the counterstories of four college students who are first-generation college students and also students of color. I used CRT to inform my analysis of their stories to forefront the salience of race and the intersectionality of race with other social identities. The use of counterstories allowed me to provide deep context and insight into these four students' college experiences. In the following chapter, I will present a review of the theoretical and empirical literature that guided this investigation. Chapter Three outlines the use of critical race methodology for this study. Chapter Four focuses on the counternarratives of the research participants. The final chapter concludes this dissertation with a discussion of the significance of these results, implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

First-generation college (FGC) students, those whose parents' highest level of education is less than a 4-year degree, are at a distinct academic disadvantage compared to their non-first generation college (NFGC) peers. In addition to negotiating the standard difficulties of other college students, FGC students must navigate additional academic and social transitions (Pascarella, et al., 2004). According to the 2003 Beginning Postsecondary Students study, 12.3% of NFGC students in four-year universities did not persist in any form of post-secondary education. For FGC students, this number more than doubled at 27.1%. FGC students entered college with less preparation for coursework: they entered with lower skills in reading, math, and critical thinking (Terenzini, et al., 1996) and are more likely to score in the lowest quartile of the SAT/ ACT (Choy, 2001). Additionally, while in high school, these students completed fewer college-preparation courses, AP/ IB courses, or college courses (Choy, 2001). Because FGC students are more likely to come from lower income families and from communities of color, it can be reasoned that, in general, they attend schools with fewer academic resources and less access to quality educational experiences (Camarota, 2004; Fine, et al., 2004).

The academic disadvantage from high school follows FGC students into college. At all levels of post-secondary education, Chen and Carroll (2005) found that FGCS were more likely to be enrolled in remedial courses. Fifty-five percent of FGC students

enrolled in remedial coursework compared to 27% NFGC students. Even among 4-year college students, the gap remained at 45% of FGC students enrolled in remediation compared to just 21% of NFGC students. By the end of freshman year, FGC students averaged only 18 credits compared to 25 for NFGC students. Students were also more likely to have lower GPAs and to withdraw or repeat courses compared to NFGC students (Choy, 2001). Earning fewer credits from the very beginning, withdrawing, and repeating courses contributed to FGCS students taking longer, on average, to complete their degree (Terenzini, et al., 1996)

FGC students were also more likely to be students of color (Chen & Carroll, 2005; Choy, 2001; Terenzini, et al., 1996). FGC students who were also students of color faced the additional challenge of navigating a racially charged environment. On average, students of color were more likely to report a discriminatory campus climate, sense more prejudice from faculty and staff, and were more likely to report negative in-class experiences than were white students (Johnson, et al., 2007; Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, & Miller, 2007; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Richardson and Skinner (1992) interviewed 107 graduates of color from public universities to understand the challenges and opportunities on the path toward graduation. One graduate described a persistent racially hostile climate: "Sometimes in the classes, I mean honestly, you could hear the racial undertones. . . . Most times it was just in the air" (Richardson & Skinner, 1992, p. 35). Students' commitment to their college institution (Cabrera, et al., 1999; Nora &

Cabrera, 1996) as well as their goal of college completion (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005) was negatively impacted by their experiences with racial discrimination.

The majority of research on FGC students seeks to understand variables such as student academic preparedness, social involvement, or faculty interaction in relation to college graduation or persistence rates. Some studies on students of color take an approach similar to that of FGC student research by investigating academic or social involvement and graduation. Other studies examine students of color as targets of racism and discrimination. An important body of research exists on how racism impacts the educational experiences of students of color. However, there is limited literature that examines the intersection of FGC and student of color experience.

Methodology of Review

This review seeks to describe the facilitators and barriers to success for FGC students of color. “Success” is defined holistically and includes academic persistence and social adjustment. Unless otherwise indicated, FGC students in the literature review are defined as those whose highest level of parental education is less than a bachelor’s degree. “Students of color” are students who self-identify as Asian American, Latino, Native American, and African American students, including multiracial or multiethnic students.

The following databases informed this review: ERIC; Academic Search Premier; PsycInfo; Psyc Articles; Urban Studies Abstracts; Race Relations Abstracts; and ProQuest Digital Dissertations. Keywords used include: first-generation college; transition; students of color; African American; Latino; Asian American; minority students; cultural capital; resistance, and resilience. In these databases, I restricted my search to articles from 1998 or later and to peer-reviewed journals. In addition to database searches, I relied heavily on branching to find additional empirical sources as well as theoretical writings.

Included in this review are both qualitative and quantitative studies. Quantitative studies provide a useful bird's eye view of the population to describe population trends. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, provided rich insight into individual experiences. There was limited research that explicitly and intentionally examined the experiences of students who are both FGC students and students of color. Therefore, I pulled from both bodies of literature. Given the breadth of literature on both FGC students and students of color, this is not an exhaustive synthesis of literature in the field.

This literature review begins with an introduction to social reproduction and resistance theories from a critical race theory (CRT) perspective. These theories provide an understanding of the differing interpretations of student educational outcomes. The review will then examine literature on the role of race and racism in the college experience, followed by how the family, and in particular parents, impacts the college experiences of

FGC students and students of color. Then, literature on FGC students and students of color with faculty and peers will be synthesized. Finally, I will analyze the role of resistance among FGC students of color.

Review of Literature

Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Race Theory

Social reproduction theories provide a framework for understanding how social inequities are reproduced through the school system. From a CRT perspective, this body of theory, however, is limited by a class analysis that ignores the impact of race and racism. Furthermore, CRT problematizes dominant interpretations of social reproduction theory which implies that a way to achieve educational equity is for poor people and people of color to assimilate to dominant values and ways of being.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that in a capitalist society, schools reproduce the class system by providing unequal education to students based on their socioeconomic class. A key construct in understanding social reproduction is Bourdieu's (1973) concept of cultural capital. Cultural capital is the knowledge, thinking, and values that are passed along from one generation to the next.

Bourdieu (1973) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) believed that schools operate within a class-conscious context and reward those with cultural capital. Cammarota (2004), Delpit (1988), Fine, et al. (2004), Valenzuela (1999) expanded the concept of cultural capital by moving beyond a class analysis and including race and ethnicity.

More specifically, they suggested that cultural capital in the language, structure, and curriculum of schools reinforces the privilege of white middle class people. As a result, when marginalized students are unable to identify with school culture, they are often pushed out of schools (evidenced by dropout or expulsion) or disengage so that they simply go through the motions of schooling. This process normalizes a system that demands the existence of haves and have-nots. This can be exacerbated by the existence of social capital or “the material and immaterial resources that individuals and families are able to access through their social ties” (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003, p. 323). Invoking social networks (such as extended family, friends or “the good old boys network”) can greatly magnify the privilege and opportunity of those who already possess dominantly valued forms of cultural capital. In college, the benefits of social capital can be seen in legacy admissions or opportunities for internships, fellowships, and jobs based on social networks. It is also manifested in one’s ability to forego working while in school based on family financial support or even successfully petitioning admission into an impacted class due to a sense of entitlement that has been passed on by parents or previous academic experiences.

From a CRT perspective, mainstream interpretations and responses to social reproduction theories maintain oppression and domination. For example, rather than disrupting the process of social reproduction, foundational theories and practices related to student services have focused on how to help students benefit from the process of

social reproduction. Tinto's (1988) early and highly influential longitudinal model of student retention implied that previous networks and behaviors must be severed for students to succeed in college. Based on his Separation-Transition-and Incorporation model, students who left college did so because they failed to separate from previous networks, failed to negotiate a transition, and failed to incorporate new values and failed to build and embrace dominant forms of cultural capital. Rodriguez (1975) described his own experience as one where "he must choose between the two worlds: if he intends to succeed as a student, he must, literally and figuratively, separate himself from his family" (p. 17). He attributed his own success to separating from his family and ethnic identity. Changes in food preference, clothes, ideologies, vernacular, and accent symbolized this separation for FGCS who came from poor and working class families (London, 1992; Rendón).

Tinto's theory has been critiqued by some as being assimilationist and without regard for the cost to students, particularly for students of color (Benmayor, 2002; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Rendón). His theory suggested that cultural identity should be shed for an academic identity (Tinto, 1988). The notion that the academy demands separating of oneself from one's family/ culture/ ethnicity has been documented by Rendón (1992) who wrote "to become academic success stories we must endure humiliation, reject old values and traditions, mistrust our experience, and disconnect with our past" (p. 62). Unlike Tinto who centered the onus of student success on the student, Rendón (1994)

challenged colleges to move out of this paradigm, and instead take on the responsibility to create a validating college culture for FGC students and students of color.

Since its inception, Tinto's original model of student retention has been adapted to identify some form of value in maintaining connections with the past. However, it still functions from a paradigm that assumes FGC students and students of color must gain dominant forms of social and cultural capital so that they can benefit from social reproduction.

Although social capital theory has origins in social reproduction theory, some social capital theorists, like CRT scholar Tara Yosso, conceptualized it as a tool for change by identifying forms of social capital that exist in communities of color that can be leveraged in mainstream institutions such as education. Yosso (2005) challenged interpretations of Bourdieuean cultural capital by introducing the concept of community cultural wealth. She identified six forms of capital that contribute to cultural wealth: (a) aspirational capital in which communities maintain hope in the face of barriers; (b) navigational capital in which communities have been able to maneuver through institutions such as schools and health care that were built without communities of color in mind; (c) social capital that includes social relationships and community resources to navigate through institutions; (d) linguistic capital in which communities have multiple languages and communication skills; (e) familial capital in which cultural memory and knowledge are shared and maintained through multi-generational households as well as

close friends; and finally (f) resistant capital which fosters behaviors and skills that challenge institutional and individual racism. Yosso argued that the qualities of these forms of capital are heavily interdependent and often intersect. She posed that that communities of color persist despite institutional racism that negates or marginalizes their cultural wealth.

By revealing the institutional maintenance of individual and group power, reproduction theories provide a useful framework for understanding structural oppression. In doing so, they reveal a contradiction between the experiences of socially marginalized people and the notion of a meritocratic American Dream. Reproduction theories offer a powerful analysis of differential opportunities to learn that exist along social categories. Although reproduction theories are helpful in thinking about structure, one can easily fall into conceptualizing power as a simple dichotomy between structure and agency, with structure owning power. Therefore, when reproduction theories are oversimplified they can be limiting by minimizing the analysis of agency and resistance against dominating structures. Some social capital theories such as Yosso's community cultural wealth offer tools for countering oppression.

Resistance Theories

Resistance theorists have argued that reproduction theories overemphasize structural determinism (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). In some ways cultural reproduction theory suggests that the "person is merely in the world, not with the world

or with others; the individual is spectator, not re-creator” (Freire, 1970, p. 75).

Resistance theorists instead shift the analytical lens to highlight how individuals create meaning by negotiating with structural oppression. CRT theorists Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) defined three forms of resistance: self-defeating, conformist, and transformational.

Self-defeating resistance has been the traditional approach to resistance theory (Fine, et al., 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Self-defeating resistance happens when oppressed groups read the disconnect between dominating meritocratic discourse and the realities of the conditions of their community, school, or family. Those who enact self-defeating resistance read this disconnect as hypocrisy and as “evidence of their social disposability” (Fine, et al., 2004, p. 2194). They “come to understand their ‘place’ in the social hierarchy” (Fine, et al., 2004, p. 2194) and act in a manner that supports this hierarchy. In short, these students have some understanding of oppressive social conditions but engage in behaviors that reproduce this oppression.

Self-defeating resistance was a key concept in Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) research. Studying the “burden of ‘acting white,’” Fordham and Ogbu (1986) proposed that African Americans and other ethnic minorities created a sense of cultural identity in opposition to the white social identity. This white social identity is thought to have been developed through the control and oppression of other people. In this framework, ethnic minorities believe that they will never be treated as true Americans, even if they achieve

economic and educational success. Thus, ethnic identity--or in Fordham and Ogbu's study-- African American identity is developed in opposition to whiteness. Students in the study conflated educational success with assimilation into white culture, which was considered to be a "forbidden domain" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 182). The majority of students consciously or subconsciously underachieved, thereby reproducing oppressive social conditions.

Unlike self-defeating resistance, conformist resistance among students often manifests as motivation with the hope of an increase of quality of life. However, students who enact conformist resistance lack a critique of social oppression or systemic racism (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Instead they become "victims of compulsory assimilation into empire-of-force ideology, including the ideology of color-blind racism" (Martinez, 2009, p. 590). Conformists blame themselves, their family, or their community for negative conditions and internalize an ideology of meritocracy in which one who pulls herself up by her bootstraps will be rewarded. Through hard work they become the "reformed, recognizable Other" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). The educational and economic success of conformists redistributes resources to oppressed people, however, the impact is at a minimal, individual level.

Students in Martinez's (2009) study show an orientation to conformist resistance. Many of her students, all of whom were FGC, generally attributed their accomplishments and success to individual dedication. Students commonly

differentiated themselves from other Chicano/as by saying that others generally “set their standards low” (p. 591) and “could care less about the education of their children” (p. 590). Martinez concluded that these students showed no understanding of structural inequity and instead blamed the victim. Although conformist resistance may result in motivation and perhaps attainment of education and resources, it is limited in that it requires a reification of dominating ideology.

Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) suggested that transformational resistance offered “the greatest possibility for social change” (p. 319). Transformational resistance challenges dominating structures and ideology. Female youth in Akom’s (2003) ethnographic study are a clear example of enacting transformational resistance, “discarding the framework of meritocracy and critically embracing the role of the underdog” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 10). Similar to youth in Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) study, these youth resist against “acting white”. However, the young women, who are members of the Nation of Islam (NOI), defined “acting white” as “not workin’ hard... but actin’ like you something’ you’re not...” and “lookin’ down on poor people” (Akom, 2003, p. 313). Guided by NOI tenets the students defined Blackness in opposition to whiteness. Paired with an achievement ideology, the students defined Blackness with greatness, and black people were defined as “the creators of all silence, wisdom, and history” (Akom, 2003, p. 314). According to Akom, within the NOI, achievement ideology coexists with an oppositional social identity. These young

women read the function of schooling as seeking to reproduce a racist society that oppresses African Americans. However, instead of engaging in self-defeating behavior as described in Fordham and Ogbu (1986), they challenged themselves academically. The young women performed well in school, but not because they conformed to school expectations. They were often described by teachers as trouble-makers who challenged discussions and authority. They sometimes skipped classes that they deemed were a waste of time and instead went to the library. These students demonstrate “external resistance” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) in which resistance is overt and functions outside traditionally accepted behaviors.

In contrast to external resistance, internal resistance (also a form of transformational resistance) can be harder to name as it may be “subtle or even silent” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 324). Because of the unassuming nature of internal resistance, it is easy to overlook and name. Examples may include college students who go back to their community to be a teacher (Benmayor, 2002), start an outreach program at their college (Saunders & Serna, 2004), or go onto law school with the intent to practice in their community (Brayboy, 2005). In comparison to external resistance, in dominant culture these actions may be socially acceptable and non-threatening forms of community engagement. However, upon deeper analysis, individuals in these studies made conscious decisions to engage in actions that support the liberation of their communities.

Individuals who possess transformational resistance hold an “awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 319) and “demand change in an oppressive environment”. It is similar to *conscientização* or critical consciousness (Freire, 1979) in which people perceive and then take action against social, political, and economic contradictions in society. Transformational resistance affirms the power of margins. It can offer students the economic and quality of life benefits of higher education. However, students are motivated beyond these rewards and see themselves as agents of change within their community. They view their success as benefiting their communities and “recognize their potential agency to improve urban centers, rather than seeing them as places to escape” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 10).

Although resistance theories center on individual agency, Yosso’s (2005) concept of community cultural wealth suggests that individual resistance, particularly transformational resistance, can be informed by community cultural wealth. Therefore, transformational resistance changes the question from, “How does one persist *despite* one’s community?” to “How does one persist *because* of one’s community?”

Resistance theory provides a useful analysis of individual agency. However, studies that use resistance theories may overlook the historical and cultural conditions that enabled varying degrees of resistance (Brayboy, 2005). From a research perspective, uncovering resistance, especially internal resistance, requires a deep

knowledge of and engagement with research participants. Long-term ethnographic methods, such as those used in Akom (2003), Brayboy (2005), and Fordham and Ogbu (1986), can be particularly revealing. These types of studies may be more likely to grasp the role of resistance, as researchers may be able to uncover the ideologies and worldview of their research participants.

Race and Racism

Discrimination or prejudice still appeared to greatly impact students' experiences in college. Although students of color are disproportionately FGC, the vast majority of research on FGC students paid no attention to student experiences with racial or ethnic discrimination. Richardson and Skinner (1992) and Terenzini, et al. (1996) mentioned that FGC students were more likely to report experiencing discrimination, but did not explore the topic in depth. Several studies that centered on the experiences of students of color, however, generally looked more deeply at discrimination or prejudice.

Quantitative studies typically measured discrimination or prejudice using self-reported scales regarding campus climate; discriminatory attitudes by faculty; and in-class experiences (Fischer, 2007; Lopez, 2005; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Fischer (2007) analyzed data from the 1999 National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen. Her sample consisted of a racially balanced stratified random sample of 3,900 students from selective universities. Fischer's study confirmed Nora and

Cabrera's (1996) findings that students of color were more likely to report a discriminatory campus climate, prejudice on the part of faculty and staff, and negative in-class experiences than white students did. Using a six-point scale (where "6" is high), African American students had the highest average perceptions of a negative campus racial environment at 5.02 while Whites had the least negative perception of campus climate at 1.57 (Fischer, 2007). Asian American and Latino students had similar perceptions of a negative racial climate on campus at 3.00 and 2.96, respectively. These findings are consistent with Hwang and Goto's (2009) study of Latino and Asian American students and Johnson's (2007) study of 24,000 students nationwide. Perceptions of a negative campus racial climate had a negative impact on grades for Latinos but the opposite effect for African American students (Fischer, 2007). However, more negative perception of the campus racial climate decreased these students' satisfaction with campus and increased the likelihood of them leaving college (Fischer, 2007). Again, no such relationship was found for White students.

Lopez's (2005) one-year longitudinal study of Latino freshman at a highly selective private university found that over time, the students became more sensitive to stress due to discrimination. Students were surveyed within the first two weeks of the fall quarter. At this time, stress due to the pressure to achieve academically was the highest reported by students (3.32) and stress due to experiences with racism was the least reported by students (2.23). When students were surveyed again during the first

two weeks of spring quarter, achievement stress was still the highest reported by students (2.98). However, stress due to racism became the second highest reported factor (2.76). As students became slightly more academically acclimated and spent more time on campus, their exposure or sensitivity to racism appeared to increase. This study is limited in that the researcher did not compare experiences of Latino students by socioeconomic class or generational status. Additionally, although response rates were high (42% at Term 1; 55% Term 2), only 54 students responded to both survey.

Cabrera et al.'s (1999) nationwide study found no difference in perceived discrimination between African American and white students. This finding, however, may be explained by the fact that the African American sample largely consisted of students from historically black colleges. This suggests that racism is not endemic to higher education, but to historically white institutions. Thus studies that seek to understand students' experiences with racism must look at the racial context of the institution. Despite finding no difference in reported rates of discrimination, perceptions of prejudice and discrimination had the largest negative effect on African American student commitment to their institution.

Quantitative studies establish that students of color experience racism and discrimination in an ongoing basis. Qualitative studies provided a deeper understanding of student experience with discrimination and racism as racial microaggressions (Camarota, 2004; Lundberg, et al., 2007; R. C. Richardson, Jr. & Skinner, 1992;

Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, Bucci, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). In contrast to grossly overt forms of racism, Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzales, and Willis (1978) described racial microaggressions as “subtle, stunning, often automatic” (as cited in Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 60) forms of racism that “are so pervasive and automatic in daily interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocuous” (Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009, p. 95).

Some overt forms of racism on college campuses have been documented by the media. For example, in 2010, a fraternity at the University of California San Diego hosted a party that was themed as the “Compton Cookout” to mock Black History Month. This was followed by a show on the student-run TV station that supported the party, called African American students ungrateful, and used a racial slur. This incident was followed by the appearance of a noose in the school library. Overt forms of racism such as the ones described above, are generally not publically condoned-- the UCSD administration and UC Regents made public statements against these acts. However, racism frequently manifests as racial microaggressions-- act that are much more innocuous but also insidious.

Because microaggressions often occur unconsciously, people typically perpetrate them without knowledge of doing harm. If called upon their actions, a typical response may be, “That’s not what I meant,” or “You’re being too sensitive.” Although microaggressions are subtle, they are also frequent. Therefore, for people of color the

cumulative impact of microaggressions can be damaging. Qualitative studies provided insight into the nature of racial microaggressions, particularly how they differed by racial group.

The small numbers of African American students on college campuses translated into perceptions by peers and faculty that they were academically incapable. As a result, they experienced being pushed out of college spaces. Students reported being stared at in the library as if they did not belong (Solórzano, et al., 2000). African American students were excluded from study groups or picked last for class projects (Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Interest or high performance in STEM fields seemed to make students a particular target for racial aggressions (Solórzano, et al., 2000). Students reported being accused of cheating by faculty and being left partnerless in lab. One student sought advice from a counselor on pre-med requirements. The counselor actively discouraged her and said “You’re not gonna be able to do that” (Solórzano, et al., 2000, p. 67). In social spaces, African American students were criminalized and were held to an unspoken set of double standards, particularly by campus police (Solórzano, et al., 2000).

For Asian American students, racial microaggressions were closely tied to the Model Minority Myth, which perpetuates the notion that despite being a racial minority, Asian Americans have made it in society in part due to assimilation and the “right” cultural values. Examples of these cultural values may include being obedient to

authority (including teachers), smart, hard working, cooperative, and docile (Chang & Au, 2007; Lee, 1996; Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009). Students described feeling trapped by the Model Minority stereotype when their peers or professors would make comments such as, “You people always do well in school,” or “If I see lots of Asian students in my class, I know it’s going to be a hard class” (Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009, p. 94). Although students believed the intention of such comments were meant to be compliments, they felt pressure to succeed and reported sometimes carrying a heavier burden in group assignments. Additionally, such comments created tensions between Asian American students and other African American and Latino students (Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009), thus maintaining "the dominance of whites in the racial hierarchy by diverting attention away from racial inequality and by setting standards for how minorities should behave" (Lee, 1996, p. 6). Perceived high academic achievement by Asian Americans sometimes placed them as the “honorary whites” or as “out-whiting the whites”. These perceptions rendered Asian American experiences with racism as invisible and silenced in campus dialogues about race.

Microaggressions are not limited to disparaging one’s racial or ethnic identity. Microaggressions can stem from sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and more. Examining the intersectionality between race and other social locations provides a more complex understanding of microaggressions. For example, although Asian Americans are sometimes considered “white,” other microaggressions stemmed from the

perception that students were foreigners. Asian American and Latino students were similarly racialized as perpetual foreigners (Solórzano, et al., 2005; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009). Perpetual foreigners will never be considered “real” Americans in the white national imaginary (Ancheta, 1998). Questions and comments such as “Where are you from?”, “Where were you born?”, or “You speak such good English,” reveal that Latino and Asian American students are constructed as foreigners or outsiders among their professors and peers. Students “did not see the questions or ‘compliments’ as benign and curious, but disturbing and uncomfortable” (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009, p. 94) as such comments reflect a view that these students are aliens in their own country.

The intersection of gender and race further complexified the nature of microaggressions. Latino and African American males reported being criminalized by peers, faculty, and campus police (Cabrera, et al., 1999; Cammarota, 2004; Solórzano, et al., 2000). Asian American women were harassed by white males with Asian fetishes; they interpreted these microaggressions as “indicating that Asian women are only needed for the physical needs of White men and nothing more” (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009, p. 95). African American, Latina, and Asian American women in the sciences tried to negotiate their double oppression of being women of color by minimizing physical attributes of femininity in an attempt to “pass” (Ong, 2005).

Studies that included an intersectional analysis of race and another social location mostly focused on gender. Pérez Huber (2009, 2010), however, introduced the

framework of racist nativism within the overarching framework of CRT and LatCrit to reveal the intersection of racism and nativism. She used an analysis of racist nativism, class, and gender to understand the educational trajectories of undocumented Chicanas and found that the women faced racist nativist microaggressions within their home community and their college community.

The cumulative impact of microaggressions may contribute to overall lower levels of well-being among students of color. Qualitative studies reveal that students of color felt drained, tired, and personally diminished by these racial attacks. They struggled with self-doubt and had to strive to maintain good academic standing, while negotiating a racially disparaging campus climate (Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009). Experiences with racism may help explain quantitative findings that being a student of color significantly predicted higher levels of stress or as well as explaining why these students scored significantly lower than white students on measures of self-esteem and overall life satisfaction (Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008). It may also explain the decreased sense of belonging among students of color (Johnson, et al., 2007). Additionally, perceived discrimination was associated with increased risk for psychological distress, suicidal ideation, state and trait anxiety, and clinical depression for Asian American and Latino college students (Hwang & Goto, 2009).

Racial subordination appeared to pose a serious risk for students of color on college campuses. Negative racial climates were perpetuated at all levels of the college

community, including students, faculty, and staff. Research suggested that the level and nature of discrimination varied by ethnic community. However, regardless of ethnicity, racial discrimination threatened the will of students of color to persist in college and contributed to increased mental health risks.

