SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM

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In partial fulfillment of
The Requirements for
The Degree

Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership

by

Arielle J. Smith

San Francisco, California

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM* by Arielle J. Smith, 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.

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SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to research how social reproduction perpetuates and replicates the status quo in the community college classroom, especially as perceived by first-generation students. The study investigated two questions: How is social reproduction enacted in the community college classroom? How do first-generation students perceive social reproduction in the community college classroom? These questions are important because the existent research and literature on Social Reproduction Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Whiteness Studies while foundational to this study do not adequately address the impact of social reproduction on first-generation community college students.

Using a qualitative, constant-comparative approach (Creswell, 2014; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008), three student focus groups with eight individual student participants, interviews with three faculty, nine class observations, and a review of syllabi resulted in the identification of five key findings. The five key findings that emerged are: the experiences and challenges of first-generation college students; the importance of care, which was identified by students as a critical element in student success; faculty communication of values, which is framed through whiteness and meritocracy; faculty perception of students compared to student self-perception; and authority and privilege as salient elements of student-teacher interactions.

Implications of the research include: the need for further research, providing intentional professional development centered on authentic care and examination of privilege; address the areas of faculty pedagogy, supporting the inclusion of culturally sustaining pedagogy and addressing social justice issues in instruction and institutions; changing hiring practices to create a more diverse faculty and staff composition; and reforming institutional structures to create collaborative, supportive, inclusive, and equitable institutions.

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

Davide Celoria, Ed.D.
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Chapter One: Purpose of the Study Introduction and Problem Statement

“The educational system...is best understood as an institution which serves to perpetuate the social relationships of economic life through which these patterns are set, by facilitating a smooth integration of youth into the labor force... Schools foster legitimate[d] inequality through the ostensibly meritocratic manner by which they reward and promote students, and allocate them to distinct position in the occupational hierarchy. They create and reinforce patterns of social class, racial and sexual identification among students which allow them to relate ‘properly’ to their eventual standing in the hierarchy of authority and status in the production process. Schools foster types of personal development compatible with the relationships of dominance and subordination in the economic sphere...” (p.11, Bowles & Gintis, 1976)

Problem Statement

Social reproduction theory in higher education posits that educational institutions replicate the patterns of social, cultural, economic positionality that serve to perpetuate the status quo (Bourdieu, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and the marginalization and *othering* of the working class. In education, social reproduction, and perpetuating the status quo, can be viewed through existing educational structures,

curriculum, pedagogy, and instructor relationships and interactions with students, who can either support or disrupt the status quo (Budd & Stowers, 2015). Jean Anyon's (1980) well-known study of several elementary school classrooms, differentiated by social class, clearly demonstrates the stratification of knowledge and skills based on socio-economic standing that served to reinforce existing social hierarchies. Social reproduction theory is important to understanding structures of higher education, especially the open access system of community college, given the rhetoric of meritocracy and social mobility that has become an inexorable rationale to the pursuit of higher education. Nonetheless, the application of social reproduction theory in isolation is insufficient to understand the experiences of first-generation college students, as they tend to be students of color and low income (Akom, N.D.; Lee, 2011; Morrow & Torres, 1995; Roscigno, 1998). Critical Race Theory (CRT), which operates from the fundamental premise that racism exists and is pervasive at all levels of society and institutions, and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) which posits that whiteness and privilege are critical in maintaining systems to protect and reproduce the status quo, in tandem with social reproduction theory provide a way to understand the experiences of first-generation college students (Allen, 2004; Kincheloe. 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Leonardo, 2004; Yosso, 2005).

First-generation college students, defined as students whose family never pursued postsecondary education (Engle, 2007, U.S. Department of Education, 2011), and who are generally low-income and students of color, experience lower rates of success and persistence than continuing generation peers, who have at least one parent who finished college (Karp & Bork, 2014; Lee, Sax, Kim, & Hagedorn, 2004). First-generation college students are more likely to come from low-income backgrounds, are more likely to place into remedial levels of math and English, have lower degree aspirations, and report lower levels of parental support related to college (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). In a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) first-generation college students were nearly twice as likely to be placed into remedial courses than continuing generation students (55% compared to 27%) (Chen & Carroll, 2005).