Interaction with Family

The role of family was a prominent theme in research on FGC students and students of color. Generally, research focusing on FGC students considered the role of the parent. However, FGC students of color tended to include the larger family unit, especially grandparents, in their interviews (Benmayor, 2002; Terenzini, et al., 1994). The broader characterization of family may be a result of stronger ties among family members, multi-generational households, or even co-parenting practices that are more prevalent in communities of color (Nora & Cabrera, 1996).

There were the only two studies in this literature review that clearly defined the construct of parent support. Barry, Hudley, Kelly, and Cho (2009) measured family support through student self-reported frequency of talking to family members of college about college. Nora and Cabrera (1996) used a Likert scale to measure parent encouragement. Students rated the extent to which their families approved of the institution of attendance, provided encouragement to continue school, and provided motivational support to obtain a degree.

Connection to the family, particularly parents, appeared to have an important impact on FGCS and students of color. In a sample of 1,453 students nationwide, Cabrera et al. (1999) found that among African American and White students, parental encouragement and support facilitated academic and social transition to college, enhanced commitment the goal of graduating, and increased the likelihood to persist in college. These findings confirmed other studies that found parental encouragement was the most important variable affecting the academic experiences of students of color (Cabrera, et al., 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Wang and Castañeda-Sound (2008) found a significant relationship between perceptions of family support and stress levels for FGC students. They found that the greater perception of family support resulted lower stress levels for FGC students. Notably, this benefit was not significant for NFGC students, suggesting just how important family support is for FGC students. Although this study did not explore this relationship for students of color, other research indicated that parental support for transition to college increased students' commitment to their goals of college completion (Benmayor, 2002), and increased their likelihood to persist in college (Bui, 2002; Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007; Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008).

Barry et al. (2009) narrowed the concept of family support to mean disclosure, or sharing college experiences. Using the premise that sharing difficult experiences reduces stress and isolation, they surveyed 1,500 students nationwide on disclosure

levels. FGC students were significantly less likely than NFGC students to discuss or share their college experiences with their families. Compared to NFGC students, when FGC students did share their experiences with family members, they received less concrete strategies to navigate through college or empathize with the college experience (Barry, et al., 2009; Benmayor, 2002). Although parents of FGC students and students of color were less likely to pass along forms cultural or social capital that can directly be applied to their child's college experience, they provided important emotional support for students (Benmayor, 2002). This type of emotional support may have a positive effect on students' integration to college and their academic development (Rendón, 1994). Unfortunately, the researchers did not investigate why this difference existed or how the quality of disclosure differed by group.

A number of studies concluded that the role of family, particularly family background, was a motivating factor in helping students obtain a degree (Bui, 2002; Pascarella, et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005; R. C. Richardson, Jr. & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini, et al., 1996). Terenzini, et al. (1996) conducted large-scale qualitative study of 132 students across four institutions. They concluded that all students, regardless of FGC status, shared a sense of debt to their parents. However, this was most salient at the colleges that had predominantly African American and Latino students. For students, a college degree was an opportunity to repay this debt by bringing honor to

one's family and supporting one's family financially after college (Benmayor, 2002; Collier & Morgan, 2008).

The literature reviewed supports these more recent student retention theories that all assume that some level of connection with family and past community can help support FGC students and students of color persist in college (Terenzini, et al., 1994). Despite this strong evidence, there is a gap in the research that identifies and evaluates how institutions or programs formalize practices that intentionally promote opportunities for students to draw strength from their families or communities. Recommended practices may include student service staff integrating family background knowledge into counseling practice and faculty incorporating critical family research projects.

Interaction with Faculty and Staff

The transition from high school to college can be difficult for all students. However, because FGC students and students of color generally come from schools with less resources and opportunities for learning (Fine, et al., 2004), this transition can be much more difficult for FGC students and students of color. For students of color, this academic disadvantage is compounded by the expectation to function in an academic Discourse that devalues students' home and community Discourses. Before discussing the role of faculty and staff in supporting FGC students and students of color

in understanding academic expectations, it is important to understand the relationship between academic form, academic identity, and academic Discourse.

Gee (2008) holds a distinction between discourse and Discourse. Gee (2008) defined discourse with a lower case d as “stretches of language which ‘hang together’ so as to make sense to some community of people” (p. 115). Discourse with a capital D pairs identity and ideology with verbal and written ways to communicate. Gee (2001) described Discourses as identity kits that are made up of social practices which are reflected in the way individuals “talk, read, write, think, believe, value, act and interact with things and other people” (p. 39). Therefore, a Discourse is how groups enact a worldview to communicate with others. People utilize multiple Discourses to navigate through the world. Students who perform academic Discourse well are likely to move through education with minimal academic challenges. However, academic Discourse is a reflection of raced, classed, and gendered privileges.

Students’ primary Discourse is a reflection of *habitus*—it is shaped by their experiences in home and school and their knowledge of the world as a raced, classed, and gendered individuals. Therefore, students from communities that have been traditionally privileged in higher education are at an advantage of knowing and performing academic Discourse, as it shares similarities to their home Discourse. Discourses are important as they work as signals “to get recognized and recognize ourselves as a distinctive group or distinctive kinds of people” (Gee, 2004, p. 39).

Academic Discourse includes academic forms, such as expectations for research papers, presentations, and particular ways of critical thinking. Control of this form is a type of capital. Therefore, although these ways of communication appear to be race or class neutral, they are not. From a CRT perspective, which assumes that race and racism are integral to life in the United States, the cultural capital of academia is racialized through white normative behaviors, ideologies, and speech patterns (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Research on K-12 public education has clearly demonstrated how public schools disadvantage and even push children of color out of schools through unequal opportunities and resources (Fine, et al., 2004). Therefore, students of color generally enter college with years of accumulated disadvantage in executing or even understanding academic forms. Thus, academic Discourse supports the ownership of education as a property of whiteness.

Harris (1992) documented “the valorization of whiteness as treasured property” (1992, p. 277) by delineating how the law has affirmed and protected whiteness as a form of intellectual property. The argument of whiteness as the ultimate property can be extended into an examination of college academic Discourse. For example, “Great Books” programs for freshman still mostly utilize literature from the Western Canon. Departments such as English, History, and Art still fetishize western European and early white American contributions. Faculty who are overwhelmingly white own and control curriculum, ideology, and access to knowledge. White university administrators control

policies that are implemented by predominantly white staff. The persistency of whiteness sends a subtle message that the non-white people occupy a subordinated place in the university. Academic Discourse has become conflated to mean an academic identity, including intellectualism. Thus, embracing an academic identity may be understood by some as a demand to deracinate oneself upon entering academia

In higher education, mastery of academic Discourse signals who belongs and who doesn't. Discourses in general are intimately linked with the distribution of social goods and resources including education (Gee, 2008). In this manner, it influences how people within one Discourse community, provide and maintain privilege for others whom they recognize to be within the same Discourse community. In education, this can be seen in the way that faculty and staff give or limit opportunities to individual students, thus, impacting a student's sense of worth, belonging, and legitimacy. Students who enact academic Discourse are likely to feel more entitled or confident and decode expectations of faculty with little help. In return, faculty may be more likely to empower these students through special projects or at the very least give students the benefit of the doubt in difficult situations. Therefore, similar to cultural capital, Discourses have strong political implications such as power, distribution of social goods, and status. FGC students and students of color who have cultural capital and Discourses that are not valued or enacted on college campuses are distinctly disadvantaged by the system of higher education.

This disadvantage results in a challenging academic transition for FGC students. FGC students of color from urban high schools reported feeling that they were always playing “catch up” in college. They had to learn how to study and how to manage their time (Reid & Moore III, 2008). In addition to being academically underprepared due to less challenging coursework (Chen & Carroll, 2005; Choy, 2001; Fine, et al., 2004), students also had to decode faculty expectations (Reid & Moore III, 2008). Collier and Morgan’s (2008) study of 63 students and 15 faculty members at a west coast university revealed that FGC and NFGC students share similar challenges in adapting to college. However, FGC student needs were greatly heightened in comparison to that of NFGC students. Both sets of students wished that faculty provided greater clarity regarding their expectations in general.

FGC students in particular desired more detail and explicit instruction from their professors (Collier & Morgan, 2008). For example, one student reported that he turned in a hand-written assignment based on the directions to *write* field notes and was penalized for not typing the assignment. Other students shared that they were reluctant to ask for help from professors who used discipline-specific jargon or were unwilling to decode vocabulary when students asked questions. Faculty on the other hand, tended to believe that they had already adjusted enough to the needs of FGC students. In focus groups, faculty said that their in-class instructions and syllabi were very explicit and attributed confusion to student failure to read directions. One faculty member clearly

stated the expectation that students need to adjust to school by saying, “My expectations are almost cryptic in the beginning, it feels like, until they have some experience, it’s like I’m speaking another language” (p. 439). Such attitudes among faculty may contribute to FGC students perceptions that faculty are not concerned with teaching or were not supportive of student development (R. C. Richardson, Jr. & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini, et al., 1996).

With the exception of being Asian American, being a student of color had positive effects on involvement in college experiences, including interaction with faculty and staff (Kim & Sax, 2009; Lundberg, et al., 2007). However, this level of involvement did not result in the same academic benefits as for white students who had similar levels of interaction with faculty (Kim & Sax, 2009; Lundberg, et al., 2007). Further research could investigate this finding by assessing for quality, rather than frequency, of involvement. Although students of color may interact with faculty as frequently as white students, the difference in impact could be the result of a supposedly one-size fits all approach that in fact privileges white students.

Unpacking academic form can be difficult for many FGC students. However, for FGC students of color, particularly those from underrepresented ethnic groups, this challenge has implications that reach beyond their FGC status. Since academic form is a property of academic Discourse, it has important implications. White faculty can consciously or unconsciously interpret a FGC student of color’s struggle with academic

form as a result of a deficit arising from a student's ethnicity rather than as a function of a deficiency on behalf of the faculty or the institution. They may project these feelings in their interactions with students. For example, students of color reported that staff and faculty actively discouraged them from pursuing STEM fields (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000) and held lower expectations (Benmayor, 2002). Not only were these staff and faculty unsupportive of students of color, but they proactively denied students opportunities to build their academic skills. These types of negative interactions may explain Kim and Sax's (2009) finding that course-related faculty interaction promoted degree aspirations for all FGC, White, and Asian American students, but not for African Americans and Latino students. Students also reported the burden of stereotype threat and were reluctant in seeking help (Fischer, 2007; Mickelson, 2003; Ong, 2005; Solórzano, et al., 2000). Not surprisingly, students of color compared to white students also viewed faculty as less approachable (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004).

Not all faculty and staff acted as gatekeepers for FGC students and students of color. Students of color and FGC students also identified some faculty and staff members who helped their academic development (Ong, 2005; Solórzano, et al., 2000). Students particularly attributed their success to student support programs such as Summer Bridge (Benmayor, 2002) or other outreach programs such as Puente, EOPS, or smaller programs (Reid & Moore III, 2008; Saunders & Serna, 2004).

Peer Support

Research on FGC interaction with peers mostly draws from Astin (1993), Chickering (1969), Pascarella (1985), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) who suggested that four types of influences must be considered to understand the experiences of college students: (a) student demographics or precollege characteristics; (b) institutional characteristics; (c) student academic experiences; and (d) students' nonacademic experiences. Peer interaction falls mostly in the latter two categories.

Research indicated that strong connections to campus may help FGC students develop social capital that can help them advance in the college culture. Interaction with peer groups has mostly been measured by frequency of student involvement in clubs, social activities, peer study groups, and university-sponsored events (Fischer, 2007; Lundberg, et al., 2007; Pascarella, et al., 2004; Terenzini, et al., 1996). Many studies have suggested that peer culture that emphasizes academics assists in a successful academic transition (Kuh, 1995; Pascarella, et al., 2004; R. C. Richardson, Jr. & Skinner, 1992). Campus involvement was related to stronger positive degree aspirations, critical thinking skills, and academic gains for FGC students compared to NFGC students (Pascarella, et al., 2004). However, FGC students were less involved in campus activities (Pascarella, et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Terenzini, et al., 1996).

Student involvement may be limited due to multiple stressors for FGC students. FGC students tend to be pulled away from the college campus due to part-time work

(Pascarella, et al., 2004), family obligations (Pascarella, et al., 2004) and because they are more likely to live off campus (Pascarella, et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005). These factors may contribute to lower levels of familiarity with the campus social environment, interaction with peers, participation in extracurricular activities, and opportunities to develop social networks.

Outside of academic benefits, peer support provided an emotionally safe space for FGC students. Terenzini et al. (1994) noted that peers can serve as a source of support and encouragement for FGC students who might need affirmation about their legitimacy in college. When FGC students perceived a lack of emotional support from their peers they were more likely to show depressive symptoms (Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008) and were less likely to be successful in coping with stressful issues (Phinney & Haas, 2003). Perhaps due to the lack of similar experiences, FGC students were significantly less likely to speak to their peers at home and at school about their college experiences. The lower levels of disclosure among FGC students may reflect a lack of safe social networks in which students can discuss details of college-related stress.

Research on students of color and peer interaction mostly examined student experience with discrimination, as was described earlier in this literature review. Qualitatively, students of color mostly described the importance of support from other

students of color (Solórzano, et al., 2000). This will be explored further in the following section.

Summary

The impact of peer interaction on FGC students has been a significant area of study by researchers. These studies are driven by traditional student retention theories (Terenzini, 1987) that assumed FGC students will persist in college if they are well-integrated into their university. The interest in this area appears to mostly be driven by an assimilationist approach that by interacting with peer groups (who are mostly more privileged white NFGC students), FGC students will gain social and cultural capital that will help them succeed in the university. This approach uses a deficit analysis of the experiences and capital that FGC students bring with them to college.

Third Spaces as Possibilities for Resistance

Some research on FGC students and students of color has focused on how students persist in an educational environment that does not yield to the needs of students.

London (1992) and Rodriguez (1982) attributed the success of persistence and graduation to students' willingness to embrace a new culture and new Discourse. Rodriguez (1982) described this culture as one that helped him distance himself from what he described as the self-victimizing nature of communities of color. In colleges and universities, academic Discourse includes dominant and majoritarian ways of

thinking about and de-valuing the experience and assets of people of color. It is deeply steeped in ideologies of merit and individualism and the privilege of whiteness.

However, unlike Rodriguez, some FGC students of color appeared to persist by learning the form of academic rules and expectations and simultaneously resisting the ideology and deracination of dominant academic Discourse.

Pulling from their marginalized identities as a source of strength, FGC Chicano students used their cultural funds of knowledge to shape their educational experience to be meaningful for themselves and their communities (Benmayor, 2002). Students attributed their family strengths as a major source of encouragement to succeed. They also largely drew support from Chicano student social groups, staff and faculty of color, and academic support services. Benmayor argued that students gravitated towards or created communities that offered “cultural citizenship.” According to Silvestrini (1997), as cited in Benmayor (2002), cultural citizenship allows “people [to] organize their values, their beliefs about their rights, and their practices based on their sense of cultural belonging rather than on their formal status as citizens of a nation” (p. 98). Rather than embracing an individualistic attitude towards higher education, students in this study drew from family and community assets to help them claim a communal right to higher education.

Similar to the concept of cultural citizenship, Solórzano et al. (2000) proposed that African American students in predominantly white universities used counter-spaces

to maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment from hostile racial climates. Examples of counter-spaces include African American student groups, organizations or programs that provide services to African American or students of color, Black fraternities and sororities, and African American theme housing. Counter-spaces provided students important opportunities to learn together in a supportive environment. Additionally, these safe spaces allowed students to share and validate their experiences with covert and overt discrimination.

Overall, counter-spaces and cultural citizenship were important resistance strategies for FGC students of color. To some degree, these strategies employ a form of “scaling down.” Richardson and Skinner (2002) identified scaling down as common student-initiated and institutional strategy. Students used physically smaller spaces to find a sense of comfort and safety. They sometimes created smaller social and peer groups to help them stay on academic track. Institutions scaled down by providing support services, academic departments, or formal peer study groups.

Unlike Benmayor and Solórzano et al., Richardson and Skinner (2002) appeared to come from a deficit perspective on FGC students of color. They warned that scaling down that is initiated by students of color could be a detriment. They posited that often students of color do not meet academic requirements for university-sponsored programs or are pushed out due to negative stereotypes. Therefore, informal groups that form “sometimes exert a negative influence by reinforcing each other’s low expectations for

achievement and feelings of alienation from the system” (Richardson & Skinner, 2002, p. 38). Although counter-spaces and cultural citizenship are a form of scaling down, they have been interpreted as a place of empowerment that reinforces high expectations for achievement. Students may also use these spaces as coping places to provide “sanity checks,” share “healthy paranoia,” and validate each other in the face of racial discrimination (Sue et al., 2008).

Cultural citizenship and counter-spaces can be interpreted as third spaces that allowed FGC student of color to cope, affirm, and empower themselves in the community in the university. In these third spaces, FGC students of color enact agency to potentially dislocate the process of domination (Bhabha, 1994; Pérez, 1999). This domination includes the idea that higher education is owned by whites and thus to succeed, one must assimilate to dominant ideologies. Perez (1999) referred to these third or liminal spaces as the “decolonial imaginary,” a space where multiple realities are negotiated and hybrid identities emerge. Bhabha contended that through the contestation of domination, hybrid identity or new subject-position can emerge, which challenges the validity and authenticity of essentialist cultural identities that are used to dehumanize people of color.

Although third spaces can be places of opportunity and possibility, they exist as a response to multiple forms of domination. Therefore, third spaces can also be dark or painful. While students were able to support each other, they still reported feeling

diminished or tired as a result of discrimination (Solórzano et al., 2000). Among students who reported being heavily involved in racial justice initiatives on their campus, some students reported these activities pulled them away from class or academic activities (Benmayor, 2002; Solórzano et al., 2000)

Furthermore, although some students saw their education as a way to honor their communities and give back, they were sometimes marginalized from their home communities. For example, Rendón (1992) described sensing “that deep in my mother’s soul she felt resentful about how this alien culture of higher education was polluting my values and customs. I, in turn, was afraid that I was becoming a stranger to her, a stranger she did not quite understand, a stranger she might not even like” (p. 59). For Native American participants in Brayboy’s (2005) study, the costs of pursuing education included being the subject of disapproval, being ignored, and for one student moving off the reservation. Both Rendón and the students in Brayboy’s study used their education to better their communities and families: Rendón furthered scholarship on FGC students of color while the Brayboy participants used their law degrees to negotiate on behalf of their tribes. Despite this, going to college still translated into a different way of returning to one’s family or community.

Hybrid identities act as “lubricants” (Papastergiadis, 1997) for students to move between the competing reality of higher education as a property of whiteness (Harris, 1992)-- thus as a tool for maintaining systemic oppression-- and the reality that

education can be a tool to dismantle oppression (Freire, 1970). According to Bhabha (1994), third spaces can be “a productive space that births new possibilities--it is interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative” (p. 178-179). He celebrated these interstitial spaces as opportunities of empowerment. Third spaces offer the possibility for a new way of being, thinking, and doing and thus may be a place that nourishes transformational resistance.

Summary

FGC students enter college with less academic preparation for college coursework (Chen & Carroll, 2005; Choy, 2001; Fine, et al., 2004; Terenzini, et al., 1996). They also need support in understanding and meeting faculty expectations for coursework (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Reid & Moore III, 2008). FGC students who are students of color have the additional burden of navigating a college environment that devalues their experiences as people of color (Rendón, 1992; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Solórzano, et al., 2005; Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Lin, et al., 2009). Despite this, little research has intentionally explored how students navigate the challenges of these marginalized positions.

Research on FGC students and students of color appeared to differ according to assumptions on the nature of cultural and social capital. For some (London, 1992; Rodriguez, 1982), cultural capital existed in one form and students had to “get” more cultural capital to increase their chances of academic success. One way students can go

about “getting” more cultural capital is by separating themselves from those who lack cultural capital, such as family or ethnic peer groups and surrounding themselves with people who have the “right stuff,” including faculty, staff, and peers (Tinto, 1988).

CRT provides a framework for understanding how the “right stuff” has been constructed as the property of whiteness. Not surprisingly, research has shown that the process of gaining the “right stuff,” is much more complex for FGC students and students of color. Students were overtly and covertly pushed out by those within the culture of power, including faculty, staff, and other students (Fischer, 2007; Mickelson, 2003; Ong, 2005; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Lin, et al., 2009) and were blocked from accessing forms of capital. According to Freire (1970), these instances can be described as limit-situations, which serve as obstacles for empowerment. Limit-situations are challenged by limit-acts which are “directed and negating and overcoming, rather than passively accepting, the ‘given’” (Freire, 1970, p. 80) Limit-acts in higher education are made possible by the reality that “all people possess cultural capital, but the cultural capital of the dominant group is what is valued by and rewarded in schools” (Delpit, 1988). FGC students of color use limit-acts and counter-strategies that leverage the cultural and social capital that they bring with them to college (Benmayor, 2002; Cabrera, et al., 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Rendón, 1992; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Lin, et al., 2009). This includes motivation from

family members, support from similar peer groups, and from institutional programs that values student backgrounds. These counter-strategies can be understood through the concepts of third spaces and hybrid identities that contest domination and subordination.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the literature reviewed, there is limited research on FGG students from a critical race theory (CRT) framework. CRT assumes that racism is endemic and pervasive in the United States. It allows researchers to investigate the systemic oppression of people of color in the United States by naming and deconstructing “prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality in the education of racial minorities” (Howard, 2008, p. 963). Although CRT places the role of racism at the center of analysis, it also uses an intersectional analysis of racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). The use of race and intersectionality can be helpful in understanding how the challenges of FGC status are further complicated by race and may help identify strategies that FGC students of color use to persist academically and emotionally in college. From these strategies, we may learn how ally faculty, programs, and institutions can proactively support the intellectual and emotional development of FGC students of color.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

I used qualitative methods to explore the following research questions: How do FGC students of color negotiate academic and social challenges in four-year colleges? And, What role does transformational resistance play in their persistence?

In this section, I provide an overview of my methodology. I discuss how critical race theory (CRT) informed my phenomenological approach in uncovering the counterstories of FGC students of color. Next, I discuss my personal connection to my topic, method, and participants. I conclude this chapter by outlining my steps for data collection and analysis.

Design

I used a phenomenological approach to understand how FGC students of color perceive their college experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). A key to phenomenology research is determining what an experience means to those who experience it (Pieterse, 2002). Therefore, I employed a series of deep personal interviews with four students to understand their experiences as FGC students of color at selective universities. Their testimonies serve as counterstories to dominant majoritarian stories, which have made invisible the role of racism and other forms of oppression in our society. Finally, I analyzed their experiences to contribute to extant theory on transformational resistance.

Critical race methodology (CRM) drives my research design. CRM is an approach

to research that draws upon critical race theory to challenge research practices that have muted or erased the reality of race and racism and have contributed to deficit-based scholarship on communities of color. Audre Lorde's essay title, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984) is fitting in describing the rationale for and intent of CRM.

Historically, quantitative and qualitative research have been used as "master's tools"-- posing as a "scientific" and "objective" approach to producing knowledge. Frequently, research on non-white nations and communities painted non-white people as primitive and uncivilized, which has served as rationale for colonization and has informed strategies to control colonized people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Even today, in educational research for example, dominant majoritarian stories use a cultural deficiency narrative that ignores the role of racism and white privilege (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Therefore, the knowledge production from dominant forms of research build up the "master's house" by reporting a "truth" that denies the context of power and race in our society. CRT pushes against this history and CRM is a methodological tool to dismantle the master's house. Solórzano & Yosso (2002) defined CRM as the following:

a theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color; (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative

solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color (p. 24).

CRM provides an alternative method and form for research that is informed by a worldview in which race and social justice are at the forefront. Therefore, CRM encompasses a set of values that informs a researcher's practice in data collection, analysis, and even the research question. CRT and CRM speak loudly to me. I began studying CRT at a time when I felt immensely silenced in my experience during my doctoral program. However, as I immersed myself in the literature, I started to find my *ja-sheen*-- will and confidence-- to continue with school. In many ways, CRT describes the way I move through my personal and professional life and my values. It brought me back to why I returned to school in the first place: to capture critical stories that challenge the silencing of people of color.

Role of the Researcher

My relationship to this research is deeply personal. It begins with my own experience as an FGC student of color, connects to the importance I put on personal stories, and continues with my relationship to the research participants.

Story as Center

The importance of stories connects me to this research. For many years, I was a pre-college counselor to high school students who would be the first in their family to

go to college. My pre-college program focused on preparing students in four core areas: academic advising, academic enrichment, entrance exams, and college knowledge. The scope of the work required me to help students plan their academic path so that they would complete their A-G requirements and other UC and CSU requirements. I came to the realization that helping students from marginalized communities prepare for college is much more complex than this approach. My work was deeply rooted in helping my students name their stories as young people who live on the margins of dominant society.

History with Research Participants

I have known all of the research participants since they were freshmen or sophomores in high school. At the time, the students were participants in a pre-college program that I ran, which was sponsored by the University of California. I worked with each participant for at least three years in the capacity as her or his college counselor. While I no longer work with them in a formal capacity, we have kept in touch over the years in person and through social networking websites. Students have reached out to me for support in varying capacities ranging from financial aid guidance to life events.