First-generation college students continue to experience lower levels of success and persistence than their continuing-generation peers. An inherent characteristic of first-generation college students is that neither of their parents has graduated from college (Lee et al., 2004). This suggests that their families lack the social and cultural capital necessary to succeed in a higher education environment, including past educational access and opportunity, the social networks and relationships used to access information, and the knowledge of the dominant social codes and practices (Coleman,

1988; Bourdieu, 1973). Key to understanding social and cultural capital in education is that the dominant social codes and practices are those of the white middle class (Karp & Bork, 2014; Yosso, 2005), giving white middle class students an advantage over first-generation college students, and students from other marginalized groups, when it comes to succeeding in higher education (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999).

Whiteness has long been institutionalized in higher education, resulting in systemically racist and exclusionary structures (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Yosso, Parker, Solorzano, & Lynn, 2004). Institutions of higher education, especially, operate on the norming of white cultural and social expectations, which has led to an exclusionary deficit-based assessment of non-dominant groups (Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003; Yosso, 2005). Whiteness and white privilege are reproduced in classroom settings, which is something that has been studied extensively at the K-12 level (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Jupp, Berry, & Lensmire, 2016; Minor, 2014). Though it follows logically that first-generation college students would be particularly impacted by the exclusionary reproduction of whiteness and white privilege in classrooms, research has not been done to study this in the community college setting.

In 2015-16, the California state allocation for the funding sources was \$472 million for Student Success and Support Program (SSSP); \$137.5 million for Equity

funds; and \$20 million for Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) funds – totaling \$629.5 million dollars in funding provided by the state with these funding sources for community colleges (Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2015). The funding sources are meant to provide support and programs to increase the academic outcomes of traditionally underrepresented student populations, among them first-generation students. This is a huge infusion of monetary resources that the state has committed to the community colleges in recognition that the academic outcomes of underrepresented student populations need improvement. In August 2016, the California Community College Chancellor’s Office issued a memo stating that the funding reports for SSSP, Equity funds, and BSI funds will be combined, and that the funds are meant to be used in conjunction with one another to provide services to students (CCCCO, 2016b). This has led to programmatic refocusing and integration at community colleges across the state. Though SSSP, BSI, and Equity do not explicitly identify first-generation college students as a target population, the support and programs that are funded by through these sources directly impact first-generation students. Given that 62% of first-generation community college students were students of color, are almost twice as likely to receive financial aid, and are more likely to be placed into remedial coursework, programs and support services funded by SSSP, BSI, and Equity impact the academic outcomes of first-generation students (CCCCO, 2014).

While many community colleges have developed, or are attempting to develop, intentional interventions, thus far these interventions have not been enough to significantly impact outcomes for first-generation college students. The interventions, such as learning communities, federal TRIO programs, and even the professional development opportunities for faculty, are also generally deficit oriented in that they do not acknowledge or build on the strengths of the students, but are based in a paternalistic proscription of providing information and skills based on what people in positions of a power believe students need to be successful. Community colleges enroll 76% of the state's public college students, almost 2.1 million (California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), 2015). More than 40% of the students enrolled in California community colleges are first-generation college students (CCCCO, 2014), and 56.3% are students of color, with 42.5% identifying as Latino and 6.4% as African American (CCCCO, 2016a). The enrollment of community college students in California is expected to increase by 22% by 2023 (CCCCO Master Plan, 2016). Enrollment projections by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the 2011-2022 period anticipate enrollment increases of 26% for African America students, 27% for Latino students, and 7% for Asian/Pacific Islander and White students (Hussar & Bailey, 2014). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the national trend for demographic changes projects that the United States will be a minority-majority nation

by 2044, meaning that the total population will be less than 50% White (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

Taken together, institutions of higher education can expect increased enrollment of minority student populations for the foreseeable future. This means that the ability to effectively and meaningfully educate students of color, first-generation students, and other marginalized students who go through the community college system is of significant importance. If the findings of this study were to hold true across the community colleges across California, the reliance on deficit models of intervention and not incorporating culturally responsive practices and pedagogies could potentially negatively impact hundreds of thousands of students, with their needs going unaddressed and strengths unacknowledged.