In the role of a researcher, I hold a distinct amount of authority and power in this relationship. Therefore, it was imperative that I understood how the dynamic between the participants and myself informed my data. Prior to data collection, I anticipated that the mentor-mentee relationship would come into play during interviews. For example,

during a small pilot study in 2009, my participants often came to interviews in need of advice or problem solving. Similarly, upon hearing some of their stories, I easily slipped into my old counselor role, trying to problem solve or add perspective.

Based on this experience, after each interview, I journaled twice about the experience-- once about what was accomplished and another about how it was accomplished (Fontana & Frey, 2008). The participant was the subject of one journal and I was the subject of the other. Because of my relationship with my students and how personal the subject is to me, both steps were important. The first journal helped me capture fresh thoughts and impressions of students. In this journal, I wrote about the following: (a) What information surprised me and how do I want to follow up? and (b) What was shared that helps me better understand each student's journey with transformational resistance? The other journal forced me to reflect on my positionality to better understand how my personal experiences and relationship shaped the interview. My journal questions were (a) At what points did I play the role of a counselor or mentor? How did this shape the interview? and (b) Did this interview jog any personal memories either my own life or my experience with the student? How might this shape my data analysis?

Negotiating the Outside

Although I have a strong history and high level of trust with the participants, during data collection, my awareness as an outsider was also heightened throughout this

study. I originally began this research with only a few concerns that I would be treated as an outsider. After all, I had known these students for at least seven years and have been a source of support for them. As I began the interview process, however, my social location as a *yi-seh* or second-generation Korean American woman sometimes positioned me as an outsider. I tried to negotiate this space by acknowledging the ways in which our experiences differ, while also highlighting how our experiences might be similar. Although I personally identify as a woman of color and therefore to some degree am a racial “insider,” three of my participants made casual references that verbally positioned me on the outside of their experience. For example, as we walked on the beach after an interview, a participant shared a story about what it is like to be a non-white student on her campus. She concluded by saying, “Well, maybe not Asians. Asians are like whites.” This was simultaneously jarring and familiar. In mainstream educational discourse, which is highly focused on quantitative academic outcomes, Asian Americans are positioned as white, or as the “model minority” who are “out whitening the whites” (Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009).

In addition to navigating how I was sometimes positioned as white, I had to navigate my identity as a non-Spanish speaker. Although interviews were conducted in English, participants sometimes used Spanish words, concepts, or phrases during our interviews. These examples range from students adding common words like *tambien*, *porque*, *¿Por qué?*, or *pero* within their sentences to talking about how their mothers’

participate in *tandas* (rotating credit systems established within a small community of trusted friends, families, or colleagues) to save money for tuition to sharing phrases that their parents utter as a form of encouragement. In the latter two examples in particular, participants attempted to provide me an explanation or translation. I was often able to relate what they were saying to something from my own experience such as drawing a parallel between Latina/Latino *tandas* and the Korean *kye*. Although I was sometimes able to build cultural bridges, I acknowledge that this does not negate my outsidership. One participant in particular half-jokingly referred to her English as “broken.” At the end of our first interview, I asked her how comfortable she felt during the interview and she responded, “I think it's good. I feel comfortable. It's just that I'm always worried about the vocabulary that I use, you know, am I saying the right things? Are they, you know... the right words in English?” This exchange surprised me as I think of all my participants as fluent English speakers. However, I shared with the participant that I have never had trouble understanding her when she was speaking English. I also told her that some words and concepts cannot be perfectly translated and illustrated this by attempting to translate two Korean words I use a lot. I ended my translation of both words by saying, “But it's not just that. It's more. And there's something inside I feel when I say it in Korean.”

Although I tried to honor and acknowledge how our experiences as Latinos and Asian Americans are different, I also tried to draw commonalities across our

experiences. Even then, however, I acknowledge that some moments may be lost or filtered as I am not a true insider in their lives or community.

Context

Research participants attend three universities: Urban University, Pacific University, and Palisades University. All three are Research I universities and are located in California.

Urban University is a highly selective public university with an undergraduate enrollment that exceed 25,000 students. In 2009, less than 22% of applicants were admitted to Urban. The entering class had an average unweighted GPA of 3.87. Ethnic demographics were as follows: 44% Asian Pacific American/ Asian Pacific Islanded (APA/API), 30% Caucasian, 11% Chicano/ Latino, and three percent African American. First-generation college students make up 25% of the entering class.

Pacific University is a selective public university with an undergraduate enrollment that nears 19,000 students. In 2009, Pacific admitted 45% of applicants. The entering class had an average unweighted GPA of 3.65. Ethnic demographics were as follows: 20% APA/API, 45% Caucasian, 25% Chicano/ Latino, and 4% African American. First-generation college students made up 41% of the entering class.

Palisades University is a highly selective private university with an enrollment of approximately 6,500 students. In 2009, Palisades admitted nine percent of applicants. Over 90% of admits had a 3.75 GPA or higher. Ethnic demographics were as follows:

23% APA/API, 33% Caucasian, 15% Latino/ Hispanic, and 11% African American.

First-generation college students make up 15% of the total undergraduate student body.

The majority of interviews were conducted on campus. Locations were chosen based on participant comfort level and convenience and included dorm rooms, empty classrooms, or scenic spaces on campus.

Participant Selection

To investigate transformational resistance among FGC college students of color, I used a purposive sample of four students. Interviewing four students allowed me to go in depth to better understand how these students come into and maintained transformational resistance. The purposive sample gave me a window of possibility to choose students whom I believed were engaging in transformational resistance. For example, the areas of study and career goals of these students all differ. However, what they have in common is that they see their life after college as an opportunity to better the conditions of their home or ethnic community.

A purposive sample also allowed me to choose students with whom I have a prior relationship. To understand transformational resistance, I must have insight into the ideologies and worldview of my participants, which requires a deep knowledge of and engagement with participants (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). The level of rapport and familiarity allowed my participants to be more comfortable and willing to share their stories. This greatly increased my level of access to their experiences.

Participants were 18 or older and all went to the same high school. Because I maintained contact with my participants, by summer 2010, I had put out casual communication about my research and let them know that I would be inviting them to participate. By fall of 2010, I sent students a formal recruitment email. All four students indicated interest and I followed up in person to answer questions about participation, obtain consent, and to collect basic demographic information. Data collection began in September 2010 and ended in January 2011.

Participant Description

Orlando is a fourth year student at Palisades University and is majoring in Urban Studies and minoring in Film. Orlando's parents immigrated to the United States in the 1970s. His mother completed a few years of elementary school in Mexico. His father completed high school in El Salvador. While neither of his parents attended college, Orlando's three older sisters all graduated from four-year colleges. As his own college graduation nears, Orlando hopes to soon find himself somewhere in the arts so that he can tell the stories of people from his community.

Adam is a third year student at Urban University and is majoring in Conservation Resource Studies which he describes it as an interdisciplinary major in which students create a focus of study. Adam draws upon coursework in City Planning; Environmental Science, Policy and Management; and Ethnic Studies to meet his area of interest which is Environmental Justice. He is the youngest of three children of

Guatemalan immigrants. Adam is the first in his family to go to a four-year college. His older sister has her A.S. and his older brother enrolled in but did not complete a degree at community college. Adam's mother had to leave school in the early elementary years in Guatemala. His father started college in Guatemala, but had to drop out. Adam attends Urban University with a full-tuition scholarship from a private foundation.

Cecilia is a third year student at Urban University and is majoring in Ethnic Studies. Her mother finished high school in Mexico and her father had a few years of elementary education. Cecilia and her parents crossed the U.S.-Mexico border when she was just one-year-old. On the advice of their lawyer, Cecilia's parents did not include her in their petition for residency, which they received in 2001. Her two younger brothers were born in the United States and are therefore U.S. citizens. For eight years, Cecilia was the only undocumented person in her family. It was late in her sophomore year of college that she gained legal residency. As her senior year approaches, Cecilia hopes to be able to get financial aid so that she can stop commuting to campus and finally live near campus.

Teresa is a sophomore at Pacific University and is majoring in Political Science saying, "Poli Sci is something I always wanted to learn. I want to know how the government is structured and how they think so you can work with the system and not let the system work you." Teresa is one of an estimated 200-500 undocumented students in her public California university system. Her Facebook profile constantly changes

between photos of her with her sorority sisters and links and images that support the DREAM Act which if passed would provide a path for legal residency for students like Teresa. Teresa's mother completed elementary school and her father completed high school. Her parents moved the family from Mexico to the United States when Teresa was nine years old in search of "better opportunities for their children." She is the oldest of four children and the first in her family to go to college.

Ethics and Protection of Human Subjects

It is likely that my work in Richdale will be one of the most personally and professionally rewarding experiences in my career as an educator. I consider it a privilege that the students allowed me to help support them in a time that can be both emotionally taxing, yet immensely rewarding. Because the topic of this research builds upon the work and the trust between my students and me, I took great care to ensure that my research did not harm or violate the confidentiality of my students. Potential participants were informed verbally and in writing of the purpose of the study, the expected amount of time for participation, and the duration for participation. Interested individuals gave given written consent of voluntary participation prior to data collection (Appendix A). The identities of all interview participants are protected and confidential. Pseudonyms are used for participant names and places (such as the name of educational institutions, cities, or communities) in data collection, analysis, and presentation. Participants were not at risk for physical or psychological harm and had the right to

withdraw from the study at any time as well as request that their data not be used in the study.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was a series of semi-structured, personal interviews. Interviews can be one of most intimate and “powerful ways in which we come to know our fellow humans” (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 118). The shared history between my participants and myself provided a great advantage to the interview. My interviews were semi-structured. I created interview protocols (Appendix A), which helped focus in on my topic and provided consistency across participants. The domains of interest included (a) academic experiences, (b) social experiences (c) activism, (d) identity, and (e) community. These categories are based on common themes from literature on transformational resistance (Brayboy, 2005; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal). A Demographics Questionnaire (Appendix B) was also administered at the end of the first interview to obtain basic participant information. I collected data from September 2010-January 2011. Interviews averaged two hours in length. Each participant was interviewed three times. At the end of each interview, participants received \$20 as compensation for their time. Interviews took place every 4-6 weeks and were conducted at a time and place that was convenient for participants.

During data collection, I drew from the protocols but also adjusted my questions based on what I learned from the previous interview. This allowed me to stay focused

on my initial research questions but gave me room to follow up on themes that I did not expect or to follow up on themes that were of obvious importance to the students. Two students also received questions in advance, per their request. The first interview was followed my interview protocol. However, interviews 2 and 3 were very different. At the beginning of interviews 2 and 3, I summarized key themes from our last interview and gave participants the opportunity to negate, elaborate, or clarify. In every instance, students used this part of the interview to share more and go deeper; it was a time when they took a lot of control of the interview. This added an additional layer of depth to the data.

Secondary forms of data also contributed to the interviews. Participants were asked to keep a personal journal and write about recent events or reflections based on our interviews. Journals were an opportunity for students to record any connections they made between our interviews and their day-to-day lives. Originally, I anticipated that journals would serve as standalone documents for analysis. However, journals helped prime student for interviews; students often referred to topics they had written about in previous journal entries. I also followed up on journal topics during the interviews. Three students also provided documents including personal writing, academic scholarship essays, short films, or examples of work from internships or jobs.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research typically refers to believability and truthfulness of the data. Common threats to internal validity include researcher bias and mortality.

Researcher bias refers to using inaccurate data or distorting data due to bias. Critical race theory recognizes the knowledge and counterstories of people of color as necessary to understanding racial oppression and resistance. Therefore, capturing the accuracy of participant stories was essential to my research. Given this objective, the integrity of my research relied on accurately capturing the words and experience of participants. With participant permission, I recorded interviews and created verbatim transcripts. I used three forms of member checking with my student participants. I sent students interview transcripts to review as well as portions of data memos. I received no responses to the transcripts but 75% of the time, students responded to my data memos. Additionally, during the interview process, all the students asked me what I was finding across my interviews. Therefore at the end of each interview I shared emerging findings by sharing how I saw their stories as similar and different parts of their stories I saw as similar to the other students and what parts of their stories I saw as different. Sharing emerging analysis with students was important to support the phenomenological approach to this study. Additionally, I shared portions of my raw data and data memos with my advisor and two colleagues who provided feedback. Colleagues also wrote data

memos and read more than half the interview transcripts. This strengthened the reliability of my coding.

Triangulation, which refers to the practice of comparing findings and analysis to multiple data sources (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), was also important in enhancing the validity of my findings. While my main source of data was participant interviews, it was supported by various data including student journals, researcher journals, and student work such as essays and student creative work such as short films, plays, art work, and poetry. Cross-checking initial interview findings against multiple sources of data allowed me to either confirm and build upon ideas or put them aside for later evaluation.

Mortality threat, the possibility of research participants withdrawing from the study prior to its completion (Bogdan & Biklen, 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), was also present in this study. Participants could withdraw for different reasons ranging from scheduling problems, special circumstances, or because they feel participating is not worth their time. Because the research participants in this study were college students, they were very busy with school, social life, work, as well as travel between school and home. I increased the likelihood of retaining participants by being flexible with data collection. Although I calendared our interview dates at the beginning, we checked in consistently to see if they needed to reschedule interviews, conduct them over the phone, or shorten them. From a CRT perspective, I believe as the researcher I

should do what I can to ensure participants benefit from our time together. Although limited, I compensated participants for their participation (\$20 per interview) and brought food to interviews. I also spent time at the end of each interview, providing advice or feedback to students based on some of the issues that came up during our interview. This ranged from reading scholarship essays, discussing financial aid options, and talking about papers they were writing. No participants withdrew from this study.

The purpose of my research was to contribute to theory and to provide theoretical transferability, not generalizability. I do not generalize the results of my study to a broader population. Transferability of themes, however, helps deepen understanding of the experiences of FGC students of color.

Data Analysis

I took a constructivist approach to data analysis, working from the bottom up and using writing as a method of analysis. This allowed me to use holistic and inductive approach to data analysis. I paired writing and coding as my method of analysis.

Qualitative researcher Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre drew attention to the possibility of writing as an important tool for analysis when she wrote, “I would think of writing as *a method of data analysis* along with, for example, the traditional—and what I think of as structural (and positivist)—activities of analytic induction; constant comparison, coding, sorting, and categorizing data; and so forth” (L. Richardson & St.

Pierre, 2008, p. 970). I first turned to writing rather than traditional methods of analysis as writing allowed me to engage with my data in a manner that felt natural and holistic. It gave me the opportunity to try out and document early analysis, which I could build upon or discard. Writing allowed me many more ways of engaging with the words of my participants. Rather than being overwhelmed with all of my data and trying to code immediately, writing helped me analyze and record what I was learning as I was learning it. It also helped me reduce my data so that it would be manageable to code.

During data collection, I captured preliminary analysis of data by writing analytic memos as was described earlier in this chapter. These analytic memos provided me the opportunity to make changes to my next interview protocol. Early analysis also allowed me to fully leverage opportunities for member-checking where I could ask my participants if my emerging analysis held any relevance or meaning to them. At each interview I was able to share emerging themes with my participants who often provided further perspective.

Over time, I read each interview transcript at least four times in its entirety. In the first reading, I simply read and marked sections where participants got particularly emotional when speaking or when I felt emotional listening—this provided an early written signal that at the very least, these stories should be intentionally revisited. In the second read, I jotted notes on the margins or highlighted sections of text that I thought might be significant. For example, it could be a section where I felt there might be

ambiguity in interpretation or a series of sections that came up throughout the interview, or mirrored a previous interview.

Between transcript readings and interviews I wrote more on how I saw data coming together. These notes ranged from reflections about individual interviews to themes across interviews or other forms of data to the relationship between theories and what research participants were talking about. Some of these notes were shared with my advisor and my colleagues.

After writing extensively and reducing my data based on data memos, I coded transcripts, student journals, field notes, and memos for topics and themes using constant comparison to analyze verbatim transcripts from the interviews and focus groups (Bogdan & Biklen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Although analytic writing was extremely important in helping me reduce my data and identify early themes, coding transcripts helped me see what themes existed across participants and what themes were limited to one or two participants. When I identified some themes that are salient among only one or two participants, I drew upon previously published research and theories as well as the student transcripts to try and understand why this was happening. I attributed differences mostly to the intersections of participant identity as FGC students of color with other social identities.

Chapter Four: Report of Findings

Introduction

I began researching the experiences of first generation college students of color to answer two questions. The first was, How do FGC students of color describe and negotiate academic and social challenges in four-year colleges? The second question was, What role does transformational resistance play in the persistence of FGC students of color? I used CRT helped me understand the ways in which students experienced race and other social identities in college. The use of multiple, in-depth phenomenological interviews provided me insight into the reality of the four students in this study. I present my findings using the counter-stories that emerged during these interviews to amplify the voices and stories of these students.

This chapter addresses my first research question on the experiences and negotiation of FGC students of color. Throughout my research, the first question seemed to strongly resonate with participants and yielded a bounty of rich data. I will address my second research question on transformational resistance in the following chapter as I found limited data on transformational resistance.

This chapter begins with individual portraits of the four student participants. These portraits weave together a series of stories based on my history with the participants. The purpose of these portraits is to provide insight into how students have

changed over the course of my five to seven-year history with them. Then I present how students described their college experience, focusing on the concept of *displacement* that I developed from my findings. Following this section, I share where and how the participants found a sense of place in their college experience. In these places, which functioned as third spaces, participants negotiated and resisted displacement in their college experience. This allowed them to find ways to make their time in college personally meaningful and fulfilling both in the present time and but also for their future. The chapter ends with participants sharing what they want for their future.

In each section, I draw across participant stories to share the similarities and nuances in their experiences. I also highlight individual participant stories at the end of several subsections in order to further humanize and individualize the participants who participated in this study providing a nuanced glimpse into how a student was particularly impacted by the themes in that section.

Participant Portraits

Below I present a portrait of each participant that introduces them as individuals. These portraits serve to provide context for my relationship with each research participant, and also to orient the reader to the critical issues that each of these four students face in college.

Teresa

Four years ago, 55 Richdale High School students and I crowded into the small conference room at California State University, Sacramento. Sitting next to me was Teresa. She raised her hand and softly asked, “What kind of support is there for undocumented students?” The EOP counselors paused and looked at each other. One finally spoke up. “If you’re undocumented, you really need to go to community college first. You can’t get financial aid. It’s too expensive to go to a four-year college right off the bat. Go to CC first, get your GEs done, and then come to our campus.” Teresa’s jaw tensed. She drew in a breath to say something but the session ended. As the group herded out of the conference room, Teresa and I hung back. She pushed her glasses off her face and wiped her eyes. She whispered fiercely, “He didn’t even answer my question. He just told me what to do! I’ve worked so hard to get here. So hard.” Teresa’s face crinkled and she started crying. “Nobody gets it. I’m just sick of it. Tired.” We made our way out to meet up with the rest of the group. As we crossed a walkway that was busy with students, Teresa abruptly stopped. She pushed her arms up towards the sky and screamed at the top of her lungs. Then she looked at me, gave me a tired smile and said, “Okay let’s go.”

Two years later, I watched Teresa’s latest fundraising video. It’s the beginning of her first winter quarter at Pacific University. Bundled in a lavender scarf and blue coat, she smiles all throughout her video as she thanks her donors and reflects on her

transition to college. Teresa described college as “the place where I always dreamed of being.” She said she loves meeting people from different cultures and taking challenging courses. She concludes by saying, “I just can’t wait for my sophomore year, I feel like I have so much to do here and so much to learn and still meet people that share the same ideas and ideologies that I have.”

Before Teresa left for her sophomore year, we met for brunch. She offered me another perspective of freshman year: “I felt like my first year, my energy and my motivation was drowning. In high school, I described myself, like, instead of my body being filled with blood, it was filled with motivation, anger, and passion to fight for this dream. But I felt like it was all going away. I don’t know. That’s how I felt last year” (Teresa, 091410, p. 6).

A couple of months later, I drove down to Teresa’s apartment, one mile from Pacific University’s campus. It was halfway through fall quarter and Teresa’s second year of college. Before I left for the five-hour drive, Teresa’s mom filled my car trunk and back seat with plenty of groceries for her oldest child. It took Teresa and me six carefully planned trips between my car and her apartment to empty my car. We laughed as we unpacked the bare necessities such as bread, tortillas, fresh and canned vegetables, milk, cheese, laundry detergent, and plenty of toilet paper. We Oohed and Ahhed over the luxury items such as whipped cream, sparkling water, and specialty

cookies. Teresa exclaimed, "Can you believe it? My mom said this is only half of what she bought!"

An hour later we sat down for brunch at a busy restaurant. Teresa exchanged pleasantries in Spanish with our waiter who was Latino. When he left, she glanced around the restaurant, which was full of white patrons, laughed, leaned forward and whispered, "I bet people think we're related."

Adam

Seven years ago Adam introduced himself to me by asking if I was the "lady from Urban University." "Can you get me into Urban? I have to go there. My parents are really strict. The only way I can go away to college is if I go to there." His grades had slightly faltered his first semester of freshman year of high school. After we started meeting together, Adam picked them up right away and quickly engaged in school.

The summer after his freshman year, Adam joined our academic summer program. As a release from the academic rigor, in the first week we took 150 high school students ice skating. For many, including Adam, it was their first time on skates. After 20 minutes and a dozen falls, most students gave up and chatted on the sidelines. Adam slowly wobbled passed me on his skates, holding onto his jeans to keep them from falling down; they were soaked with water. He grinned at me and waved. Then he fell hard. Despite falling over and over again, Adam skated the entire two hours. Other program staff asked in awe, "Who is that kid?"

His senior year of high school, Adam applied for a scholarship to attend a local environmental conference. That opportunity quickly snowballed into being chosen as a “Climate Change Champion”--one of three student ambassadors representing the United States. Adam traveled to London to meet with 38 other youth from around the world. Together they identified three actions they would take to educate other young people around issues of climate change. They presented their plan in front of the G8 environmental ministers in Kobe, Japan. Each time Adam came back from these trips he shared the stark differences between him and the other participants. “Sometimes I felt out of place because the way they talked was very different. If I talked a certain way they would think I was ghetto I don’t think they’ve ever met someone like me and I’ve never met people like them before either” (Adam, 092110, p. 10)

Even in his third year at Urban, Adam was constantly aware of how his peers read his physical cues, particularly his clothes. When I asked Adam if it would be easier to change his dress responded with the following:

It’s funny because I had this conversation with my roommate the other day. He kinda asked me the same thing. I thought, fuck that, I’m not going to change who I am just because I’m at Urban. People will still stereotype me even if I dress differently. I especially don’t want to change who I am because of all the good experiences I’ve had. Like I’ve met the governor and stuff. I’ve done cool things but I never want to lose who I am or where I come from. If I did, I’d be denying where I’m from. I don’t want to do that. When people make it big, they change and I don’t agree with that. They deny their culture and maybe don’t speak Spanish anymore. I’m the contrary. I’m trying to embrace that (Adam, 092110, p. 13).

Orlando

“I’m just telling you a story. If you listen, that’s up to you.” Richdale community member featured in Orlando’s 2006 documentary *Tent City*.

Early on I learned that Orlando is an artist at heart. With his art he tells stories about himself and his community. In high school, Orlando joined an internship with the Bay Area Video Coalition. With BAVC, he produced and directed two videos. The first video of his I saw, *Contra*, focused inward. It was a creative short that alluded to Orlando’s struggle with identity:

I want my own identity, not a projected one. . . I am not another prospective high school failure. I am not the man of steel that never shed a tear. I am not the machismo male. . . I knew what I was fighting against but did not know what I was fighting for. I am not ready to be free.

His second video, *Tent City* was a documentary focused outward, archiving a call for peace by Richdale’s African American community members who erected and lived in tents in empty lots and parks where violence was escalating.

Art continued to be an important part of his life in college. Years later, as I sat in Orlando’s dorm room, I took note of his busy bookshelf. One by one he pulled out his tattered folders and thick binders, surpassing the few textbooks that also sat on the shelves. “These are just ideas that I’ve written down. Characters I’ve developed. Screenplays I’ve started. Someday, I’ll come back to them” (100210, p. 19). He passed me a tattered and overstuffed folder, which held documents for a family tree project that Orlando started for personal interest. Before Orlando stepped outside for a break he

offered me free reign of his things. I leafed through a folder that had newspaper clippings and programs from *Zoot Suit*, which Orlando adapted, co-directed, and acted in his freshman year at Palisades. I skimmed his screenplay of *Memories from the Outside*, a play he wrote and directed that commemorates the 40th Anniversary of MEChA at his university.

I looked around his room and my eye wandered to his posters and artwork, which are bunched up in one corner of his room. A concert poster is nestled next to a protest poster calling for “Clean Air for Richdale.” When Orlando came back in the room I asked him about the original art work on his walls. “Oh, I did those in high school. Well that one, in high school we read *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, so it’s inspired by his poetry.” Orlando’s piece showed two hands releasing a bird into a red sky. “And that one”? I asked, pointing to a black and white piece that boldly states WHAT HAPPENED? with tiny hand-printed text covering the entire piece.

I’ve been thinking of taking it down too because people ask me about it all the time. I did that for my high school art class. I never submitted it to be graded. The story is about me, well not really me, but like me. It tells a story about a son that grew up gay in a family that didn’t accept him and the different things, the feelings of self-hatred, feeling different, those two feelings. I don’t remember all the details of the story. But I remember deliberately writing sloppy so the words cannot be made out. People ask me about it all the time and I just say I don’t remember what I wrote in the background. Maybe I should take it down.
(Orlando, 100210, p. 23)

Five weeks later when I returned for our second interview, Orlando’s personal art remained on his walls.

Cecilia

In some ways, it could be easy to miss a student like Cecilia. She is friendly but quiet. She is intelligent but unassuming. Cecilia told me, “I never told people my grades or kissed ass to the teachers. When I got into Urban people were like ‘What? You got in?’” (Cecilia, 091410, p. 2).

I met Cecilia when she was a high school freshman. Unlike many of my other students, she rarely searched me out or came to see me on her own. However, she participated in every workshop, came to every one to one appointment, and participated in every single weekend and summer academic enrichment program. I can’t remember when, but early on, Cecilia shared with me that she was undocumented. In fact, I learned that nearly a quarter of her college-bound peers were undocumented. In high school, Cecilia was the president of Amnesty International. Because of her own experience, which mirrored the reality of many Richdale High students, she focused her club to organize around the issue of immigration. When immigration raids on the community became more frequent, Cecilia and her peers marched to City Hall where she shared her story of being undocumented in front of City Council members. The summer before Cecilia’s junior year in college, she created a Facebook account. Her first photo album was entitled *Mexico 2010*. That’s how I learned that Cecilia gained her residency a few months earlier. *Mexico 2010* archived her first time back in Mexico since she was a year old.

Despite being near the top of her class at Richdale, Cecilia had a difficult transition at Urban. Initially, she intended to study math. At Richdale, she enrolled in an accelerated math program finishing Calculus AB and BC in one year. She described Urban's math classes as isolating, unfriendly and intimidating. After taking two math classes, she switched her major to Ethnic Studies. "People say that Ethnic Studies is an easy major, but for me it's really hard. There's a lot of reading and writing, different ways to look at things. Writing was one of my biggest fears" (Cecilia, 092410, p. 2). Cecilia's first exposure to Ethnic Studies was a class her freshman year. "It was very, very challenging, but I really liked it because I was learning a lot, things that I have never heard before. But I didn't pass that class. It was very, very hard for me. And I was like I have to retake that class. So yes that's what I did. And I passed" (Cecilia, 092410, p. 3).

I stepped into Richdale High's College and Career Center to meet Cecilia for our last interview. I walked in just as she was wrapping up a calculus tutoring session with some Richdale soccer players. Her brother Rafa, a senior at Richdale, is using one of the school computers to apply for a scholarship. "Don't submit until I see it" she said. She turned to me and looked at me a bit worried, "He does everything last minute." Cecilia looked at the clock and signed out on a clipboard. Together we walk out into the quad to find a space to begin our interview. As soon as we sat down to begin our

interview she excitedly exclaimed, “I got straight As!” Her fall semester ended in a dramatically different way from her previous four semesters at Urban.

Struggling Through Displacement

The concept of displacement can be commonly found in anthropology and sociology as part of the study of immigration. The term is used in multiple ways but usually infers a process of harm. Displacement has been described as an action of forced migration of a group of people, usually due to political and economic agendas of governments and also as a way to describe the immigration or refugee experience. Hyndman (2000) characterized displacement as “involuntary movement, cultural dislocation, social disruption, material dispossession, and political disenfranchisement” (p. 2) which connects the experiences of migrants. Political conservatives have also appropriated the concept of displacement into a xenophobic and racist framework which paints a narrative of how “natives” of the United States- referencing white Americans—are “displaced” from jobs by immigrants or people of color who will work for lower wages or benefit from affirmative action policies.

In this study, I introduce *displacement* into educational research to describe some of the experiences of FGC students of color. When I asked students to describe their college experience many of their stories centered on encountering what I have conceptualized as displacement. Displacement refers to how students experience the difference in Discourses and values between home and college.

Displacement builds upon the concept of space—physical, geographical, or social spaces-- which is often used by critical scholars to situate their research. Spaces can be examined in the context of social locations or how identity markers such as race, sex, language, or immigration status are privileged or oppressed based on the dominant cultural values. Displacement describes the experience of a subject when her space shifts from a first space to a second space that depends on a vastly different Discourse. This shift results in a disruption of a subject's view of self, values, and reality.

Displacement is grounded in the concept of third space---the space in which competing first and second spaces are reconciled and birth new ways of being or thinking. Third spaces are often framed as a space/ place to enact agency and resist domination—a space that reconciles first and second spaces (Bhabha, 1994) which are seen as distinct spaces with distinct Discourses. However, while third spaces are productive spaces, they exist in response to domination. Displacement can be considered the domination and dislocation that happens before, outside, or absent of third spaces as individuals seek to orient themselves in a new space. Therefore, examining displacement focuses on the experience of disarray and devaluing between first and second spaces.

Critical race theory influences my conceptualization of displacement and informs the methodology for this study. First, displacement is understood by valuing the counterstories and experiential knowledge of individuals (Bernal, 1998; Ladson-

Billings, 2005). Displacement draws from CRT's intercentricity and intersectionality of race and racism by focusing on how individuals experience their social identities such as race, immigration status, and sexuality (Ladson-Billings, 2005). These identities become social locations when we consider how identities are located in relation to policies and practices that oppress or empower particular identities through the perpetuation of structural inequity such as racism, xenophobia, and heterosexism. Forefronting the social location, not just the identity, allows us to see beyond the fact that the educational outcomes for underrepresented minority students and FGC students are dismal. It instead forces us to look at the culture and policies that privilege these identities. Additionally, looking at displacement in education challenges dominant forms of inquiry that focuses and values research on the quantitative outcomes of students such as grades and retention rates. Displacement challenges the normative importance on measureable outcomes by forefronting how individuals or communities experience a specific space by way of social and political contexts.

In my student interviews, displacement emerged in three spaces: academic spaces, institutionalized spaces in student life, and also in the family space. This section will discuss how students described these forms of displacement.

Academic Displacement

I really feel like I have to prove myself a lot more because people don't think I'm as smart. They think that people of color go here because of a sob story. They're not smart; they're here only because of their struggle. And yeah, I went through a

lot and I've had a lot of struggles but I'm smart too. I deserve to be here (Adam, 092110, p. 8)

At Richdale High, Adam, Cecilia, Orlando, and Teresa were a part of a small group of students who gained acceptance at four-year colleges. On average, less than half of the freshman class at Richdale graduate from high school four years later. An even smaller number go on to four-year colleges. Adam, Cecilia, Orlando, and Teresa represent a small fraction of Richdale students who graduated and matriculated to elite colleges.

Students overwhelmingly described the feeling they did not belong when they entered their second space—their college campus--- in their freshman and sophomore year. Throughout the interviews, I found myself noticing how quickly students' academic place became challenged when they entered college. I remember all four of them as high school students taking fierce control of their academic future. In EAOP, they participated in multiple summer academic programs including concurrent enrollment at their community college and summer courses with Urban students. Students attended office hours regularly during summer program. They came prepared with questions related to course content or college life. At Richdale High, they self-organized study groups in their AP classes. Even with college counseling, they often briefly checked in with me in the mornings to let me know that they needed to talk to me later in the day. In contrast, once they entered college, students quickly realized that

their high school had academically underprepared them for college. All of the students failed class assignments, finals, or even classes— something they had never experienced as Richdale. They went from occupying a privileged academic space in their school to struggling in the margins in college.

Below I will describe how the academic displacement that students experienced was complicated by their identities as FGC students and students of color. I will then present Teresa's story to show how her life as an undocumented immigrant further dimensionalizes her experience with academic displacement.

Academic displacement and first-generation college identity.

Students' identity as FGC students contributed to a sense of academic displacement. When students moved from the geographic and social space of Richdale to college, they described being minoritized as FGC students. In high school, the vast majority of their peers were also FGC students. They shared that it was a part of their identity but did not distinguish them from their peers. In comparison, students reported knowing very few FGC students in college. The difference in life experiences and opportunities between the students in this study and their peers was obvious, particularly as it related to students' access to academic form and Discourse.

When asked about their academic transition to college, students described being surprised at their relatively low level of academic preparation. They said things like "I knew I would have to work hard, but I didn't know it would be like this" (Orlando,

100210, p. 11) or “I knew Richdale High sucked but I took summer [college] classes and did really well” (Adam, 110910 p. 7). The students had worked hard and graduated at the top of their high school class but entered college “unprepared” and felt “cheated” by the educational system.

All students described initial difficulty in understanding the expectations of major tests, essays and research papers. For example, freshman year Adam got a D on a final research paper. We had dinner immediately after this happened and he was visibly shaken and angry. He pulled out his crumpled paper from his sweatshirt pocket and showed it to me asking, “What happened? Does this prove that I’m not supposed to be here?” After speaking to him and reading his syllabus I realized that Adam interpreted “research paper” to mean research on an original topic. In the context of his undergraduate introductory class, however, “research” referred to using topics and readings from class to demonstrate mastery of course content. The misinterpretation of the assignment resulted in him not only receiving a poor grade but also left him questioning his self worth as a student. In this example, we see how the assignment required Adam to decode the expectations of his instructor; the lack of instructional clarity has been as a particular challenge for other FGC students as well (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Reid & Moore III, 2008).

Orlando remembered how deeply he was impacted by the difference between him and his peers:

I was really conscious about my background. Where I was coming from, what high school I went to and like what neighborhood I'm from. Just the social class and income level that I was from. The disparity was obvious. Like, in the classroom – even the way people speak or just like the way they were talking with ideas that are pouring out –I was like, “What school do they go to that would help them think so critically like that?” I would think, “Do I really deserve being here? Did I really qualify for all the requirements?” (Orlando, 100210, p. 20)

Adam recalled that in his first week at Urban, students in the dorms would compare their high school GPAs and SAT scores. “My parents didn’t go to college and I didn’t have the same resources [as other students]. I know that my SAT scores weren’t as good as theirs or even my AP [scores]. So I feel like every single day I’m here I have to prove myself by getting good grades because I didn’t have the same SAT scores” (030209, p. 2). In both of these instances, students showed an awareness of how structural inequities have impacted their academic readiness and confidence, however this awareness did not eliminate the self-doubt or pressure students felt.

As FGC students, for Cecilia, Adam, Orlando, and Teresa, the academic displacement they experienced was personally disorienting but also had implications beyond on their own educational success. Experiencing academic difficulty is common in the transition from high school to college (Chen & Carroll, 2005; Choy, 2001; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Fine, et al., 2004). However, as FGC students their success represented a potential transformation in their community. Because only a small percentage of students from Richdale went onto four-year colleges, the success of these students was greatly noticed. Orlando and his peer Rodolfo were the first students from

Richdale High to go to Palisades; their story was captured in multiple newspaper articles about how they represented what the principal called “The NEW Richdale High.” Immediately following, in Adam and Cecilia’s senior class an unprecedented 16 seniors gained accepted to Urban. When the students in this study talked about looking up to the classes above them as inspiration they realized that they too inspired younger students. Orlando excitedly told me about helping to organize Richdale High’s first field trip to Palisades, “There’s actually a lot, well not a lot, but other students from [the city of] Richdale here so they participated too. But they all went to private schools. I was the only one from Richdale High so I think it meant something different” (110710, p. 9). Cecilia was impressed that more and more students used Richdale’s College and Career Center; the Richdale students shared their ambitions with Cecilia “about how they wanted the best—like Urban or Palisades. When I was there, it was just us--the EAOP students-- now there’s students from everywhere who want to go to college” (092410, p. 11). When the participants told these stories they spoke with a great sense of pride and responsibility. They enjoyed being role models; they smiled as they told me about going back to Richdale High School. And while they had great pride in their identity as college-going pioneers in their community, this also amplified the pressure to do well in school.

In a later section, I will share more about the participants’ relationship with their families. But I will share briefly that the sense of pride, responsibility, and pressure

participants talked about also came through in their family stories. Adam, Teresa, and Cecilia especially talked about how their educational success was directly related to the well-being of their families, which has been noted in other research on FGC students and Latina/Latino students (Benmayor, 2002; Villalpando, 2003). Their parents referred to them as the family “savior” or the one who would “make it all better”-- the students also wanted to “give back” to their parents. Without me asking, all participants shared their parents’ stories with me—how their parents had to end their formal education early to work or take on family responsibilities. All participants ended these stories with comments like, “I guess I’m living out my parents’ dreams, too” or “What they couldn’t do is up to me.”

The increased academic challenges of FGC students compared to non-FGC students have been thoroughly documented (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Reid & Moore III, 2008; Terenzini, et al., 1996). Looking beyond academic challenges to the experience of academic displacement provided insight into how the challenges impact participant sense of belonging or worth based on their identity as FGC students. Additionally, when I considered how participants talked about the implications of being FGC beyond being a student—as hope to one’s family and inspiration to one’s community—I realized that for the participants, academic challenges had implications beyond themselves.

Racial identity: Feeling like a minority.

[When I was in high school], I thought about being Latina when I saw *paleterons* selling *paletas* and *churros* late at night. Or when little kids were helping their parents sell oranges by knocking door by door. Those two moments made me realize how much the Latino community works to put bread on their family table. . . I think about being Latina even more. Maybe because the majority [of students at Pacific] are whites/ Americans. Mainly because I have a feeling that the dominant race (whites) think that other races are not as smart as them. Also I always think about stepping up and showing others that I can obtain a degree and get good grades. (Teresa, email communication 020710)

Students described a profound sense of racial displacement that intersected with their academic displacement. The poor physical and academic conditions of their high school as well as the racial re-segregation students experienced at Richdale is typical for Latino students in California (Orfield & Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2001).

When I asked the students if they thought about race in high school they all responded that they thought about “race on a structural level” questioning, “How do communities like this happen?” While they understood themselves to be targeted and impacted by structural racism, especially in education, in this segregated community, they perceived themselves to be relatively protected from interpersonal racism. In comparison, when they became a part of the small number of Latinas and Latinos on their college campus, students described experiencing race “on the day to day basis” or “on a personal level.” Adam wrote in a journal entry, “Before coming to Urban I didn’t know that so many stereotypes about Latinos and about people from places like Richmond existed.”

The lack of Latina and Latino presence sent a powerful message to students that they did not belong on campus. Students shared that college was the first time they “felt like a minority” or “saw [their] race as a liability.” When their physical place moved from Richdale to college, students found themselves as targets of racial microaggressions, particularly in the classroom. Orlando remembered how he felt when he first arrived at Urban. “Freshman year it really went to my head like, ‘Oh, man, there are so few of us here. Just wondering why are there so little of us, like why? What’s happened to minority students? We’re not being represented’” (100210, p. 13). Cecilia constantly thought, “this isn’t for me” as she sat in her math classes and struggled to find other Latinos. Teresa’s first day in a Political Science class gave her a peek into her major: “When I walked in I was like ‘No wonder, no wonder people are really shy to take these courses because it’s an area that’s primarily white.’ At least I saw some reality of the world” (121410, p. 14). Adam echoed this sentiment as he reflected how he felt in his environmental science classes, which have predominantly white students: “It feels like I’m not meant to be there at all. I’m the only one. [There’s] a feeling of being an outsider. They don’t talk to me and I don’t talk to them” (010511, p. 8)

In their freshman year, the feeling of isolation sometimes resulted in students being pushed out of academic spaces. Cecilia’s academic struggle paired with her awareness of being one of the few Latinas in her math class had a heavy impact on her. “It was mostly white students and Asian students. I was like I don’t belong here. They

were too smart for me. It was just a difficult class for me so I guess that's when I decided that Math wasn't for me. I got intimidated" (092410, p. 21). Teresa had a similar experience in her freshman year dorm lounge, "I didn't feel welcome. It was all white students and I didn't know how to relate to them, so I just went back to my room to study" (121410, p. 12).

The students did make friends and acquaintances of other races. However, they commonly talked about having to first prove wrong assumptions or stereotypes about Latinos. Teresa talked about connecting with white students in her classes, "It's like, 'Oh, damn. She's pretty smart. Let's hang out with her'" (112310, p. 18). Adam was targeted by stereotypes on a daily basis. As a Latino whose day-to-day outfit consists of baggy jeans, large baseball caps, and fake diamond earrings, other students read him as "ghetto" or "hood". His peers were not shy about sharing their initial stereotypes. "Once they got to know me they were like, 'Oh Adam, I thought you were a thug but now that I know you you're the nicest guy ever.' I'm like 'Uh okay.' I find that really interesting" (030209, p. 2).

Being part of an ethnic minority made students feel "small" and "alone". They described feeling targeted, like they did not belong. Cecilia told me that she rarely spoke Spanish with her friends in public campus spaces, "People might think we don't speak any English and that we shouldn't be here" (111210, p. 14). In the journal

Orlando kept for this research, he wrote about how in the context of his college his ethnic and academic identity combined to a feeling of disempowerment:

I felt vulnerable because of the small numbers of Latinos. That and my inadequate preparation for college made me feel insecure. In high school, I never thought of my Latino identity as affecting my school performance. I was aware that there were disparities affecting Latinos at my high school; the amount of violence, graduation rates, immigration status, jobs; but that was in a societal sense. Being Latino in high school didn't psych me out the way it did my first year at Palisades.

Adam shared that he felt like he had to represent for Latinos and other people of color, “I have a fear of asking stupid questions. I don’t want to say something dumb and someone else thinks, ‘Oh yeah, the stereotypes are true’” (092110, p. 8). Adam located this fear in a double standard for white and Latino students. “I know that’s messed up. Like a white person can follow up with a question that the professor just talked about and people won’t think it’s a stupid question. But I could do the same thing or even ask a question that we haven’t talked about yet, but people might think my question is stupid” (092110, p. 9).

For all of the students, being Latino and needing academic help represented a difficult position. For example, Orlando remembered his freshman year that he felt that “the act of going [to office hours] showed – it showed to me that you know there's a possibility that I wasn't meant to be here, that I probably didn't belong here” (journal entry, 092310, p. 1) He also reflected on the internal struggle he experienced: “I actually felt some jealousy because [other students] asked for help so easily. How come

I can't do that? Why don't I allow myself to do that? I wanted to prove something to myself that's why. I had to think, you should just get yourself out of these heroics – stop thinking that – stop thinking about yourself in that way and just ask for help” (100210, p. 21).

Over time, participants' internalization of the low numbers of Latinos seemed to subside. They talked about getting “used to it” and trying to “brush it off” and “forget about it” so that they would not feel intimidated. While they learned to personally cope with and push through these negative experiences they remained critical of the low numbers of Latino students: “It's not that I'm not conscious of it. I'm conscious that this is bullshit. There should be more of us here. But I don't let it affect me the same way that it affected me freshman year,” (100210, p. 13) Orlando said.

Each of the participants found ways to support recruitment and college exposure activities for Latino students with the hope to encourage younger students to go to college-- Cecilia tutored at Richdale High School; Orlando helped host field trips for predominantly Latino high schools; Teresa supported student recruitment and yield activities; and Adam made college presentations at Richdale High School. Orlando referred to having a sense that the growing numbers of Latina/Latino students in college and in professional careers meant that they were “building that base of networks for ourselves” (122610, p. 6) so that it would be “easier for Latinos to make the changes we need whether it's getting a new park or community center built or if it's just getting a

job or internships” (122610, p. 6). While their college exposure activities helped them contribute to positive change in the Latino community, participants also hoped that their educational success would disprove stereotypes about Latinos. All students indicated that these negative experiences motivated them to “prove others wrong” and “disprove stereotypes that Latino’s aren’t smart.” Students hoped that their good grades would show others that “We deserve to be here,” and that “there should be more opportunities for us.” Adam shared, “I want to make people believe that Latinos and people who come from places like Richdale-- we can make it and we deserve better” (110910, p. 5). When thinking about her educational opportunities, Cecilia connected her experience in the broader system of racism and classism: “I know that it’s not our fault that there aren’t a lot of us [Latinas/Latinos] here. Especially [in class] when I learned that schools like Richdale High are everywhere except for in rich white communities, there’s something else going on,” (111210, p. 14) Cecilia said.

Teresa: “Fighting for an education.”

Teresa’s story highlights how being an undocumented student further dimensionalized her experience with displacement. Prior to the beginning of this research, Teresa and I met for breakfast near her home in Richdale. In a few weeks, Teresa would leave to start her sophomore year at Pacific. Before she left, she shared with me disheartening stories of her freshman year which ranged from Teresa’s “white and very, very blonde” roommate introducing her to friends as “Burrito” to having to

elect out of sophomore housing arrangements with friends because she was uncertain if she could afford to return to school for another year. More than all of this, though, Teresa located much of her struggle her freshman year on a lingering doubt, “What’s the point? Does it even matter to work so hard if I don’t know if I can come back?” (091410, p. 2). She found it difficult to try and find a place on campus since her place was vulnerable due to her undocumented status.

Teresa resolved that her sophomore year would be different, “I’m just like, Teresa don’t be with the mentality of I don’t know if I’m going to come back or anything like that. Just enjoy it and just make the best out of it” (112310, p. 18). When I visited her during the new school year, Teresa shared that she was ready to keep fighting for her education. Throughout our interviews, Teresa commonly referenced her educational journey as a “fight.” She told me story after story of being denied educational opportunities due to policies that discriminate against undocumented people. For example, as a high school freshman, Teresa tried to join Upward Bound—a federally funded pre-college program, but was denied due to her status. She said, “That [experience] was telling me because I’m an AB540 student I don’t have the right to participate in that program and the purpose of that program is to receive a higher education. That’s why I describe it as fighting for an education” (112310, p. 4).

Teresa’s approach to fight to take her rightful place in higher education was two pronged: to demand more from herself and to demand more from others. Although

Teresa had yet to find “that special professor” whom she could confide in about her undocumented status, she still find opportunities to exercise agency. Academically, Teresa turned to teaching assistants and signed up for a writing and math lab course.

I feel like I still need extra help in reaching that high standard that Pacific asks for in academics from right out of high school. That's why I go talk to them about my writing. I'm like it's not that I don't spend time in my paper. It's just like – it's because of my second language—my grammar. You know, it's not just because I'm doing my stuff last minute. You know, like just giving that heads up so they know where I'm coming from (112310, p. 11).

And while Teresa took back the ownership of her education, she also expected more from those who were supposed to support her. Throughout our interviews, Teresa excitedly shared with me stories where she directly challenged her teaching assistants. For example, many students in her early morning math course were struggling with pop quizzes. “I told him, well if we are all failing, what do you have to do differently as a teacher? I had to tell him, you know, it's not fair. On a cold morning, you don't just start up your car and start driving. You let it warm up. That's like us in the morning! Gives us the quizzes at the end when we are awake more!” (112310, p. 23). From then on, her instructor changed the time that he administered quizzes.

Teresa also planned to share with her two “mentors” how she felt about their relationship with her. Teresa's mentors supported her “to get money for college.” She met them through a pre-college program at Richdale High. According to the program's website, it was created by a wealthy individual who knew of the “bad reputation of the City of Richdale” but was impressed by an “admirable, unexpected and heartfelt display

of sportsmanship” by a group of Richdale students. Her mentors-- the founder of the organization and a board member-- helped Teresa set up her fundraising website and manage the donations through a non-profit. While Teresa appreciated the generous support and felt “blessed to have them” she wanted more.

When they ask me how school is going I feel like I have to say, Everything’s going good! (*smiles and nods emphatically*). But it’s not. I can’t tell them about the roommate stuff or the struggles I face. They say, “Your full-time job is to apply to scholarships” or “How are your grades”? It’s only about money or grades. But they don’t understand why I wasn’t motivated because I couldn’t share with them. A mentor is supposed to be there for you (112310, p. 17).

Teresa shared her plans to note “huh, you didn’t keep your promise did you?” for all the unfulfilled promised visits and phone calls. She prepared herself to tell them what she needed, “Thank you for the financial support but I also need to be able to talk and just share what else is going on” (112310, p. 18).

In the reality of being an undocumented person, Teresa drew strength from other undocumented students. She talked about one of her friends who had graduated and gone on to an internship in New York. While other interns were paid, Teresa’s friend worked unpaid due to her undocumented status. “She’s still doing it you know, she's like I'm going to show them that I am doing a much better job than those people who are getting paid and they're going to find the way to pay me you know. So it's kind of like that sense of motivation that keeps us going” (121510, p. 5).

While Teresa described her fight for education as a collective fight—“a fight for other people as well” (112310, p. 4)-- it was also an individual fight:

I just want to prove for myself that an AB540 can do it too. You know, like I stayed here – my four years. I was able to pay for my four years. And just because statistics show that an AB540 they tend to dropout their second year because they cannot afford it-- look at me, I'm not another statistic. So that's my major motivation. I'm an AB540 student. That's keeping me going (112310, p. 5).

Even though Teresa's place in school is jeopardized by policies and practices that are meant to keep undocumented people out of school, these negative experiences also serve as fuel to keep her going.

In this section, I presented student counterstories to provide insight on participant experience with academic displacement. Orlando, Cecilia, Teresa, and Adam came to college facing great academic challenges. The students described their own high school experience as having “crappy counselors and teachers” of whom 16% were un-credentialed. The students also talked about attending “AP classes that were a joke” and having “really poor learning conditions.” Considering the ways that systemic oppression limits educational opportunities in schools with predominantly students of color (Fine, et al., 2004; Orfield & Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2001) and examining the context of their education in a high school that was comprised of 80% Latina/Latino students, nearly half a student body of English Language Learners, and more than three-quarters Free/ Reduced Lunch participants and illuminates how experiences of academic transition are further compounded by experiences of racism. These difficulties, paired with the experience of being minoritized as FGC students and

Latinas/Latinos made their academic challenges very different from those of traditional students and often resulted in a sense of insecurity about their place on campus. As FGC Latinas/Latinos, students recognized that their academic success had meaning to their larger family community and Latino community. This created a sense of pressure to succeed and also served as motivation to support their family and community.