A review of the literature pulled from a number of different sources. Databases used included: EBSCO, and Google Scholar. In addition to electronic databases, the bibliographies and reference sections of key books and articles were used as they contained useful sources. Electronic peer-reviewed journals on community colleges, urban education, race and ethnicity, and higher education were also searched. Search terms included first-generation college students, community college, whiteness, white privilege, campus culture, critical pedagogy, critical whiteness, colorblindness, and critical race theory in education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to research social reproduction in the community college classroom, especially as perceived by first-generation students. Social reproduction in the literature is primarily focused on class, nonetheless, analyzing the impact of race and whiteness are crucial to understanding differential student outcomes and experiences. For this reason, I draw on Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) as theoretical lenses with which to analyze the process of social reproduction of first-generation college students in the community college setting. Though an area of critical importance, my review of the literature revealed that social reproduction in higher education, and especially whiteness in the community college setting, is an under studied area, as the results were sparse and not applicable to the setting or population in question here.

The quantitative academic outcomes of first-generation college students have been studied for over three decades, yet research consistently finds that academic outcomes of this population are lower than the academic outcomes of continuing-generation students (Billson & Terry, 1982; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Soria & Stebleton, 2012; Terenzini et al., 1996). There have been a number of interventions and programs – learning communities, TRIO Student Support Services, Achieving the Dream which are aimed at increasing the outcomes of first-generation

college students. Yet these programs are all deficit-oriented in that they aim to remedy presumed deficits in the students' knowledge and increase fonts of dominant social and cultural capital. In looking at overall student outcomes such as successful transfer, receiving a degree, passing classes, and persistence rates, those of first-generation students are still below those of continuing generation students (Zachry Rutschow et al., 2011).

One area that has not been systematically studied in relation to first-generation student outcomes is that of the impact of social reproduction, especially whiteness in teaching, and faculty-student interactions and relationships. Faculty are in a unique position in that they spend more time with students during their tenure in college than any other college employee, and thus have the most potential to make a difference in students' academic trajectory. However, as Bowles and Gintis (1976) pointed out over 40 years ago, the educational system serves to perpetuate the status quo, not to change it. Faculty are instrumental in this process, though they may not even be aware that such pervasive reproduction of social class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and the like is taking place, largely at their hands. This makes research into social reproduction in the classroom, especially the community college classroom with higher numbers of first-generation college students, critical. The mechanisms must first be identified to

begin to change them, and once we can begin to change them, student outcomes may begin to change with them.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the research questions: How is social reproduction enacted in the community college classroom? How do first-generation students perceive social reproduction in the community college classroom?

The following propositions were explored during the research study: Faculty communicate and reproduce the status quo in their classroom in ways that are both implicit and explicit. First-generation students perceive, internalize, and react to the process of social reproduction. Faculty have set beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes that have been molded by whiteness, privilege, power, and their positionality that gets communicated to the students in their classroom. The students of color and first-generation students receive more detrimental messages than groups who are stereotypically seen as “successful.” First-generation community college may students perceive and internalize the implicit communication by their instructors, which may influence their self-perception and academic outcomes.

Definitions of Key Concepts

Continuing-generation student: an individual who has at least one parent who finished college (NCES, 2005)

Culturally responsive pedagogy: “teaching practices that attend to the specific cultural characteristics that make students different from one another and from the teacher.

‘Cultural characteristics’ include commonly thought of concepts such as values, traditions, and language, but also extends to include concepts such as communication, learning styles, and relationship norms” (Rychly & Graves, 2012, p.44)

Culturally sustaining pedagogy: “culturally sustaining teaching must meet three criteria: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness. It is distinguishable by three broad propositions or conditions regarding self and other, social relations, and knowledge” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483)

Eurocentric values: “the belief that the perspective of the Euro-Americans is the norm and (b) the practice of ignoring and/or delegitimizing the experiences, motivations, aspirations, and views of people of color. Traditionally, the majority of Euro-Americans adhere to a Eurocentric perspective founded on covert and overt assumptions regarding White superiority, territorial expansion, and “American” democratic ideals such as meritocracy, objectivity, and individuality” (Bernal, 2002, p.111)

First-generation student: an individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree (20 U.S.C. §1070a-11(h)(3))

Pedagogy: the instructional practices established by an instructor including what a teacher conceptually conceived, organized, or performed and encompassed numerous forms of teaching, learning, and assessment strategies (Mallen, 2006, p.21-22)

Social Reproduction: replication of the patterns of social, cultural, economic positionality that serve to perpetuate the status quo. In education, social reproduction can be viewed through existing educational structures, curriculum, pedagogy, and instructor relationships and interactions with students (Budd & Stowers, 2015; Bourdieu, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976)