All participants experienced academic displacement in relation to their identity as FGC and Latinas/Latinos. When looking deeper into individual student experiences, in Teresa's story we learned how her location as an AB 540 student further complicated her experience with academic displacement, which suggests that the nature of academic displacement can be even more complicated than presented here.

Displacement in Student Life

Students described having strong social ties to individuals and groups of friends. However, when I asked about connections to student life, I was surprised to learn that most students did not have strong connections to their campus. At Richdale High, they started community service clubs, participated in immigration raid protests, started a tutoring program at the local elementary school, and even helped facilitate freshman EAOP orientations. I clearly remember during college application time, sitting with two of these students. Each came to me with a hand-written list of activities, all which showed long-term involvement and leadership. I helped them strategize and combine their activities so that everything would fit on their college application. During my

research, however, when I asked the students about the place that student life activities played in their college experience, most shared that they tried to acclimate to their freshman year by joining student organizations but felt unsettled in these spaces. In this section I will describe the influence of race in student's experience with displacement in student life both in mainstream spaces and Latino student groups. I will then share Cecilia's story to illustrate how her experience as an undocumented student greatly exacerbated this experience.

Racial displacement in mainstream spaces.

The experience of racial displacement students experienced in the classroom also impacted involvement in student life activities. The racial isolation Adam felt in his Environmental Science classes carried over to student environmental organizations. "I tried to join them but they're all white and upper class. . . Like the way I dress or the way I talk, I don't fit in" (110910, p. 6). Adam felt that this difference in race and class backgrounds translated into a different set of values around environmentalism.

For some people environmentalism is like you drive a hybrid and you eat locally. Sometimes it feels like people are like 'Like, omigod, let's just recycle!' that's it. They don't see the place that I come from. Like it's not just about a hybrid for me because I live next to pollution. It's in my community you know? (092110, p. 3).

Like Adam, Orlando felt disconnected from predominantly white student organizations. Once Orlando started college, it was important for him to become comfortable with his gay identity. He envisioned college as an opportunity to "really

explore and embrace” his identity. Orlando went to several Queer Student Association (QSA) events but “felt alienated” and didn’t like that it “seemed to be about hooking up and that was it.” At the beginning of this study, Orlando joined La Familia, a queer Latino student organization. He described that the community felt “tighter” and “more comfortable” in comparison to QSA. Orlando told me he was excited to see what would happen with La Familia. Unfortunately, over time, the student group stopped having regular meetings.

Latino student groups: Racial affirmation and racial essentialism.

Several studies on students of color found that cultural affinity groups served as counter-spaces that helped student maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment from a racially hostile campus climate (Benmayor, 2002; Solórzano, et al., 2000). Likewise, three of four participants in this study turned to Latino student groups to help them minimize the multiple forms of displacement they experienced on campus. Students described these spaces as both affirming and restricting.

Freshman year, Orlando and Teresa turned to their campus Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) groups for a sense of belonging. Orlando also lived in Latino theme housing, which at his campus was closely associated with MEChA. Teresa described the importance of this experience, “I felt that I wasn't alone and that I had a place here at Pacific” (112310, p.8). In both her and my memory, she is the only the student from Richdale High to attend Pacific in the past eight years. As a

senior in high school, Teresa attended MEChA's Raza College Day. She referred to this experience as being the deciding factor for choosing Pacific. Orlando chose to live in Chicano theme housing his freshman year. After experiencing racial and social isolation in class, Orlando could return to his dorm where people "were friendly, even if they don't know you" (100210, p. 2). When I visited Orlando his freshman year in college, he took me around and explained the history and significance of the murals that adorned his dorm. For Orlando, involvement in Latino student organizations also gave him opportunities to further develop his interest in storytelling through art, his main area of interest. He wrote, directed, and produced a play that commemorated the 25th anniversary of MEChA at his campus and also adapted, co-directed, and acted in an interpretation of *Zoot Suit*. I remember visiting Orlando freshman year soon after *Zoot Suit* ended production. He proudly showed me newspaper clippings of that the show.

Unlike Orlando and Teresa who joined Latino student organizations early on, Adam resisted these groups as he "didn't want to be put in a bubble." However, during his junior year, Adam decided to join Hermanos, which provided him an important "sense of solidarity." At Hermanos meetings students shared their lingering insecurities and found support. "I don't feel stranded. I feel like I'm just-- well I know I'm one of a few-- but I feel like one of many. It builds community and a sense of presence on campus, even if there aren't as many of us as there should be. It makes me feel at home," (110910, p. 4) Adam said. In these spaces students developed a sense of

cultural citizenship (Benmayor, 2002); rather than being perceived as someone who did not belong on campus, these spaces offered “another way to be Latino”-- to develop an empowered racial identity that countered the sense of race as a liability that students described in dominant mainstream spaces.

In these spaces, it was clear that there was an empowered Latino identity that countered the dehumanizing that happened in mainstream campus spaces. However, over time some of the students felt that these counter spaces were also restrictive as the counter identity-- an empowered Latino and activist identity—required conforming to an essential set of values and behaviors. As a high school student, Teresa was drawn to Pacific by MEChA but once she joined as a college student she felt pressure to be “political and not too social” and to associate with only MEChA students. “On campus I feel as a Latino you have to choose between being an activist or having a social life. Why do we have to choose? Why do we have to exclude our own kind?” (091410, p. 5). Orlando also felt that the culture of the Chicano dorm and MEChA had strict rules around claiming an empowered identity. Orlando shared why he left the Chicano dorm after his freshman year:

There [was] so much insistence on being Chicano. And there was only one way to be Chicano. In order to show that you were like 100% Chicano, you started acting more a part of it. It was very forceful. The issues surrounding race, Chicano activism and society were presented too flat. . . There were students who were more excited than others to pick up the Chicano symbolism, correcting others when someone didn’t know about the Chicano culture. That turned me away (100210, p. 1).

The demand to conform to the empowered but still essentialist identity that was upheld by the student groups was unappealing to Orlando and Teresa. Both students still participated in occasional activities and projects but ceased looking for a sense of community in these spaces.

The participants shared a sense of being outside of these groups. For example, the heavy emphasis on Chicano culture in some of these clubs also made Adam and Orlando feel “a bit different.” Adam, whose parents are from Guatemala, and Orlando, whose father is from El Salvador, also mentioned that they felt that they had “repress” or “forget” about their heritage to participate in these organizations. For Adam, because he joined Hermanos his junior year he still felt like an outsider. “People have been there a long time so there’s cliques and stuff. Technically I’m a Hermano but I don’t really feel like it. I don’t feel like I’m legit” (110910, p. 6).

Despite the outsidership, these spaces continued to have importance. Even though Adam did not feel “legit,” almost immediately after this statement he referred to Hermanos as the space on campus where he felt safest. Senior year, Orlando moved back into Casa Zapata, when I asked why he said, “I missed being here. And now, I have a bit of a wall up but also I have a better understanding of who I am and I don’t let the whole narrow definition get to me anymore” (100210, p. 3). Orlando and Teresa continued to help out with some MEChA activities but seemed to do so because of the

personal and political importance of the activity rather than to gain socially or find a sense of belonging.

Cecilia: Student life as luxury.

Cecilia's experience with social displacement appeared to be the strongest of all of the students. As a commuter, Cecilia had to bridge the social and geographical space between Richdale and Urban everyday. She felt that joining student organizations as a way to find a sense of place on campus was not an option.

For the first three years of college Cecilia could not access financial aid. As an undocumented student in her freshman and sophomore year she was ineligible for aid. By the time she received her residency, it was too late to apply for financial aid for her junior year. She could only afford to attend Urban if she commuted her first three years of college. "I don't want to wait around after class. All those [activities] are at night. To get from school to home I have to take BART and bus. I don't want to go home and then do [that commute] all over again just to go to a meeting" (092410, p. 9). For Cecilia, participating in student life would come at an economic and time cost, which she could not afford. In addition to commuting, since starting college Cecilia worked 25 hours a week, juggling two to three jobs at a time. The amount of time she spent working, commuting, and trying to keep up with her studies took priority over everything else. For several years, as far as socializing on campus went it was with other Richdale High alumni who also commuted to Urban, one of whom is also

undocumented and all of whom knew about Cecilia's immigration status. "I just go eat with the Richdale students. Besides that, I go to class and go home. That's it" (092410, p. 17). Cecilia noted that the common experience commuting brought the group of students together, "I knew them from EAOP and class, but they weren't my friends. Sometimes when we eat lunch together we talk about how we barely even talked in high school. If I didn't have them, I'd be alone" (092410, p. 18).

As I heard Cecilia's story, I realized the invisibility of her status to the campus at large. Her absence in student life could easily be dismissed as her not caring but there are larger forces at play. At Richdale, nearly a quarter of the students I worked with were undocumented. Many spoke freely about being undocumented; service providers were often explicit in letting students know what types of services undocumented students could or could not access; I regularly witnessed students who were privileged with residency or U.S citizenship ask about opportunities for their undocumented friends or cousins. While the students could not be protected from all discriminatory policies, their status was acknowledged and it was a relatively safe space. Richdale was physically and emotionally safe enough so that Cecilia could speak to the City Council about her community's experience with ICE raids. It was safe enough for her to focus her school's Amnesty International Club on immigration reform. On the other hand, for Cecilia, Urban was not safe enough: "Before when I didn't have my residency I was scared to join clubs or try and go to a program because I thought they might ask me for

my social security number, you never know,” (11210, p. 4) she said. I asked Cecilia what she thought her college experience would be like. She said, “I thought I would be really involved like before--that I would make friends easily and that I would be really involved in school. Now that I’m in college, it feels like there’s too much to worry about” (092410, p. 14).

Policies at all levels that restrict opportunities for undocumented students have negatively impacted all aspects of Cecilia’s college experience. Current university, state, and federal policies prohibit undocumented students from benefiting from financial aid including grants, loans, and work study. Even many private scholarships hold residency requirements. For example, Adam received a four-year full-tuition scholarship from a privately funded program that works in partnership with Urban University. Although Cecilia’s high school academic and leadership achievement made her a competitive candidate for this program, she was disqualified from the process because of her immigration status. Therefore, for Cecilia, becoming a part of student life symbolized a luxury that was directly connected to her status as an AB 540 student.

In this section I have described participant’s experience with displacement in student life in relation to race. I showed how Orlando and Adam-- the only students who considered joining mainstream student groups—felt a sense of racial isolation in student life that was similar to what they experienced in many of their classes. I then

looked at how traditional Latino student groups were a contradictory space for the participants-- creating both an empowering Latino identity but also one that students perceived to be restrictive for multiple reasons. Although the participants often felt like they were outsiders, these spaces continued to have a sense of value to the students. I concluded this section with Cecilia's story to show how her experience as an AB 540 student who commutes and works multiple jobs created difficult conditions for her to find a sense of place in student life.

Displacement and Family

All of the students spent a great deal of time talking about their family. As I listened to their stories, I realized that while students were experiencing displacement at school, they also experienced it in multiple ways in their family life as well. In this section, I will highlight how families supported the students despite the families themselves experiencing displacement on the school campus. I will then share how students described the ways in which they felt displaced when they went back home. Finally, I will end with Orlando's story to illustrate the complexity of how he experienced displacement with his family.

Absence of space for families on campus.

Over time, students described the different ways in which they found a sense of place on campus. Despite this, it was obvious to the students that there was little room for parents on the physical campuses. For example, Orlando's family visited him one to

two times a month at Palisades. While they were used to physically coming to the campus, Orlando noticed a difference in his parents. Even after four years of visiting Orlando at Palisades, Orlando said this to describe his parents on campus:

I see that my dad he gets really, he acts more professional. Okay, he's acting more white or he's acting in a way that he thinks he should act. Like he becomes really quiet and really like follows the rules. He just becomes really rigid like, no personality. It's like as if he's like afraid to say anything. That's not my dad. He's really lively. And like for my mom, I notice it more. Like I could just see the way my mom looks around and just like notices kind of how other people are dressed. You could just really tell she's uncomfortable (100210, p. 5-6).

While Orlando's parents visited him frequently, the absence of visits by Teresa's parents was just as telling. Despite the five-hour drive from Richdale to Pacific, Teresa's family have never stayed to visit the campus or even shared a meal with her in the surrounding community. According to Teresa, her father's only comments about her college were that the trees reminded of Mexico and "there are so many white people here" (112310, p. 20). Rather than staying after dropping off their daughter, Teresa's parents returned immediately to Richdale as the long drive to Pacific represented a huge risk to Teresa and her family. For example, Teresa told me a story of driving back from her college to Richdale with her parents.

We pulled over to take a break. A cop stopped and asked us what we were doing. He wanted to see my dad's license and stuff even though we didn't do anything. . . I feel like the cop crossed the line. He asked us if we were illegal and all of these things. And my dad told him yes! I was thinking in my head, No dad, just say that we're in the process. But he didn't. So I had to tell the cop that I was coming home from my first year of college and it was a long drive so we pulled over to take a break and rest, so we could be safe. I showed him my student ID and everything. He finally let us go. Before we left, the three of us

[Teresa, her mother, and her father] made a promise that we could never tell my little brothers what happened. It would be too scary. What would have happened if I wasn't there to show my ID? (091410, p. 4-5).

In this story we see how Teresa and her parents' experience with displacement is impacted by their shared immigration status. However, her question at the end of this quote also illustrates her insight into a form of differencing that developed between her and parents due to her privilege as a college student.

Although Teresa's parents, particularly her father, did not want to linger at Pacific, it was clear to me that Teresa wanted them to feel that they too could be a part of this world. When I visited Teresa at Pacific, it was Parent's Weekend. She gave me a tour of the campus noting what she wanted to share with her parents and speculating what they might have to say. Teresa planned that her graduation would be a vacation for her parents—she wanted them to be able to say “‘I actually visited Santa Barbara you know,’ like Mexicanos don't have privilege to say, ‘I took a vacation’” (112310, p. 14). She also hoped that her new sorority which was predominantly Latina, would be a place where her parents “would see, oh there's other Latino parents here too!” (112310, p. 14).

Negotiating displacement with community cultural wealth.

Despite families being marginalized on the school campus, the student's families represented a great deal of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) so that students could negotiate the displacement students experienced on campus. Yosso

described aspirational capital as instilling a culture of possibility and I saw this throughout the students' stories about their family. They described their families as providing "motivation to keep going." Orlando's parents told him "to take advantage of everything Palisades has to offer. You won't get chances like this again" (110710, p. 17). Adam's father was sympathetic when Adam shared his experiences being stereotyped, "My dad has always worked with a lot of white people so he's had some bad experiences. We have that in common. He says 'I understand, living in this country we face this'" (092110, p. 6) but encouraged his son to keep going despite this reality. Teresa and Cecilia's younger siblings shared encouraging words like "You got this" and "You're my role model."

Teresa and Cecilia's mothers also played a particularly important role in helping their daughters assert their place on campus. Teresa and Cecilia's mothers regularly contributed to their daughters' college expenses, making it possible for them to go to school. Teresa's mom sent her \$800 a month. She was able to do so by using her social capital and participating in *tandas* or rotating credit pools with women at her workplace. In high school, when Cecilia wondered how she would pay for college, her mom always told her not to worry. Cecilia was surprised to learn that her mom had been saving money "a little bit here and there" since Cecilia was in third grade. Despite policies that eliminate access to financial aid for undocumented students and send the message that

these students have no place on college campuses Teresa and Cecilia were able to make the financial commitment to college mostly because of their mothers' foresight.

The students were also driven to keep going by their parents' stories of not being able to go to college. The students saw their education as an opportunity to "live the life that [their parents] couldn't" and take care of their family. Students dreamed that some day they would be able to take their parents back to their homeland, buy their parents homes, and buy their parents medical insurance. In sum, the students' families had much to provide the students to help them maintain resilience in the face of displacement.

Experiencing displacement in the changing role at home.

While students were very committed to and close with their families, they also realized that their college experience had drawn them away from their families in unexpected ways. Students felt that they were unable to support their families in the ways they had when they were high school students. Additionally as their life experiences grew and students' identities outside of their role as children continued to develop, their relationship with their families became precarious.

For Orlando, seeing his parents out of place at Palisades reminded him of how he and his sisters always tried to "protect" their parents in public spaces such as banks and grocery stores. He said, "I really wanted to protect my mom and my dad, more my

mom, from ever having that feeling that they were less. Now that I'm here, I can't protect them" (100210, p. 6).

Like Orlando, Cecilia and Teresa both realized the role they played at home was changing. As the oldest children and as daughters Teresa and Cecilia held a lot of responsibility in regard to their younger siblings. In speaking about her younger brothers Teresa said,

Now that I go to Pacific, I feel like I have no control over their lives-- how they grow up or what they're learning. They were born here, so they don't know [what it's like being undocumented]. My dad doesn't talk about it with them. So I have to. They won't experience being scared of driving, or they won't know what it's like to come over and cross the desert. So I have to explain it to them. And they ask me, "Will I have to be scared when I drive too?" And I say, "No, but that's why I'm telling you. So you know where you're coming from." Now, I can only talk to them like that when I come home (091410, p. 8).

For Teresa, the physical distance between home and school contributed to a changing in the way that she could provide for her family. For Cecilia, even though she lived at home, the time spent working, studying, and going to school kept her busy. "I always thought I would have time for my family, you know. Like I was going to help my little brothers out since I was the oldest one with more experience, more knowledge when it comes to college and things like that" (112310, p. 5). Cecilia realized that over time her brother Rafa who was a high school senior had lost interest in going to college.

It's my fault because before when he tried to ask me questions I was too busy. When Rafa was applying for college I was like in my mid-terms and stuff. I felt badly because I always thought that I would have time for them. I really tried, but I don't have the time anymore to help him out. I had to do my own [school] work, and go to work, and stuff like that. I feel that my parents have given up on

him. They think, “Oh, Cecilia got into college. She is going to be the one that is going save us.” I always dream of my little brothers going to better colleges, surpassing me at every level. I feel that they are smarter than me, way smarter. I just don’t know how to make Rafa understand that (112310, p. 18).

Although Cecilia did help Rafa with college and financial aid applications and continually tried to motivate him, she could not be there to support him every step of the way. Between working two to three jobs and trying to keep herself off academic probation, she had limited time to play the role she thought she could at home.

Another way students found their role changing at home was that they started to create identities a part from their families. This meant when they returned home, they had to reconcile these differences. Orlando, Teresa, and Adam tried to minimize the differences between themselves and their families by calling home often. The students said they rarely talked about themselves, but instead asked about what was going on at home so they “wouldn’t be lost” and “could get the jokes” when they went home. While this helped them maintain a sense of connection with their family, when they went home the changes were obvious. For example, Teresa described the tension that developed between her and father during her first Thanksgiving home.

I was so homesick. I was tired and had papers to write. My dad kept telling me to do chores-- do the dishes, wash the car-- but I was putting it off. My dad said, “Why else did you come home if you weren’t going to help and do chores?” That hit me. I’ve been away to college and I just come home. I want some love and you tell me this? (121510, p. 12).

Teresa described how this tension was later minimized when she came to a greater understanding of her parents’ work:

I started going to work with my auntie to clean houses on Saturdays [during break]. For me it was like, Wow my back really hurts. I can't imagine my mom coming from work and still cooking and still cleaning. Imagine if that's how I feel right now and I'm super tired and hurting, imagine my mom or my dad. So now I just do the chores (121510, p. 13).

Adam's family moved out of Richdale during his freshman year of college. The bank had foreclosed on their home and his parents moved in with his older sister to a city that was an hour away from Urban. Since then, Adam rarely went home on the weekends. When he did go home during school breaks, he made time to spend with his friends, many of whom are local. While his parents were uncomfortable with this, it was his older siblings were particularly critical. "They're like 'Adam doesn't care about us anymore. You don't love us anymore, you'd rather be with your friends.' It kind of makes me feel bad but I still want to live my life. I want to be me, find my freedom, and have my own independence and be myself" (010511, p. 18).

For all of the students, the complexity of the fissure that developed between themselves and their families was painful. Whether the students blamed themselves for letting down family members or were frustrated by their family's lack of accommodation to the students' growth, the students told these stories visibly upset and often through tears.

Orlando: Breaking away from the collective.

Recognize your past, the triumphs and failures of your parents, but do not allow it to define your own narrative. You belong to a different generation and you belong to yourself. – excerpt from Orlando's Survivor Letter

For Orlando, the move from home to college was simultaneously restricting and liberating. Orlando casually shared with me at the beginning of our first interview that he was gay. When I thought back to my four years at Richdale High, I realized I did not know a student who outwardly identified as LGBTQ. The school did not even have a Gay Straight Alliance or similar type of student club. I knew of several Richdale High students who, like Orlando, had come out during college, but knew of none who had done so in high school. All of my interviews with Orlando came back to his experience as a gay man, particularly in relation to his role as a son.

Although Orlando experienced a great deal of displacement in college from the devaluing of his identity as a FGC Latino, college also represented the possibility for him to embrace his gay identity—an identity that he had not fully revealed to his family. Orlando felt that the space between Richdale and Palisades gave him-- “the individual” a chance to “leave behind shame” and love himself as a gay man. At the time of our interviews, he felt that his individuality could not coexist with “the collective”-- his family—as he could not imagine a time when he “wouldn’t have to hide” a part of himself from his family. This tension, which he referred to as “the individual versus the collective,” represented a great source of conflict and anguish.

Orlando described coming out to his father during his freshman year of college. “I felt like I just screwed up. I felt really guilty. And you know, I really hated this feeling, like, like me just being who I am, how can I bring so much shame to another

person?" (100210, p. 3). As Orlando shared with me that his father was "sad," "confused," and "didn't understand" Orlando became emotional. After Orlando took a minute, he smiled at me and continued,

He did tell me that, no matter what I'm still his son, and so that gave me some peace. I expected him not to understand but at least he still accepts me for being his son. And that's what I really admire about my dad. I'm really proud of him. It's been three years since [I came out] and nothing has changed in our relationship. I could tell that he loves me (100210, p.4).

Although Orlando came out to his father years ago, they have not spoken about the topic since. Orlando's sexuality remained a secret from many in his family including his mother.

My dad told me not to tell her because it would hurt her so much and she will be shocked and just paralyzed. It's a lot to take, to feel that [I] have to withhold a lot. There is love but there's also a lot of pain and constraint. Going back to Richdale and going back home brings so much feelings of-- even though I really like Richdale because it taught me a lot about myself-- at the same time whenever I go back in my house the first thing that goes on in my head is like "Fuck, I gave up so much" and I think of being silenced and repressed (100210, p.4).

This memory of being silenced in high school and the reality of covering his sexuality when going back to his parent's home in Richdale or when they visited him in college weighed heavily on Orlando. In high school, Orlando thought he would return to Richdale after college. As college graduation approached, however, he saw himself living far away from his family so that he could come into his own. Orlando only saw himself returning home if there was a place for him in his family- a place in which his identity as a son and as a gay man could exist together.

Without a deeper analysis, an outside perspective would likely interpret Orlando's desire to focus on himself as uncomfortably individualistic. However, his love for his family is clear. In our interviews, time and time again Orlando came back to the topic of his family, sharing with me stories ranging from his parents' childhood stories to his excitement about a course that will culminate in a one-week trip to El Salvador, his father's home country. "The last time he went was in 1991 when his mom died. My dad wants to go back so badly but he hasn't had the chance. And I kind of see it like at least I'll go there. I'll take a bunch of pictures to show him how much has changed" (122610, p. 18).

Although Orlando talked about creating distance between him and his family, he continued to honor them in his actions and his words- - talking about their strength, wisdom and support. And while Orlando loved Richdale, he also affiliated it with the repression of his sexuality. Orlando shared that since coming to Palisades he realized that the issues in Richdale were part of "a bigger systemic issue, it's kind of intentional what is happening" (110710, p. 9). He noted "there's a million Richdales. They are each different but it's the same issues everywhere" (110710, p.9). When possible, Orlando continued to focus much of school work on issues at Richdale. He also knew that after college he could take what he learned and "apply it somewhere else but still do the work that I want" (010510, p. 13). He graduation neared, this seemed to be a focus on policy.

Orlando's Survivor Letter is addressed to himself as a reminder of his "own rules of life." While he often spoke about his personal conflict in binary terms -- "the individual versus the collective"-- Orlando's letter provided further insight and challenged this binary:

I have realized I have to put myself first. I have to work on myself. I have to fulfill myself. I recognize this sounds selfish, but I also see it as the best way to actually move my family collectively, to bridge stronger. . . Distance from family is required to get to know your own strength and identity. This separation should not be permanent and taken to the extreme of abandoning family. But I urge, to never lose yourself. Everyone deserves to recognize their individual worth and realize their happiness. This is my advice and the way I hope to live. Individually strong, collectively considerate, going forward to fulfillment.

Throughout our interviews, Orlando consistently came back to the "individual versus the collective." His Survivor Letter suggests that he has found a way to look at the individual and the collective—the interconnected relationship between himself and his family.

In this section, I have described some of the very complex relationships between family and displacement. Orlando and Teresa's parents experienced displacement on their children's college campuses in a way that was informed by class, race, and also for Teresa's parents, immigration status. Families, particularly through the use of multiple forms of community cultural wealth, were key in helping Orlando, Teresa, Adam, and Cecilia move beyond the forms of displacement they experienced on campus. The motivation and support that we saw from their families, has been highlighted in other

research in Latinas/Latinos (Benmayor, 2002; Yosso, 2005). I also saw a particular use of social and resistance capital by Teresa and Cecilia's mothers to provide their daughters with financial support to be able to attend college. Lastly, students struggled with displacement when they went back home due to the changing role in their family-- Orlando's story further dimensionalizes this experience by considering how the need to cover his sexuality contributed to an even more difficult position. This also showed that while college was a challenging place for Orlando as an FGC Latino, it was a place for him to begin to negotiate his sexuality.

Summary

I have used displacement as a theoretical tool to understand how participants experienced the difference in Discourses between home and college. The change in place to place resulted in an obvious change of participant social location. The participants wrestled with these changes in three key areas: academics, students life, and with family. Students experienced academic displacement through FGC identity and racial identity. Participants' identity as Latinas/Latinos contributed to their displacement in student life both in mainstream, predominantly white student groups and also racial affinity groups. Family helped students resist displacement in college, but when students returned home, they experienced displacement among their family. The use of student focal stories from Teresa, Cecilia, and Orlando complexified the ways in which participants experienced displacement based on their other social locations. Orlando's

focal story on his sexuality and family also showed how first spaces of home can also be dominating spaces in which displacement is experienced. When experiencing displacement, participants sometimes internalized negative messages about their social identities and other times resisted these messages suggesting that in this place there is constant tension between domination and resistance.

Finding and Creating Third Spaces

Although the students described their college experience as struggling through displacement, they also found and created ways to live outside these disorienting experiences in different forms of third spaces. Third spaces have been conceptualized as physical spaces (Bhabha, 1994; Delgado Bernal, Alemán Jr, & Garavito, 2009; Moje, et al., 2004) as well as moments or individual practices (Bhabha, 1994; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda, 1999; Karanja, 2010). Third spaces are liminal spaces in which established hegemonic practices and dominant paradigms are challenged (Bhabha, 1994). In these third spaces, students garnered a sense of power, purpose, and grounding. They found ways to resist the hostility and invisibility of their campus.

This section begins with an examination of Ethnic Studies classes—the only institutionalized space that students identified as a third space. I then present the ways in which each student used or built forms of cultural capital to enact third spaces. Finally, I share how students approached their course of academic study as a third space

in which they could negotiate the competing realities and demands from the dominant culture, their parents, and themselves.

Ethnic Studies: Site of Contestation

As shared previously, students described the many ways in which they were displaced academically. Their relatively low level of academic preparation paired with being in a racially hostile campus climate, resulted in loss of confidence and increase in self-doubt. In response, students were purposeful in finding intellectual opportunities that affirmed their identity, particularly in their identity as Latinos and people of color. Overwhelming these intellectual spaces came in the form of Ethnic Studies and Chicano Studies courses. In the section below, I will highlight the importance of this third space as one that provided the opportunity for students to learn in a safe and meaningful space. I will then show how students used Ethnic Studies courses to give meaning to their studies in other disciplines. Then, Cecilia's story will illustrate the power of this third space in transforming her college experience. Finally, I will share the vulnerable nature of Ethnic Studies as a third space.

Safe and meaningful space.

When Cecilia goes back to Richdale High and tells students she is majoring in Ethnic Studies she explains to them that "Ethnic Studies is the whole history about the minority groups in the United States, but looking at it in different perspective, not the mainstream perspective that we have been taught in high school and all. Like the other

side of that history the side full of perspectives from minority groups, like Chicanos and Asian Americans, African-Americans” (092410, p. 2).

The inclusiveness of the curriculum was also reflected in the classroom environment and provided a distinctly different space from other areas of study. Students used words like “safe,” “relief,” and “comfort” when they talked about the atmosphere of their Ethnic Studies courses. They also described the students as “easier to approach,” “friendly,” and “supportive.” Teresa went as far as to say that said she and the other students in her Chicano Studies class referred to the class as “our own little family.” Students felt “hooked” by the curriculum in their Ethnic Studies courses. Learning about the cultural, social, and political history of communities of color helped students feel personally connected to what they were learning. For example, students referred to understanding how the *bracero* program impacted current immigration reform. They also drew parallels between immigration and assimilation theories to the experiences of their families. Teresa described that Chicano Studies was a time for “learning something that people are not aware of and getting information that you don’t hear everyday. Chicano studies increased my awareness about the struggles of my ancestors and how that impacts me today” (091410, p. 6). For Adam, learning about Guatemala alongside hundreds of other students made him “feel more empowered, rather than isolated” (110910, p. 5) on campus. Teresa and Cecilia shared that they began to think about how immigration impacted gender roles in their households.

“When I first started to learn about patriarchy, I saw how it worked in my family- it [saw how it] affected me and my mom a lot,” (112310, p. 10) Cecilia said.

And while students found that they were able to make connections to their family and cultural history, Teresa and Orlando also seized the opportunity to focus on themselves. Both students took a Chicano theater class and decided to focus inward. They described these classes as “therapeutic” as it allowed them the opportunity to academically engage with what was the most pressing in their minds: for Orlando his sexuality and for Teresa her immigration status. Orlando remembered his first assignment in a playwriting class. “From the first monologue I knew this is going to be some serious shit. I was like this is some deep shit I’m going through. I’m not really sure where this class is going to take me but I know it will take me whole” (110710, p.10). Throughout the semester, Orlando worked on a manuscript for his play *Desaije*, which centered on the death of Roberto, a young farm worker. The play is told mostly through a series of memories from his secret lover Hernan and Roberto’s mother. While Orlando’s play was not autobiographical, it was deeply personal. It took place in Huron, where Orlando’s grandfather worked as bracero and where Orlando places the “origin” of his mother’s life in the United States. Like Orlando, Roberto, the main character, keeps his sexuality hidden from his mother. In the end it is revealed that Roberto and Hernan were planning to run away from their families to start a new life together in another city. Orlando said his class was more like a “personal task. I believe it worked

inside internally. It's just like examining yourself and trying to understand your own person" (100210, p. 23).

The opportunity to focus on self was something Teresa also experienced. Her Chicano theater class as an opportunity to "forget about the outside world for a moment" (121510, p. 12). Teresa described herself as the "strong girl", the one who held together her family through ICE raids in her community and who her mother leaned on after Teresa's sister's recent attempted suicide. And while Teresa is a "strong girl" she admitted that are times when she breaks and that she needs an outlet. Teresa described the pressure that she carried with her, "It definitely, definitely builds up. Like if you're eating a dessert. You're eating and eating until you're stuffed and you can't take it anymore and you throw up. It's not until when one little thing really pops it and everything comes out" (121510, p. 14). For Teresa, Chicano theater presented an opportunity for release. "I can actually let all of this anger come out. It was like if I were going to a psychiatrist, just a little extra time for myself" (121510, p. 12). Although her class assignments had pre-assigned topics, Teresa focused her final performance on her experience as an undocumented person. As I listened to Teresa recite her piece over dinner at a crowded Italian restaurant, she ended it loudly proclaiming, "Yes, I'm Teresa and I do exist!" This last statement was in defiance of a professor with whom Teresa shared her immigration status. Upon learning about Teresa's immigration status, the professor said, "It's like you don't even exist,"

referring to Teresa's lack of social security number or driver's license number. In the written assignment that accompanied her performance piece, she wrote, "I'm humanizing myself. I'm giving myself the respect that others haven't given me. I'm rising up and joining the undocumented individuals who have said to the people of the U.S. that we do exist and that we deserve to be treated with the same respect that others are treated."

Resisting racelessness.

Ethnic Studies served as a physical third space for students within the classroom but also as a discursive third space that translated across academic disciplines. Adam and Orlando took what they learned in their Ethnic Studies courses to resist the racelessness that existed in their areas of study. They perceived Ethnic Studies to be the only academic space that allowed deep intellectual engagement on the issue of race.

Both students talked about how the classes in their major, Urban Studies for Orlando and Conservation Resource Studies for Adam, rarely introduced the topics of race. Orlando noted that in Urban Studies "race is often disguised as class" and when the topic of race did come up, the discussion "was awkward and didn't go anywhere." He instead appreciated the frank nature of his Ethnic Studies courses. "I think everybody was at peace because we already knew that we were going to talk about race. For the students we were really conscious of race being a strong component in our identities. We already knew what we weren't afraid to go into those topics. We weren't

going to label it as anything else” (100210, p. 14). Beginning in his junior year, Orlando began to feel much more confident in all of his classes. He attributed to both adjusting to the rigor of Palisades but also being confident in what he learned in his Ethnic Studies courses and being able to apply this to those “awkward” conversations in Urban Studies. He said, “Now, I know that I belong here. Now I feel really confident in myself and if I want to say something I feel like I’m loading it with a lot of power and a lot of analysis. Now when I say something it’s precise and it’s just what I want, what I feel needs to be said” (122610, p. 15).

Adam’s environmental justice class was the only class in the department of Conservation Resources Studies that touched on the issue of race. “It was the most students of color I’ve ever seen but it was still mostly white. Also some people didn’t get it. They would start to say these things about race and I would think, ‘Oh crap, where is this going?’” (110910, p. 6). Because of the lack of classes within his department that could support his interest in environmental justice, for Adam, it was important to weave together classes on environmental conservation and urban studies with courses in Ethnic Studies. “I have a lot of knowledge about race from my Ethnic Studies classes so I combine a lot about race, space, and city planning. I see a lot of the same concepts. Even if they’re not the same, I can apply them” (010511, p. 9).

Both Orlando and Adam’s stories provided insight into how Ethnic Studies serves as both an institutional and physical third space on campus that reached beyond

the classes offered in the department. The students used what they learned in their Ethnic Studies classes and drew it across disciplines to fill the gaps of racial inclusion and analysis in other academic disciplines.

A third space as marginal space.

For the students in this study, Ethnic Studies was a space that challenged the dominant culture of their campuses in which there was little room for Latino students and other students of color. Although the third space of Ethnic Studies was also a safe space inside the classroom walls, it was also a marginalized space in the dominant campus context. Cecilia described leaving lecture or discussion section and seeing people's faces as they assess the students who come out of the classroom. "It's mostly Latinos then Asian and black students [who are leaving the class]. They [other students] look at you. One time I heard someone say, 'Oh easy class.' I was like wow, just by looking at us you think it's an easy class" (111210, p. 14). Therefore, while Ethnic Studies was an important academic and personal space for these students, students were very aware that it held a subordinate status on campus. All of the students shared that people assumed "because you're born in a Mexican community you know your history" (Adam, 110910, p. 14) or "you're Chicano so it should be easy" (Teresa, 121510, p. 3). The students were very frustrated by this perception and also offended.

Students' positive and transformative experience in Ethnic Studies and Chicano Studies stand in great contrast to the experiences of displacement in other academic

classes. Therefore, while students read and understood the belittling and devaluing of this space by the mainstream population, they continued to fiercely embrace and defend its importance, telling me how they had “never studied harder” and “learned to look at the world differently” and “much more critically.”

Cecilia: Finding community.

Cecilia scheduled our first interview immediately following her first study group session for an Ethnic Studies class. I asked her what she thought about their first study session. She shrugged and said nonchalantly, “I don’t know. They seem nice.” Six weeks later as Cecilia and I walked alongside each other on campus, she waved and called over to a group of three Latino students. “Sign me in, I’ll be there later!” “Is that your study group?” I asked. She smiled and said, “Yeah, those are my friends. We’re going to an extra credit lecture later and then to celebrate one of their birthdays.”

As Cecilia and I sat near a grassy hillside, she told me about her difficult transition to college.

At the end of my freshman year I had Cs and Ds. I was barely, barely on the borderline of being on probation. I was like, if I go on probation I am dropping out because I was so embarrassed. What will my family do? What will my friends think? *Oh Cecilia, you couldn’t handle Urban!* I remember staying up late at night and crying in bed. It’s just that feeling like I didn’t want people to know that I am a failure. I have never failed before you know, so it was hard (112310, p. 14).

Cecilia pulled her sleeves down and wiped her eyes, “I just couldn’t tell anyone. I knew if I did, I would start crying and I didn’t want that.” She paused and continued, “This is the first time I’ve talked about it” (112310, p.15).

The solo nature of Cecilia’s educational journey has begun to subside. The study group was the beginning of a new community.

I am doing way better with them. Every time we get our midterms back, it’s “What you’d get, what’d you get “ and I’m not used to that. Before, I just stuff it in my backpack, ride BART and go home into my room, close the door and then look at it. But now it’s like “What did you get?” and I’m like “Uh I got a B” or an “A” and they say “Oh that’s good!” I feel that’s good for me. I guess that is a high point, actually having a study group, meeting new people, helping each other out (112310, p. 17).

Ethnic Studies was academically challenging for Cecilia. As a student who loved math, she constantly referred to writing as her biggest fear and felt challenged by the level of reading; nonetheless, Cecilia shared that she is “learning to manage” and “beginning to be good with writing.” In comparison to her math classes, in Ethnic Studies, Cecilia felt safe enough to take risks and was developing her confidence. “I am always doing the readings then I go to study group. I’m usually the one asking questions—to get help with what I don’t understand,” (112310, p. 16) Cecilia said. Inside her classes she also felt much more comfortable:

I am not one of the students who participates all the time but I’m listening to other people. Some people might say, “You’re just listening. You’re not really participating. You’re not bringing anything to the discussion” but in Ethnic Studies classes I feel that I can do that and don’t feel bad about it. I am listening. I am understanding what they are talking about and I am reflecting (112310, p. 19).

Cecilia's confidence is obvious in this quote. She freely dismisses any critique of the nature of her participation and self-validates her learning process. This is in clear contrast to the manner in which she talked about her math classes, which was filled with self-doubt. Strikingly, Cecilia began Math and Ethnic Studies with considerable academic struggle. However, in part, she attributed the ethnic diversity or lack of diversity to how she felt in class. In Math, she felt alienated and alone; she was one of a few. In Ethnic Studies, however, she connected with other students and was a part of a community of Latino student scholars. During our last interview, Cecilia shared her story of hesitantly checking her semester grades. After she saw her straight As—the first time she got straight As in college—she knew she had to share the proud news with her parents “and thank my study group. Like, you guys, I could not have done this without you. Thank you so much!”

From Cecilia's story we learned how Ethnic Studies as a third space offered a refuge away from the academic and social displacement she was experiencing. In these classes, Cecilia realized many possibilities: the possibility of academic success the possibility of learning in community and the possibility of new friendships.

Third Spaces Outside of Academic Spaces

The students in this study also located third spaces outside of academic spaces such as internships, clubs, or jobs. What was common across these student experiences was the ways in which they took various activities to engender meaning for their own

purposes, struggles, and dreams for the future. For each student, this act of agency looked very different; therefore in the sections below I present student stories individually.

Teresa: Third spaces for negotiating immigration status.

For Teresa, structured activities provided the opportunity to find strength in her identity as an undocumented student. Power Through Knowledge, a recently formed student group, was an important activity of Teresa's. The group fundraised to gift scholarships to high school seniors and community college transfer students who would attend Pacific. For Teresa, the importance of Power Through Knowledge is "just knowing that you're being part of the process that is going to give money. You're putting time and effort to raise that money and to just like give somebody that extra opportunity--especially financially" (112310, p. 3). Although Power Through Knowledge does not focus on scholarships for AB 540 students, Teresa saw this as her opportunity for influence, "I want to be in that position where I could help somebody that was in my situation. That I can be that – that extra voice that can help him or her get extra financial help. Because there's like a lot of people that, even though they support AB540 students, they don't really know how – like, what it feels to be an AB540 and what it takes you to go to school" (112310, p. 3).

Teresa also saw important opportunities to share her undocumented status with other students. "It's a part of who I am so I want to share that. I also just want to

educate others so they know more about AB 540 students. People get shocked when they find out. They have a lot of questions” (112310, p. 17). Teresa was careful about who she shared her status with but felt that it was an important step to help humanize AB 540 students.

Teresa also talked about her participation in IDEAS, a student group that supports undocumented students. For Teresa, IDEAS helped her stay grounded in her identity as an AB 540 student.

I feel that it makes me like realize who I am because sometimes--- especially being here – we can forget that. You feel like you just want to be a normal kid. That life is perfect. You know, I feel like that's what Pacific wants you to think. But if I say I'm involved in IDEAS, it brings you back to earth and tells you, you know, like this is your status, this is your situation, so don't forget where you're coming from. Just being a part of IDEAS makes me remember who I am and what's my purpose here at school because sometimes we forget who we are (112310, p. 2).

Teresa shared that to survive “especially in a majority white school”, she felt the pressure to be the best and to act as if she had no challenges. “You don't want [white students] to be like, ‘Oh you're less than me.’ That's why you always have to put up that shield that will protect you and sometimes that shield can keep you away from your origins which is the thing that brought you here” (112310, p. 2). For Teresa, activities played an important role in helping her stay actively engaged in her identity as an undocumented student which she contributed to being her “drive and motivator” to finish school.

Orlando: Art as third space.

For Orlando, organized activities mostly seemed to fall short of his expectations. He found the greatest pride and meaning in work and projects he did on his own or with his friends. However, Orlando's involvement in STAMP, his campus' social protest theater group was also an important space.

STAMP, which is predominantly comprised of white students, is a newer theater group that, according to Orlando, does work is "politically charged" and "has substance." Orlando shared that this is why he was drawn to STAMP. "I feel like the words that I say have meaning to them. The plays or the ideas at STAMP go along with my own view of a play should be. A play should be active. It should be about a real topic that's tied to our times or should help us understand something about American society" (100210, p. 9). Orlando's work with STAMP included a project called The Real Theater, which staged same-sex marriage proposals in public spaces. "I felt really awkward, certainly awkward. I stood up in a coffee shop and I was like, 'Okay. There is this special somebody in here and I really want to tell that I love this person. I want you to come up here.' I got on one knee and asked 'Will you marry me' that kind of thing. And then people clapped and at the end we give our spiel for No on Proposition 8" (100210, p. 10). Other projects with STAMP included an online mental health project where students wrote anonymous posts about their experiences with mental illness and

another was an interactive activity, which raised awareness on abortion rights for minors.

Orlando described STAMP as a “good group of people” but strictly as a “working relationship” and a “network” of artists. When I asked Orlando why he did not see STAMP as a place to make friends, he attributed this to joining STAMP at a time when he was unsure of himself. He said, “I did put up this wall on my social side because I really want to get the work done. But, yeah, some of the personalities too, it just didn’t click well because they were more outspoken– not more radical but they really did wear their politics on their sleeve” (100210, p. 10). He described political discussions at STAMP as “long,” “advanced,” and “well-reasoned.” While Orlando’s political beliefs are strongly influenced by his own lived experience “as a person of color and coming from a poor background” when he first joined STAMP he was also conscious of the privilege he “lacked” based on this identity. Orlando felt that the other students had a long history of debating and articulating their political views, something that he had not experienced in high school. Therefore, he “was hesitant to share because [he] didn’t know how to communicate with them in their language” (email communication, 030111).

Although STAMP was not an opportunity for Orlando to build a strong social network, he was set on using it to build his professional network. Early on, Orlando became aware of the importance that networking played at Palisades. When he would

hear other students share news of impressive opportunities he would wonder, “Wow, what kind of connections do you have to get that type of an internship? Like who does your dad know?” (100210, p. 14). So, while STAMP presented the opportunity to engage in art in a meaningful manner for Orlando, he also seized the opportunity to build his own network. Therefore, while Orlando’s individual artistic projects were where he put most of his energy, he anticipated the STAMP network would be important for him to actualize his art in public spaces. As his undergraduate experience at Palisades neared an end, Orlando prepared for a stage reading of his play *Desajie* and drew upon his STAMP colleagues for support of the event.

Cecilia: Tutoring as third space.

For Cecilia, the experience with commuting combined with the need to work limited her opportunities to be involved with campus activities. However, Cecilia extended the social capital she had built in high school into opportunities during college. In high school, she participated in a small college prep program, which was established for the Richdale soccer team. Her junior and senior year of high school, Cecilia also volunteered for the school’s AVID program. After high school AVID and Aspire staff invited Cecilia to work as a tutor at RHS. These opportunities allowed her to earn money for her commute and school expenses. It also gave her an important sense of responsibility. Students often asked Cecilia about college and how they could be better prepared. Many, including her brother, saw her as a “role model.” “I just love

going back to Richdale High because that's where I went to high school. I already knew some of the kids and also my brother was in the AVID class. So, just me trying to help them out in their homework problems and their math, especially math felt good” (091410, p. 5).

Although Cecilia did not feel successful in her math classes, tutoring at Richdale allowed her to continue to cultivate her love of math and draw upon aspirational capital to maintain her dreams of becoming a teacher. “That's when this urge of me becoming a teacher started. I enjoy teaching them, like actually giving them lessons and trying to get them to engage into the material. And I feel like they actually learn things from me, right? I felt proud of that” (092410, p. 1). For Cecilia, it was the geographical space furthest away from her college that she found the strongest sense of confidence and could develop her drive and passion for teaching.

Adam: Environmental activism as third space.

As described earlier, Adam found a sense of affirmation and belonging the Hermanos student group, however, Adam’s greatest involvement was in his activities that took place off campus. Like Cecilia, Adam also continued to build upon his social capital from high school. This allowed him to sustain a sense of purpose and action while he was in college.

Adam ended his senior year of high school on an extreme high. He had joined the Climate Champions and returning from his first two international trips. When

college began, Adam particularly anticipated joining environmental student groups. Once he arrived on campus, however, the stark difference between him and students involved these environmental student groups made him feel he it was not a “fit.” Instead, Adam continued to cultivate his involvement in environmental activism outside of the Urban community. I once did a quick internet search of Adam’s name and realized how disconnected his environmental work was from his identity as an Urban student. I found Adam’s name on page after page of articles, blogs, videos, and speaker’s lists for national conferences. About half is content that he has self-published and the other half is stories or interviews about him from variety of news sources. Urban is only referenced as the college that Adam attends.

In Adam’s senior year of high school, he became involved in his local chapter of the Young Planner’s Network, which seeks to include youth in the urban planning process through educational engagement and advocacy. The following year, as a freshman in college, Adam took the opportunity to intern with his chapter’s YPN taking the lead role in organizing its annual conference for over 200 people. He described this as one of his highlights in college, “There were kids from all over the country [who attended]. That was a really amazing moment for me because I worked hard for it and I saw it happen. These kids from New Orleans, after the conference they started a community garden. That made me happy that I can make an impact” (110910, p. 10). Currently, Adam is involved with YPN on the national level, participating on the

steering committee, which is focusing on fund development and organizational stability for YPN.

Adam continued to seize opportunities to pursue his interest in environmental justice. Last summer, Adam interned for Green For All, which he learned about from YPN. Green for All is a national NGO which focuses on “building an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty” [website]. As the online intern Adam was responsible for creating and maintaining online content on blogs and social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. He saw this as an important opportunity to build his skills “to learn how to communicate to get a message across to a lot of people” (092110, p. 6).

Rather than forcing himself to be in the unwelcoming space of Urban’s student groups or ceasing his involvement in environmental activism, Adam built upon his previously existing connections to create opportunities for himself. Again, like Cecilia, Adam was able to find meaning and value outside of the university. It was outside the boundaries of Urban that Adam was able to continue to cultivate his sense of purpose of environmental justice.

Education as Third Space

As students shared their stories with me, I was struck by the intricate approach students took to think about their courses of study. The students saw their education as a potential lever for positioning themselves after college. Although they had many

educational experiences in college that were dehumanizing, they still perceived their degree to be key in reaching their personal, political, and professional endeavors. The manner in which students thought about their course of study positioned their academic journey as a third space—a mode of articulation in which their course of study could help resolve the contradictory and binary nature of education as oppressive and education as liberatory.

All of the students shared that their experience growing up in Richdale in low-income immigrant families and as the first-generation to go to college gave them a greater sense of purpose in college. As first-generation college students, they felt the “responsibility” as well as “burden” to make “things happen and make things better for the family.” The students saw their time in college as immediately impacting their individual future as well as the future of their families. Unlike many of their peers, the students recognized that “they could not fall back on their parents” after college. They saw their major as having an important influence on what opportunities would be available to them after college. As a result, they put a great deal of thought and intention in choosing their academic majors so that they could better position their future.

In this section I outline how students chose their courses of study while considering the context of the dominant white society, the expectations of their parents, and also their personal dreams to demonstrate the ways in which students blurred the limitations and boundaries across these realities.

Negotiating whiteness.

The experiences with racism and racial microaggressions in college left a strong impression—they referred to their experience with race in college as “a reality check” and “the real world.” The students knew that it was likely that after college they would enter into workplaces that were predominantly white spaces. Therefore, students strategized on what would hold weight in these white spaces.

Teresa shared that she wanted to take Spanish classes to improve her language skills. She was compelled to take it as a minor as she felt it was important to study Spanish in a formal academic setting in order to legitimize her Spanish skills to future employers,

If they ask me, “Oh, do you speak another language?” I want to be able to say, “Yes. I speak another language and also I have a degree that says that I’m proficient.” So, it’s kind of like a backup just because I feel like sometimes speaking another language, that’s not enough. Like, in job they want to see what type of degree or certificate you have especially for a language like Spanish. It shows that you really know it” (112310, p. 16).

All of the students mentioned the “hidden rules and markers,” “norms,” and “expectations” differed between Richdale and their universities, which to them represented “real life.” They had difficulty explaining these rules but one that was easily identified was that others felt threatened by the topic of race. They used this to inform how they thought about their course of study. For example, Orlando remembered that when he chose his major sophomore year, he felt very unsure of himself. It was at this time that had heightened sensitivity around the racial and economic privilege of his

peers. He wanted to choose Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity (CSRE) as his major but his sophomore year chose Urban Studies because he felt it would be better accepted. “Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, that sounds so confrontational,” (100211, p. 12) Orlando said. He noted that at the time he thought it could result in diminishing his future opportunities as studying race could make people uncomfortable. He took comfort in knowing that CSRE and Urban Studies courses were cross-listed. For Cecilia, although did not shy away from studying race, she shared that she thought Ethnic Studies, rather than Chicano Studies, would be more attractive to future employers because it cut across ethnic groups and showed that she was not “in a bubble.”

The students’ logic in considering the impact of whiteness on their lives is revealing. They showed awareness that they are on the outside of a society that privileges whiteness and strategized to gain access and legitimacy in this world. In a way, the students’ strategies uphold whiteness because they do not directly challenge the dominant structure. However, they simultaneously rupture the structure by positioning themselves so that they can access these resources.

Making meaning for family.

On top of negotiating the reality of the dominant white culture they would soon be working in, the students also had to navigate the expectations of their parents. As

children of janitors, day laborers, bus drivers, and other low-wage workers the students were aware that their degree represented a potential turning point for their families.

The participants described difficulty in communicating the nature of their academic interests to their parents. Teresa remembered that her dad laughed when she considered majoring in Chicano Studies, "He would say 'Oh CHI-CA-NO Studies', like it was funny or something" (112310, p. 11). Both Orlando and Adam did not know how to explain their majors to their parents. They found it easier to tell their parents that they were learning to become city planners. Although neither student considered this their path, they thought it would be the simplest way for their parents to grasp what they were studying.

In addition to having to explain their majors, there was also a considerable focus on financial stability. Participants felt that their parents were interested in their major as it related to a career path that would "make a lot of money." For Cecilia this pressure seemed particularly strong. Her dad wanted her to study Political Science and become a lawyer. "My dad's dream is . . . to live over there like relaxing in Mexico. So he actually wants me to get a good job, a really good job so I could send him money every month. As a teacher, I'm not going to be making that much money. And so – I don't know. So they're like, 'Why do you want to be a teacher?'" (091410, p. 16). Cecilia was the only student who mentioned this level of pressure. The other parents, including Cecilia's mother told their children that they wanted to make sure that the participants did not

“have it rough” or “live hard.” All participants felt that their parents’ most frequent and pressing question, “Can you get a good job and make a lot of money with that major?” (Teresa, 011011, p. 6) was due to “being immigrants and struggling their whole lives ” (Adam, 010511, p. 14).

The participants were also concerned with financial stability as they wanted to be able to support their parents. Participants had big dreams of how they could support their parents—ranging from taking care of parent’s uninsured medical needs, saving money so that their parents could retire, buying a home, to taking their parents on vacation around the world and also back to their home countries-- a luxury that many had never experienced. As college students, however, they had been exposed to a greater variety of majors, careers and possibilities. Because the parents did not share this reference point, they continued to bring up lawyers, doctors, and business people as the ideal careers. The participants wanted to “love [their] job” and “do something that matters” – which for three of them did not included the three parent-sanctioned professions. Although it was difficult to go against their parents’ wishes, the students took comfort in knowing that “no matter what, I will take care of them.”

Making meaning for self.

In addition to considering what would hold weight in dominant society as well as what would please their parents, the students felt strongly that their studies should meet their personal needs and interests. For these students, the personal drive behind

their area of study was deeply influenced by their lived experiences. It also included a resistance orientation in which students saw the content knowledge of their major as a possible lever for resisting social oppression.

For example, Teresa vacillated between Chicano Studies and Political Science, most recently, she settled on majoring in Political Science.

Chicano Studies is like the liberal view of what's going on and Poli Sci I think is the conservative view. For me, I need to know both sides, you know? Poli Sci is something I always want to learn. I want to know how the government is structured and how they think so you can work with the system -- not let the system work you. So just learning how you can talk their language makes me want to change to Poli Sci. Like how am I going to use that to get what I want? (091410, p. 6).

And while Teresa hoped a Spanish minor could open up job opportunities, she also noted the personal importance for the course of study. She shared that her younger brothers were quickly losing their Spanish. As she thought about life after college and the possibility of gaining her residency, she considered teaching Spanish.

I know that there is a lot of stuff around ELD kids and teaching kids to speak English, but I want to teach kids of immigrants how to read and write in Spanish. I want to teach the children, sons and daughters of Latinos so they don't forget where they're coming from. I know this goes against people teaching English only, but I feel like it's necessary. . . Reading and writing is important because you can't connect with your people. They're losing that communication with their parents and parents are kind of losing their communication with their children (091410, p. 8).

Cecilia shared that Ethnic Studies allowed her multiple benefits. The first was the "eye-opening" experience of learning about the history of Chicanos and understanding "why things are the way they are now." Also, Cecilia felt that growing up

in a predominantly Latino community made her unprepared for the ethnic diversity of Urban. Ethnic Studies presented the opportunity to “learn the similar histories of blacks, Asians, and Latinos” in a multi-ethnic setting.

For Adam, the personal relevance of his major stemmed from his own experience living in a community with many oil refineries. “The type of environmentalism that I can associate myself with comes from the perspective of the poor and lower income citizens that live in neighborhoods that have environmental threats affecting their health. If you live sustainability it’s better for the environment but also for the community itself, the people. Like if the factories weren’t here in Richdale, we would live in a better community” (010511, p. 11).

Although Orlando wished he had chosen CSRE as his major, many of the classes in his major and CSRE were cross-listed. He also found other ways to make his major personally meaningful.

I was learning through Richdale. I would remember all – all of the places I saw in Richdale and I was always wondering like, I mean, like how could a neighborhood get so bad; like how could it go all so down hill? And Urban Studies really has provided the background or like the facts for like what happened and like in cities across the U.S.

Orlando shared that he was especially impacted by a class on public service where he realized that he had “providing or fixing” rather than looking at systemic issues. “I realized that what happens in Richdale is one instance of a larger systematic and very intentional issue” (100210, p. 11). Orlando’s senior project for Urban Studies drew

together his interest in art, race, and culture. He studied the public arts-based revitalization efforts in downtown Richdale and its implications on creating a public narrative on race in Richdale. Most recently, he secured a grant from his university to produce a documentary on the topic.

Summary

In educational research, the creation of third spaces is idealized. It is in these spaces that students who have been systemically disadvantaged thrive (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2009; Gutierrez, et al., 1999; Moje, et al., 2004; Owens, 2005) through the challenging hegemonic practices (Bhabha, 1994). I found that Ethnic Studies was the sole institutional space that students referred to as the third space. In comparison to the forms of racial displacement students experienced in many campus spaces, Ethnic Studies engendered the possibility (Bhabha, 1994) that Latinas/Latinos *did* belong on campus and that issues of race could be talked about on campus. Despite the lack of institutional third spaces and experiences with displacement in many forms of student life, the participants created their own third spaces. These third spaces looked different across the participants: Adam and Cecilia used their social capital from Richdale to create third spaces off campus where they could cultivate their professional interests; Teresa and Orlando found ways to connect personal dreams to student groups. Students talked about their major or course of study as a third space—they connected their academic interest across multiple realities: that of the dominant culture, their parents

expectations, and also the participant's own values and dreams. The realities of these demands can be contradictory but students demonstrated that they had found ways to resolve these three needs. In sum, participants were able to move beyond the restrictive forms of cultural meaning that contributed to displacement by finding and creating third spaces that enabled a sense of inclusion, possibility and resistance in students.

Looking Toward the Future

The students clearly saw college as only one stop at the beginning of their future. In this section I provide a brief glimpse into what the students want for their future.

Teresa

As Teresa thought about her life after college, much of it rested on her immigration status. She hesitated at the prospect of going to graduate school, as it would mean she would have to fundraise the entire cost of tuition. As an undocumented person, perspective employers are legally prohibited from hiring her. Therefore, "fixing" her immigration status is her most immediate concern. She hoped for passage of the federal DREAM Act which would make students like her eligible for legal residency. But Teresa also must also consider the possibility of it not passing.

After [college] I was thinking maybe I can make connections back with a big corporation or a business in Mexico and try to like – I know it sounds bad -- but it's just get a lot of money and try to come to U.S. legally and try to help fight the system and help those people that are trying to like – to pursue like something higher or to like – to reach at their goals. And if not, I'll definitely do the other way that people do it. Just like to get to married? With a friend? That's

the other solution. And from there try to get my parents their residency so that they can go visit their family and to see the land where they were born and the land that they left for a better future (112310, p. 10).

Teresa continued to be the “strong girl” and “the optimist.” She hoped that some day she will be able to work in advocacy or legal services for Latina/Latino immigrants or perhaps teach Spanish to children of immigrants. In the short term, Teresa recently applied for a summer internship with United We Dream, a national immigrant youth-led organization with the missions to achieve equal access to higher education for all people, regardless of immigration status.

Adam

When I asked Adam about his future he had an endless list of possibilities. When he was a college freshman, Adam saw himself starting a non-profit environmental justice organization. Now, three years later he sees himself working his way through a large and established organization such as Green for All. More recently, he has been motivated to consider graduate school as he has seen other students of color “be really successful” in school. In a journal entry, Adam wrote that he would study “how to change cities in order to more sustainable and equitable. The two are linked. The environmental justice movement is developed from the Civil Rights Movement as a way to create rights for people of color- at its core it’s to create environmental sustainability so that poor people and people of color-- we can live in healthfully and not bear the burden of pollution and climate change.” Adam perceived

his future to be open and full of possibility, “There’s so many ways that I can see myself going but I’m not sure which way I’ll go or maybe I’ll be the mayor of Richdale! There hasn’t been a homegrown mayor and that would be really nice” (010511, p. 10).

Cecilia

As her junior year neared its close, Cecilia looked forward to her last year at Urban doing the things she couldn’t do in her first three years. For the first time, Cecilia applied for financial aid. After she submitted her first FAFSA form, she sent me a Facebook message that read, “I got \$13000 in grants. Is that really my money?!” She hoped to live near campus so she could easily hang out with her friends and attend campus events. Cecilia also wanted to find opportunities to work with younger students as she was trying to discern if she would teach younger students or older students. Regardless of the age, she said that she wants to be a teacher who treats students “fairly and like they are important.” When Cecilia reflected upon her time in high school she realized that she was tracked and that she saw the “same people over and over again.” She realized that as an AP and Honors student she had benefited from tracking. “It’s very unfair because I feel like there are so many other students that are way smarter and they didn’t have the opportunity that I have to go in to AP classes and having those really great teachers that actually care about your education and pushes you to, ‘Oh, apply to college, get into college’” (121510, p. 17). Cecilia wanted to become to the

teacher that sees potential in all students. She continued, “I want to treat students equally. Well, not that I am going to treat them all the same way, but that they are all important. Some students are going to have more needs than others so I have to help those students more and give them the same opportunities as everybody else” (121510, p. 18). Here, Teresa clarified the difference between an equal educational system and an equitable educational system.

Orlando

When Orlando shared his hopes for his future he said, “I just really want to be happy. I hope in a few years I am out to my family and they will accept it or understand it. I won’t have to like hide it anymore” (122610, p. 19). As graduation neared he looked at opportunities outside California. As a high school student, Orlando thought he would return to Richdale. After coming to Palisades he realized that there are many communities like Richdale—to Orlando this showed first that he could move away but still work in communities with great need and second also that there is a “larger systemic need-- systemic issues that need to be addressed” (122619, p. 15). Orlando wondered how he to leverage his networks from Palisades to draw attention and increase resources in communities like Richdale,

By coming to Palisades, I was entering a dominant society I realized that in some ways I am also a part of this space too now, this white mainstream society that has a lot of resources and privilege. I’m learning some of the know how of how to break through, how things play out, so that I can use these resources and bring them over to [communities like Richdale] (110710, p. 12).

Currently, Orlando is waiting to hear back from several public policy fellowship opportunities in Washington DC that have a focus on the Latino community. He shared that self-doubt still lingers but that he is much more assertive, "I'm seeing the example of others and how much they're doing with their Palisades affiliation. I feel like I should do the same thing too, like big things that I never thought about for myself in high school-- prestigious internships or fellowships. And now I'm like shit I shouldn't hold myself back either. If they can do it, I can do it too" (110710, p. 13).

For the summer he is looking at several internship opportunities with Latino LGBTQ legal organizations that work with farm workers and recent immigrants. Orlando is unsure of what his career will be but is confident that he will also be continuing his art so that he can share the "stories of where I come from, my community, my story, my family, the bigger story of race and class" (100210, p. 11).

Summary

When I began this study I hoped to understand how FGC students of color experienced and negotiated four-year colleges. I started by first investigating the challenges that students experienced in college. Literature on the experiences of FGC students and students of color gave me insight into types of academic and social challenges the students could experience. From this, I was able to identify not only the challenges but also the nature and impact of these challenges. The concept of displacement helped me give language to the process and effect on students. These

“challenges” were a direct result of the change in space between home and school and the change of Discourse and values that followed. This resulted in struggle and disorientation as students experienced being repositioning in the larger social landscape. The displacement experienced at home, particularly when students returned home as changed individuals, further complicated this concept and challenges the one-directional perception of power and privilege.

The displacement that students experienced happened outside and absent of third spaces. Third spaces are spaces that challenge the dominant master narratives that exist in school, in politics, and even home. I found that for these students, third spaces that were also institutional spaces were few and far between. Instead, students mostly created their own third spaces by adding intention and meaning to student activities and courses of study. Regardless of whether spaces were institutionalized or self-created, these spaces allowed students to resist the subordinate social positioning they experienced in displacement.

Finally, foregrounding the stories of Teresa, Orlando, Cecilia, and Adam also challenged me to hear the multiple ways in which they moved through college. These students are first-generation college students and students of color, Latino and Latina students. They also bring with them other identities including daughters and sons of immigrants and also for some, immigrants themselves. In addition, the students’ college experience was heavily influenced by other identities they carried, particularly as

undocumented people and as queer people. As a result, the complexity of their experience as college students forces us to consider the multiple ways in which students are vulnerable due to politics and policies that institutionalize multiple forms of oppression and inform individual perceptions and practices of domination.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

In this last chapter I will summarize and synthesize my findings. I will first provide an overview of my research questions and methodology. I will then present the major findings of this study, which will be followed by a discussion of the implications and recommendations for action and further study. Finally, I conclude by offering reflections on this research process.

Overview

I began this study with an interest in two primary questions: (a) How do first-generation students of color describe and negotiate academic and social challenges in four-year colleges? (b) What role does transformational resistance play in the persistence of FGC students of color? I hoped that answering the first question would help fill a gap in the limited research that investigates the intersection of first-generation college status and student of color status. I asked the second question to build upon the theoretical concept of transformational resistance. I wanted to understand how students maintained transformational resistance in college and what experiences and opportunities contributed to this. The general impetus for this study was also influenced by my own experience as an FGC student of color and also my professional experience in working in pre-college programs that targeted first-generation college students who were mostly students of color. I used critical race theory (CRT) to guide my

phenomenological approach to this study, which helped me understand the subjective experiences of the student participants.

I began by identifying four students whom I believed to be engaged in transformational resistance. I have known Teresa, Orlando, Cecilia, and Adam between five to seven years. The students were interviewed individually three times over the course of three to four months. Our interviews averaged two hours, which paired with our personal relationship allowed for in-depth conversations and produced rich data. I triangulated interview data with my personal field notes as well as additional data provided by students such as journals, academic work, and Survival Letters. After our interviews concluded, the students and I kept in touch by phone, e-mail, and social networking websites.

For data analysis I heavily used writing and reflective memos as a form of analysis. I shared data memos with my advisor and two colleagues. My colleagues also read approximately half of my data and wrote memos as well. I also coded data for topics and themes and used constant comparison to analyze transcripts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). For analysis, I also used two forms of member checking which included sharing data memos and verbally sharing emerging findings.

Interpretation of Findings

The critical race counterstories of Cecilia, Teresa, Adam, and Orlando reflect the complexity of how intersections of race and other social identities and locations impact students' experiences with oppression and resistance in higher education. I will first review and build upon my initial findings that answer the first question. How do first-generation students of color describe and negotiate academic and social challenges in four-year colleges? I will then discuss my findings around my second question, What role does transformational resistance play in the persistence of FGC students of color? *How do first-generation students of color describe and negotiate academic and social challenges in four-year colleges?*

The ways in which students described the challenges of college were consistent with other literature about FGC students and students of color. The students in this study spoke clearly about struggling with lower levels of academic preparedness, which has also been noted in studies related to FGC students and students of color (Chen & Carroll, 2005; Choy, 2001; Fine, et al., 2004). They also talked about being less involved on campus, which has been noted in FGC student research (Pascarella, et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005). The students in this study had some common experiences with ongoing racial discrimination, which was in accordance with previous research (Cabrera, et al., 1999; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

Students experienced academic unpreparedness paired with racial isolation both in and out of the classroom, which was very damaging. I also got a sense of the stress and anxiety students experienced which has been noted for both FGC students (Wang & Castañeda-Sound, 2008) and Asian and Latino students (Hwang & Goto, 2009) . Generally, research has linked FGC status or under-represented minority status and academic unpreparedness to stress. However, these student stories suggested a more complicated relationship in which lower levels of academic preparedness paired with the implication that one's academic success in college will impact the wellness of the family also contributes to levels of anxiety and stress.

Using displacement as an analytical tool forced me to look at the larger context of the participant experiences to understand the intersection of FGC and student of color status. On the surface, participant challenges with academics may seem like standard FGC challenges of being less prepared or having difficulty decoding academic expectations. If we look within the full context of their experiences it is evident that these challenges were greatly amplified by their racially and economically determined educational experiences at Richdale High School.

The experiences with racial microaggressions and for some students microaggressions based on sexual orientation or immigration status were exacerbated by the difference in Discourse that resulted from the change of space between home and school. For example, it not just that these students experienced racial microaggressions

on campus both in academic spaces and student life, but that the move from a predominantly Latino community to one where Latinos were a minority, resulted in the students experiencing race as a liability for the first time. The struggle and disorientation that students experienced was not simply a case of college transition and adjustment but rather one of grappling with being repositioning in the larger social landscape.

I also saw multiple interplays between family and displacement. On one hand, through incredible uses of community cultural wealth, families helped mitigate many forms of displacement. On the other hand, students also experienced displacement at home. In some ways the role of the participants had changed, they were no longer immediate providers or protectors due to the constraints of being away at school.

Additionally, although the role of race came out very strongly in participant counterstories, I often noticed when I asked students questions explicitly about race such a common response was a shrug followed by comments like, “I don’t really think about it too much” or “I guess I don’t see it as an advantage or a disadvantage.” Cecilia and Teresa would continue this answer with a response that indicated immigration status was what consistently occupied their mind. Orlando explicitly said he thought much more about socio-economic class. On the surface this suggested that race and racism had little impact on students. But when I asked them to speak about their

academic and social experiences on campus, all of them told stories in which race was salient.

Students also showed great caution when talking about race. In interviews with three of the students, when we were in relatively public spaces they would whisper the words “white people” or refer to “Caucasians.” In comparison, in private spaces, journals, and emails they freely said or wrote “white people” or “white students.” When I asked students about this they had similar responses around how people are sensitive about race. For me, the contradiction that existed in the student interviews is important for two reasons. First, the contradiction, particularly the whispers, compels me to consider the coercive nature of colorblind discourse and race-blind politics that affectively silences public dialogues around race. This is perpetuated by the experience of racelessness that students described on their campus. Second, it drew attention to the importance of intersectionality and forced me to consider again the context of social spaces and how multiple social identities are highly threatened and marginalized in education.

While students experienced displacement, they also found ways to navigate through this and find a sense of place, grounding, and purpose in third spaces. A notable third space for the students was Ethnic Studies, which provided a sense of community and safety for these students as well as a space that cultivated their intellectual

curiosities. Although Ethnic Studies played a very important role in the experiences of these students, it was the only third space on campus that all four participants identified.

Despite the absence of institutional third spaces, students were able to create their own third spaces by drawing from many forms of community cultural wealth. We saw this in multiple ways including Teresa and Cecilia's mothers use of social, resistance, and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) by providing financial support for tuition and fees; Adam and Cecilia's use of social capital to find internships and jobs; and all of the students use of navigational capital to move through college despite the institutional constraints they faced.

Their participation in this research also appeared to be a third space. At our final interview, I asked them how, if at all, these interviews impacted them. Without fail all students shared that they looked forward to our interviews. Students described our interviews as a "really positive benefit, a "relief" and an opportunity to "put it out there" or "just get it all out." Three of the students told me stories that they had never shared with anyone-- I saw visible relief on their faces after they shared. Two students also said that since the first interview, they found themselves more willing to share with their family and friends. While the students felt that this year was their "busiest", the interviews "helped break the rhythm of going and going" and provided a chance to "decompress." Cecilia especially enjoyed the journals saying it gave her a space to get more comfortable with writing outside of class and that it forced her to reflect on what

was going on around her. All students also referred to the benefit of the interviews as being similar to “seeing a psychiatrist” or “therapist.” In fact, immediately, after our first interview, one of the students began seeing a therapist, saying, “After talking to you, I realized that I need to talk to someone.” I saw parallels between the ways students talked about our interviews and the ways that Orlando and Teresa talked about their Chicano theater classes—both spaces gave students the opportunity to reflect and focus on issues that were important to them.

By examining the intersection of participants’ experience as FGC students and Latina/Latino students, I saw how students experienced college as a repositioning in the larger social landscape. The challenges they faced as FGC students were compounded by the racially discriminatory educational practices that impact Latina/Latino students in K-12 and higher education. For example, their academic preparedness was distinctly tied to systemically limited educational opportunities for students of color which exist at the K12 level. This exacerbated the difficulties of FGC students and was further compounded by experiences of being minoritized both in academic and social spaces. Being positioned in a larger social landscape also resulted in a greater sense of responsibility to do well in school. As FGC students and low-income students this could translate into a better life for their family. As Latinas/Latinos on campuses where they were underrepresented, the students hoped that their academic success would affirm their presence and the presence of other Latinas/Latinos on campus.

What role does transformational resistance play in the persistence of FGC students of color?

One of the original intents of this study was to deepen my understanding of the role of transformational resistance among FGC students of color by answering the question, what role does transformational resistance play in the persistence of FGC students of color? My findings do not answer the original question but still build upon the concept of transformational resistance by revealing different dimensions of transformational resistance.

Transformational resistance has been defined as “behavior that illustrates both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice. In other words, the student holds some level of awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination and must be at least somewhat motivated by a sense of social justice” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 319) and as acts in which “individuals work to move themselves and their communities away from sites of oppression” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 194). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) described two forms of transformational resistance, external and internal. External resistance is conspicuous and overt behavior, which does not conform to institutional norms and expectations. On the other hand, internal resistance is subtle or even silent and may appear to “conform with institutional or cultural norms and expectations, but is consciously engaged in a critique of exploitation or domination” (p. 324). An example of internal resistance was a

student who was motivated to go to school to use the tools that she learned to work towards social justice (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Delgado Bernal (1997) noted that there was little written about forms in internal resistance but that it was important to not overlook or ignore its power. The students in this study engaged in both forms of transformational resistance, but in college, predominantly engaged in internal transformational resistance.

Examples of transformational resistance.

I saw that in comparison to who they were in high school, the participants use of external resistance decreased while their internal resistance remained-- to varying degrees students demonstrated that they had a critique of multiple forms of social oppression and were also motivated by social justice. The critiques of social oppression and thus the forms of social justice that students concerned themselves with differed. For Cecilia, it was a critique of the educational system. She had an awareness of how she had benefited from tracking and wanted to become a teacher to provide opportunities for all students. For Adam, it was a critique of environmental racism. His experience living in Richdale and seeing the how “nobody cares if you pollute in poor communities and communities of color” (092110, p. 4) led to him to become involved in environmental justice. Teresa’s critique of social oppression focused on the oppression of undocumented people. She continued to be involved in actions around the DREAM Act and hoped in the future she would be able to work on immigration policy.

I also saw that Teresa was critical of English-only paradigms and thus was motivated to continue to build both her and her younger brothers' Spanish skills. Orlando possessed a critique of the silencing and absence of stories of communities of color, poor people, and immigrants. From an artistic standpoint he wished to create visibility about these experiences of those on the margins. In the short term as he looked at fellowships, he hoped to find opportunities in public policy to learn more about "how to make change on a larger scale" (110710, p. 12).

The students engaged in many small acts of social justice including but not limited to Orlando's public art, Teresa educating her peers on the experiences of AB 540 students, Adam's work with YPN, and Cecilia's continued tutoring at Richdale High. Collectively, they shared their pursuit of higher education as an act of social justice that would position them to take care of their families, strengthen the Latino community, and also prepare them for their future careers.

Multi-faceted nature of resistance.

In Solórzano and Delgado Bernal's diagram of resistances, resistances are positioned within different quadrants across the axis of motivated by social justice and critique of social oppression. The authors referred to those who exhibit both qualities as enacting transformational resistance. I build upon the concepts of resistance by suggesting that acts of transformational resistance can also embody other forms of resistance. These ideas are not to critique the concept or use of expressions of

transformational resistance but to instead grow the conceptualization of transformational resistance.

First, I believe that transformational resistance can be enacted with forms of internalized oppression or forms of conformist resistance. Based on student counterstories, participants were continually engaged in their education, which in the case of these participants was an act of transformational resistance. While they showed varying levels of critique of social oppression, they were still vulnerable to enacting conformist resistance. For example, in struggles of displacement, they questioned whether or not they belonged or if they had earned their space on campus. And while these feelings were strong, they also demonstrated an awareness of how structural inequities impacted their academic readiness and confidence. They called out the “bullshit” of the low numbers of Latino students and were able to link their experiences with intimidation to the racial isolation they experienced. This awareness, however, did not eliminate the self-doubt or pressure students felt. In this case, participants engaged in their education as a means for various forms of social change but still struggled with signs of imposter syndrome, which could be considered a form of conformist resistance.

Second, I believe that expressions of resistance that target a single system of social oppression are limited as the absence of an intersectional approach may perpetuate the oppression of other social identities. For example, students of color who organize for more AP classes at their poorly funded school may be enacting external

transformational resistance along the lines of race or class but may also be enacting forms conformist resistance by not engaging critically with at the greater impact of tracking. Or people who organize across a feminist agenda but silence the different ways that gender is complicated by race or class enact both transformational resistance and other forms of resistance.

Several researchers have indicated that Latina/Latino college students tend to possess more altruistic goals than white students (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2009; Villalpando, 2003). Similarly, the students in this study also spoke clearly about the intentions to contribute to their families and communities. Particularly early on in college when experiences with displacement were much stronger, students had to establish short-term goals that would help them realize their longer term goals which also embodied transformational resistance. Sometimes these short-term goals appeared to conflict with participant goals of contributing to their family and community. When put in a greater context, however, these acts contributed to the possibility of larger acts of transformational resistance.

For example, Cecilia expressed enormous guilt over the times that she could not help her brother with school or college applications. This happened especially in the several semesters that Cecilia was on the brink of academic probation after getting Ds in several math classes. On one level this may look like individual achievement ideology--that she is only concerned about her well-being. Although Cecilia had a sense of pride

and stubbornness to prove to herself that she could do well in school, it was also much more than this. When I asked Cecilia about her choices she said, “I felt like I had no choice [but to focus on school]. Failing out of Urban would mean that I wasted all my family’s money. It would mean that I let everyone down, my family and my community—what would it be like to see someone from Richdale go to a school like Urban and you’re all excited and then that person comes back because they couldn’t do it? How would that make you feel?” (111210, p. 14). It was evident that for Cecilia, increasing her academic standing was imperative to fulfilling the role to “save” the family and the role model to her younger brother and students at Richdale High. Her career goal of becoming a teacher who would see and help realize the potential of all students was also linked to her need to persist in college.

In the example of Orlando’s perception of the “individual versus the collective,” the choice to create physical distance between him and his family suggested that “the individual” won out or was more important than “the collective.” However, upon closer examination and in our extensive talks about “the individual versus the collective” it was clear that the focus on the individual also worked in service of the collective. Throughout our interviews it became clear that Orlando felt that to be fully a son, brother, and Latino he also had to realize his “own self-worth. . . the worth of Latino boys like me” (122610, p. 26). He felt that he needed to leave Richdale and his family to be in a space that would help him strength his sense of self. Although it meant that he

would create physical distance between him and his family and not return to Richdale, it did not change his intentions to make visible the stories of his community or to engage in work that would better the conditions of low-income and Latino communities.

The interdependency between self and community was an incredible form of support-- both tangible and emotional. Students assigned a significant amount of motivation to the need to support their community. While it was a motivation, it was also a burden. The expectations to be the family “savior” or represent for the race weighed heavily on students-- Adam reflected on a difficult semester and wrote in a journal entry, “I feel like I have failed my mission in disproving stereotypes.”

The students shared with me these types of stories—stories in which internal transformational resistance was subtle or times when they had stumbled in their acts-- in an almost confessional style. They felt that they had let others down and they had strong feelings of guilt and anguish. This provides insight into another cost of transformational resistance. Brayboy (1999) found in his dissertation on the experiences of Native American Indian undergraduate students at an elite university that one of the costs of transformational resistance may include being targeted as a cultural outsider when coming home from college. To this I add another potential cost of transformational resistance, which may be the experiencing of guilt when not being able to do it all.

The findings on the multiple burdens of transformational resistance have important implications for CRT researchers and practitioners, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Limitations of Study

A major limitation of my study is that despite being conceptualized to understand the experiences of FGC students of color, my findings are based on the experiences of four FGC Latina/Latino students. This happened because it was important for me to do research with students I have close relationships with so that I could start my research with a sense of established trust and comfort. This was particularly important as studies that look at transformational resistance require a deep understanding of student motivation and values (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). The most feasible place for me to look was my prior experience as a pre-college counselor at Richdale High School which is 90% Latina/Latino. From this, I ended up with four research participants that were all Latina/Latino.

Although I identify the students in this study and myself as having a shared identity as people of color, I do not assume that this common identification can transcend race; nor can it give me an understanding of their particular experiences as Latinas and Latinos. I acknowledge that the racial domination of African Americans, Latinas/Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans is highly complex and nuanced (Sue, 2009; Sue, Bucci, et al., 2009; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue,

Capodilupo, Nadal, et al., 2008; Sue, Lin, et al., 2009). For example, the students spoke clearly about racial isolation. My own experiences with racial isolation as an undergraduate were few and far between. I went to a college that was 40% Asian American. I also chose to major in Asian American Studies. Therefore, while I experienced racial isolation in many spaces including school, I would not use it to describe my experience in higher education.

In the end, however, I chose to retain the phrase “students of color” with a focus on race because I believe that people of color have some common experiences with racial domination. These commonalities include an often silent but consistent assault on our communities that result in normalizing the experience of dehumanization. This is why I continue to frame the study within the context of students of color. I also ask the reader to use your own knowledge in delineating what parts of the student counterstories may hold true for many students of color and which may hold true for more so for Latinas/Latinos or even for children of immigrants.

Finally, it could be that my identity as Korean American woman interviewing Latina and Latino students led to student tendency to not speak directly and immediately to questions of race. As an Asian American woman, I am sensitive to the fact that my racial identity is often used in the larger social context as the Model Minority-- the people who “transcended racism” or even “outwhite the whites.” Even in educational research and reports, I often see charts that break out ethnic minority groups

but will then group together data on Asian and white students. Therefore, while I am certainly positioned as being an outsider to their Latina/Latino identity, there is a possibility that there were times when students positioned me as white and as an outsider to their identity as a person of color.

Implications & Recommendations

Resisting Racelessness

The counterstories of these students continue to highlight the importance of interrogating the role of race and racism in our society. Despite living in a minority-majority state and in a nation with its first non-white president, it is clear that students continue to experience the impact of both systemic and interpersonal racism. When we place the counterstories in this context we see the fallacy behind “colorblindness” and “post-racial” discourse.

Adam, Teresa, and Cecilia who attend public institutions were admitted under admissions processes that ignored their racial reality. From both conservative and neoliberal stances, these students were admitted under strict meritocratic measures. However, their stories clearly show us that before and during college they are competing in highly racist and classist field. Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn, and Arrona (2006) analyzed higher education policies and politics post-*Grutter* from a CRT perspective. In *Grutter*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld racial diversity as a compelling state interest and ruled that admissions decisions based on comprehensive review can

use race as one of many factors of consideration. The authors found that despite this ruling and the existence of diversity discourse from predominantly white selective campuses, institutions were not doing enough to take advantage of opportunities to affirm diversity. They concluded by proposing a broader conceptualization of affirmative action, which included the following:

(a) changing the material conditions of the lives of low-income persons and persons of color through a wide range of measures (e.g., affordable housing, better health care, job training and higher wages, etc.), (b) challenging conservative forces to “ante up” more resources and energy to eliminate racial inequities at the elementary and secondary school levels, and (c) proactively recruiting and retaining students and faculty of color and deal with the microaggressions that they face and the sometimes hostile racial climate documented by CRT researchers in higher education.

Their proposal for affirmative action forefronts a paradigm in which racial inequities in education is considered in both the immediate and larger social context.

Even in California, we must take a critical interpretation of the language in the state constitution that was added as a result of the passage of Proposition 209. The constitution now reads

The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.

The counterstories of the students clearly show us the state propagates discriminatory conditions in public education by way of de facto segregation. Policy makers, administrators, and practitioners at all levels must challenge our interpretation of the

law and also the law itself to create expansive ways in which we can protect the rights of marginalized communities, including but not limited to communities of color.

Visibilizing DREAMers

Teresa and Cecilia's counter-stories highlight the urgency of need for policies and actions at all levels that support undocumented students—or DREAMers. Teresa and Cecilia both benefited from California's AB 540 policy, however, this is not enough. The passage of the California Dream Act would grant AB 540 students access to institutional scholarships and state grants making college more affordable. The passage of the bi-partisan sponsored federal DREAM Act would provide a path to conditional citizenship for students like Teresa so that they could have the chance to utilize their education.

As we wait and advocate for these policies there is still much that we can do to support DREAMers. As researchers, we can continue to document the counterstories of DREAMers to help visibilize and thus normalize their experiences. Second, the reality of our institutions is that there will be both documented and undocumented students on our campuses. Therefore, a major action for institutions and educators is to normalize the experiences of DREAMers particularly to faculty and staff. Administrators and faculty can do so by being explicit and intentional in the inclusion of residency status in campus diversity policies and actions. These policies and actions should move toward eliminating the many forms of ignorance that exist about undocumented people. Faculty

and staff should work with AB 540 and undocumented student groups to inform staff trainings on how to be sensitive to students if they disclose their residency status. It is important to understand the reality of policies that can restrict opportunities for DREAMers but also be knowledgeable and learn from the creative ways in which undocumented students and communities have sustained themselves despite these restrictions.

Supporting Ethnic Studies

Another implication for this study is for administrators to look critically at the role and treatment of disciplines such as Ethnic Studies, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Chicano Studies. It is clear in this study that Ethnic Studies was an extremely important space; however it served as a lone counter-space in the institution. This draws great attention to the ghettoization of Ethnic Studies by way of institutional neglect of students of color. In Cecilia's story for example, we see the power and liberatory role that Ethnic Studies played in her college experience.

However, we must remain critical of the fact that Cecilia, like many other Latinas and African American students, was pushed out of Math. In a sense, she was also pushed into Ethnic Studies due to her negative experiences in Math classes. For Orlando and Adam, Ethnic Studies was the alternative to experiencing racelessness in their majors. In all of these counterstories the intersections of critical issues such as race, class, and academic preparedness in college become the "issue" or "problem" for Ethnic Studies

to remedy, indicating an institutional laziness to grapple with issues of race and racism head-on.

Administrators should increase their support of programs like Ethnic Studies. This support should be two-fold. First, administrators should commit additional resources to expand, not simply maintain, these programs. This action, especially in the face of educational budget cuts is a public acknowledgement of and legitimates the importance of the role of this discipline. Second, the expansion should happen with the understanding and commitment that issues of diversity and equity will be a rigorous task across the institution and not relegated to single or small cluster of departments and programs.

I also wish to acknowledge that this dissertation was published a year after Arizona Governor Jan Brewer prohibited curriculum and programs such as Ethnic Studies from K-12 education. This law should be a warning to critical educators as we have seen that state policies can have a rippling impact across the nation as evidenced by the history of the dismantling of affirmative action and bilingual education. Therefore, educational researchers should continue to build a strong body of evidence that demonstrates the positive qualitative and quantitative impact of curriculum and programs such as Ethnic Studies.

Honoring the Complex Intersections of Our Identities

Lorde (1984) challenged the white feminist community for ignoring and silencing different experiences with sexuality and race. She said, “Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist” (p. 114). I apply Lorde’s examination of feminism to CRT. As CRT researchers we privilege the analysis of race to further our understanding of historic and ongoing racial oppression. We do this with the intent to name and dismantle systemic oppression. Similarly, as CRT educators we look to these findings to sharpen our tools to combat the impact of racial oppression. This study contributes to the vibrant counterstories around race; it also clearly brings to light the complexity and diversity of our collective story. Therefore a major implication of this study is that we must be vigilant to not overshadow or silence the multiple experiences and identities of individuals who share that group membership.

Research that looks at the group can be valuable as it helps identify common needs and therefore practices that can better serve people. The group approach, however, can also result in creating a homogenizing narrative. Therefore I challenge critical race researchers to be rigorous in examining the intersectionality of experiences. When we really consider both the intercentricity and intersectionality of race with other

social identities and locations we are able to see the similarities, nuances, and also the clear differences in our lived experiences. This is not to suggest that looking at issues of race or other social identities are irrelevant because there are so many forms of intersections and thus “we are all just individuals”, rather it is to suggest that “intersectionality provides a basis for re-conceptualizing race as a coalition” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1299) to challenge institutions that maintain racism, xenophobia, heterosexism and other forms of oppression. This forces us to look critically at the ways in which our own communities re-create and perpetuate oppression including internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Furthermore, when researchers honor an intersectional analysis we practice fidelity to CRT’s call for privileging the experiential knowledge of our community as the underpinnings for social justice research and work.

From a practical standpoint, when we look solely at the group we risk homogenizing our practice and reducing it to “best practices” that uphold stereotypes. When we move to the opposite end of the spectrum and look solely at the individual, we risk missing the impact and relationship between systemic and interpersonal oppression. In this paradigm we easily backslide into a meritocratic discourse. Therefore, to address the complex identities and needs of our students, we must carefully work with the interplay of the group and individual perspective. From a professional development and practitioner perspective, this is difficult but may be nurtured in an ongoing community of learning rather than one time or disconnected professional development practices.

From a student services standpoint, programs that are designed to support FGC students but ignore students' converging experiences with racism, sexism, heterosexism, or xenophobia will be limited in impact. They require strategies to be responsive to these intersections.

Cultivating Transformational Resisters not Martyrs

Finally, I wish to draw attention back to transformational resistance. The concept of transformational resistance has a clear focus on the awareness of systemic oppression and action towards social justice. The focus on *social* justice not simply justice or even individual justice implies the importance of our larger social communities. For many of us, it is in our community histories where we draw strength and anger for change (Lorde, 1984). Given that these histories have been systematically erased from the dominant discourse and replaced with theories of cultures of poverty; that coming together through community is an essential survival strategy; and that the dominant white society has falsely pointed to individual people of color as indications of racial progress, it is understandable why we uphold the belief that equity comes with the consideration of the community. And while the focus on the community is essential we must also acknowledge that the strength of our communities relies on the survivance- the survival and resistance (Vizenor, 1999)--of both the community as a whole and also the individuals within it.

As educators who seek to support the cultivation of transformational resistance among our students, we must value and validate expressions of internal resistance just as we value external resistance. This does not mean that we claim every act of resistance is one of transformational resistance, but that we assist our students in anchoring their actions by helping them articulate and center their epistemic knowledge. Additionally, even within acts of transformational resistance, we must help our students be critical of reproducing oppression internally and externally across other social oppressions. Finally, we must also support our students in mitigating the costs of transformational resistance. This means that we must help our students resist self-martyrdom by allowing room for breath, or even a reprieve from action in acknowledgment that transformational resistance can be costly and burdensome and that the wellness of the community and the individual are interdependent.

Two of the participants in this study wondered if they were depressed. I do not have the credentials to be able to diagnose this but it seemed highly likely. Given the costs of transformational resistance, paired with the multiple experiences of displacement I want to draw attention to the importance of mental health. I have often heard from people of color that the focus on individual wellness, especially therapy or counseling, is for middle class white people. I admit that I too have been guilty of perpetuating this myth. However, over the years I have come to strongly challenge this idea. If we look critically at why we assume mental health care is for white people, we

can see the convergence of multiple forms of white privilege. Systemic racism has created conditions in which whites have more access to material capital and tools to access mental health care through resources such as money, time, and health insurance. Also, because the systemic oppression of communities of color have created better social and material conditions for the white community, whites have the privileged mentality to focus on the self and caring for self; generally, they are released from the concern of the well-being of their community as a whole. Therefore, rather than thinking about mental wellness as a luxury for white indulgence, we must also consider wellness as critical sustenance for people of color and communities of color. Educators should take care to look for signs of depression or anxiety in our students. We should reach out and connect our students to mental health resources. The student in this study who did seek therapy was continually critical of the experience. The student felt that the psychologist asked questions and provided guidance from a very western perspective that ignored the reality of the student as a child of immigrants, as a member of the Latina/Latino community, and as person who is coming from a community like Richdale. Therefore from a larger institutional perspective, it is important to ensure that campus psychological services are staffed by people who can address the needs of students of color and first-generation college students with competency and sensitivity.

Research on Students in the Institutional Margins

Another need is one for further research that examines the experiences and outcomes of students who go unserved by institutionalized programs and services. There is a considerable body of qualitative research on FGC students and students of color that draws from students who are involved in long-standing student organizations including ethnic affinity student groups or are involved in institutionalized student support services such as EOPS. Research that focuses on the students who are less connected to our campuses can help us better understand what is happening to students who are on the margins of institutional practice. This will provide an alternative insight into why and how our institutions successfully or unsuccessfully serve all students.

Reflections on the Research Process

I began this research with a sense of caution to not default back into my counselor or mentor role. In an earlier pilot study I conducted, the familiar relationship between student and counselor contributed to a loss of focus on my original inquiry. In the process of this dissertation, I still found it difficult to hold back and be inactive. I was better able to toe the line between mentor and researcher. If students asked me directly for help, I stepped right in to offer another perspective or support. Other times, I found myself making notes and revisiting issues after the interview in person or through email. Although I had to restrain my instinct to immediately problem solve, it did help

me become a better listener and therefore a better researcher and a better educator and mentor.

Researching and writing this dissertation was also emotionally taxing. As I have shared previously, this research is extremely personal to me. I have seen these students grow over the course of five to seven years. Some of their stories I had heard, but many stories, especially the ones that were difficult to hear, were new stories. When reading interview transcripts, I often found myself getting very emotional, sometimes even crying. I was inspired by the stories of the students, I was also very angry for them. I found myself wondering how I could have and how I can continue to better support them. My anger also grew because many of their stories resonated with my own experiences in college and even more so as a doctoral student.

When I felt angry, I turned to Lorde's (1984) writings:

Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change (p. 127)

My anger became productive energy. Re-visiting raw data such as full transcripts and journals gave me a sense of urgency to write so that I upheld the time and trust the students gave to me.

Although student counterstories reminded me of our common experiences with oppression, they also pushed me to continue to grapple with my own privileged locations. I will refrain from going in depth with this process but will share that I was

especially struck by Orlando's story. I was challenged to think about my participation in maintaining heteronormativity, particularly in educational spaces. I realized that I mostly interrogate my heterosexual privilege in teaching spaces where the presence of LGBTQ youth is visible and obvious. Listening to Orlando's story forced me to realize that I rarely considered my privilege in the absence of the visible presence of LGBTQ youth. In doing so, I perpetuated the silencing and invisibility of students like Orlando. Even though I believe myself to be highly aware of the ways in which I am oppressed and privileged, this served as an important reminder that my work on myself is never done.

Conclusion

The richness of the student counterstories gave me insight into the complexity of student identity and experiences. Although the students are demographically similar: all Latina/Latino, attended the same high school, FGC students, and attend highly competitive Research I schools we see the wide variety of their experiences. I started this research to look at the intersection between race and FGC status. During the process I found myself challenged to understand how other social identities and social locations impacted student experience as well. Across all participants, I saw how the intersection of race and class was powerful. Often, when they talked about being Latino, whether in reference to their educational preparedness or to their dreams for their family, they were addressing both race and class. The use of participant focal stories

further demonstrated that the experiences of these participants are shaped by the convergence of multiple social systems. I highlighted the multiple ways in which policies that restrict freedom for undocumented students negatively impacted Cecilia and Teresa's college experience. I also presented Orlando's experience with the silencing and repressing of his sexuality at home. This left him unsure of how he would return home. In Adam's counterstory, out of all the others, race was the most salient. As a Latino male he found himself often racialized as a thug or a gangster. These are just a few of the ways in which intersectionality helped us better understand the experiences of students.

When I looked across Adam, Cecilia, Orlando, and Teresa's counterstories, I also saw many commonalities in their experiences. In the absence of institutional support, I learned that students struggled with forms of displacement but often were able to move through this by leveraging their community cultural wealth and identifying third spaces. Another commonality was that these students, like many other FGC students and students of color, saw a strong connection between their success and the livelihood of their families and communities.

The counterstories of Adam, Cecilia, Orlando, and Teresa force us to take a more critical look at the experiences and successes of FGC students of color in higher education. Without a doubt, I am certain that these four students will graduate and be successful-- they are intelligent, resourceful, think critically, and are full of love, hope,

and optimism. While I am certain that their futures are bright, I end this research doubtful of the role their universities have played in contributing to the success of the students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guides

Domain Codes: A=Academic; S= social, AV= activism, ID= identity, C=Community

Interview 1

1. *Explain why I invited individual to participate, can you tell me more about this?*
How have these activities impacted your experience in college? (S, ID)
2. Tell me about your motivation to attend college. Probe: What will your college degree represent? (ID, C)
3. Tell me about why you chose your major. (A)
4. Can you talk about your experiences as a Latino/ Latina on your college campus? (ID)
5. When you find yourself struggling with something going on at school, where do you turn for support? (S, C) Probe: What about family? How do you describe the support from your family? How often do you keep in touch with them?
6. Is there a faculty or a staff member who you feel has been especially supportive of you? Probe: What do they do that makes you feel supported? (A)
7. Tell me about your transition from high school to college. Academic? Social? What have you learned? (A,S)
8. What classes are you taking? Which ones are you struggling in? Why? Which ones are you doing well in? Why? (A)

Interview 2

1. What do you think are behaviors or indicators that professors or other students look for to decide if someone is a “good student”. Probe: Do you think these standards are different for a Latino or Latina student? Do you think you meet the “good student” standard? Why or why not? (A)
2. Can you share a story about a time when you felt unwelcome on campus? Can you tell me about a time when you felt at home on campus? Where do you feel the most welcome? (ID, S)
3. Activism can take many forms. Often people think of activism as participation in protest or leadership in progressive or radical organizations. However, it can also take on more subtle forms such as engaging in dialogue with people who have different opinions or mentoring younger people. How do you describe your activism? Can you give examples? (AV)
4. Activism seeks to accomplish change. What kind of change are you working towards? Probe: Where do you think you learned these values? How does being in college help/ hinder this? (AV)
5. Think back to one of the first times you went back home after starting college. What was this experience like? What did you notice? Is it any different now? How? (ID, C)
6. Think about where you come from, for example your family, Richmond, anything that’s an important part of you identity. How has your background or history helped you find success? (ID)

Interview 3

1. Can you tell me about a time when you witnessed or experienced overt discrimination on campus (in or out of class)? *Probe:* What happened? How did you respond? Why did you respond that way? (AV)
2. Can you tell me about a time when you witnessed or experienced subtle discrimination on campus (in or out of class)? *Probe:* What happened? How did you respond? Why did you respond that way? (AV)

3. Can you tell me about a time you felt like another student or a professor suggested you didn't belong here? It can be a time when it was explicitly said or a time when it was implied. Or perhaps they under-estimated your ability. How did you respond? Probe: How did you cope with or overcome that incident? How do incidents like these impact your motivation to be successful in college? (ID)
4. What do you think your university does well to support students of color on campus? Where does it fall short? (A)
5. How did your semester go? Academically? How did you do in your classes? Socially? (A,S)
6. We've talked about (share some themes), is there anything I didn't ask you, that I should have asked you? Or anything you want to share?
7. Envision yourself 5 years from now. What are you doing? What about 10 years from now? (ID)

Appendix B

Student Demographic Questionnaire

1) Name _____ 2) Age _____ 3) Gender _____

4) Major _____ 5) Minor _____ 6) GPA _____

7) Year in college _____ 8) Do you receive a Pell Grant or a Cal Grant? _____

9) Language(s) spoken at home _____

10) What is your ethnicity? _____ 11) What is your racial identity? _____

12) Briefly describe your/ your family's immigration history _____

13a) What is your mother's highest level of education?

a. _____ Less than elementary	e. _____ Community College
b. _____ Elementary or equivalent	f. _____ 4-year college or higher
c. _____ Middle school or equivalent	g. _____ Unknown
d. _____ High school or equivalent	

13b) If your mother has a 4-year degree or higher, in what country did she receive her degree? _____

14a) What is your father's highest level of education?

a. _____ Less than elementary	e. _____ Community College
b. _____ Elementary or equivalent	f. _____ 4-year college or higher
c. _____ Middle school or equivalent	g. _____ Unknown
d. _____ High school or equivalent	

14b) If your father has a 4-year degree or higher, in what country did he receive his degree? _____

15) Briefly list any activities, jobs, internships, or programs you are involved in.