Whiteness: the normed white cultural and social expectations, which has resulted in exclusionary deficit-based assessments of non-dominant groups, and used to maintain the status quo. Whiteness “is characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions” (Frankenberg, 1993, as cited in Leonardo, 2002, p.32; Kincheloe, 1999; Leonardo, 2004)

White privilege: attach more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographical location (p. 178, McIntosh, 1988)

Generalizability

Although the study’s results may not be broadly generalizable, they have applicable implications for faculty who interact with first-generation community college

students, particularly white faculty. These implications are related to teaching pedagogy, classroom interactions, interactions between faculty and students outside of the classroom, and the support provided to first-generation college students, in particular. The purpose of the research is to contribute to theory of social reproduction as it applies to community colleges, not generalizability. Transferability of themes helps further expand the understanding of first-generation college student experiences as well as existing teaching pedagogy in community college, where faculty are hired as content experts and rarely trained in any pedagogical practices, development, or theory – let alone cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study are significant in expanding on educational equity, especially as it relates to first-generation students. Systemic change is necessary for underserved and underrepresented student populations to begin to experience more positive outcomes. Students who do not conform to dominant norms or have knowledge in dominant social and cultural capital are marginalized and pushed out of our educational system, as evidenced by the higher attrition and lower degree attainment rates of underrepresented students, as that system was created to maintain power structures and the status quo. However, the status quo and pervasive whiteness of community colleges must change, and our institutional structures, instructional

methods, pedagogical training, and the values embedded and passed on to students and teachers must change to become more culturally responsive if we are to accomplish this. While this may seem like a monumental task, beginning with pedagogy development, training, and implementation of instructional strategies that are based in culturally sustaining pedagogy are feasible starting points to begin the process of change to better serve our students. The remaining chapters are organized as follows: chapter two is a literature review on social reproduction, Critical Race Theory (an overview, colorblindness and meritocracy, and centrality of race and racism), Critical White Studies, care, and first-generation college students. Chapter three is an overview of methodology and data analysis. Chapter four reviews the results of data analysis and discussion. Chapter five discusses implications for practice and leadership.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine what is known about social reproduction theory and its application in understanding how the white privilege of community college English instructors impacts first-generation community college students, using the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies, in an effort to better understand the experience of first-generation college students.

The theoretical model that guided the study is consistent with social reproduction theory, Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness, calling into attention the importance of race and privilege in relationship to first-generation college students. In order to better understand the significance of social reproduction, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Whiteness, this chapter has been organized into the following sections: Social Reproduction, Critical Race Theory (an overview, colorblindness and meritocracy, and centrality of race and racism), Critical White Studies, care, and first-generation college students.

Social Reproduction

In the literature social reproduction in educational systems has been discussed primarily in relationship to K-12 education and teacher preparation programs. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) first outlined the relationship between cultural reproduction and social reproduction in educational systems. Though strictly a class analysis, Bourdieu made

clear connections between the class status and educational opportunities of various students, noting that educational institutions have been able to engage in the reproduction of the structure of class relations while reinforcing the appearance of neutrality through use of merit. As Bourdieu states,

By making social hierarchies and the reproduction of these hierarchies appear to be based upon the hierarchy of “gifts,” merits, or skills established and ratified by its sanctions, or, in a word, by converting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies, the educational system fulfills a function of legitimation which is more and more necessary to the perpetuation of the “social order” as the evolution of the power relationship between classes tends more completely to exclude the imposition of a hierarchy based upon the crude and ruthless affirmation of the power relationship. (p. 60)

Thus, the existing status quos are maintained by reinforcing supposedly impartial measures of academic success, which in turn strengthens the narrative of meritocracy that is one of the primary underpinnings of educational achievement (Naidoo, 2004). Bourdieu noted that as the marks of academic success are actually values and qualities of the dominant group, educational institutions operate with implicitly embedded

criteria for success that do not allow those who are not part of the dominant group to advance and succeed in equal measure.

Cultural capital is distinct from social reproduction, though it plays a central role within the process of social reproduction (Tzanakis, 2011). Cultural capital is the accumulation of types of knowledge related to dominant high status cultural practices and cues, for example, attending or participating in the theater, museums, art, and dance (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). In education, this can be seen in students' ease of navigating institutional policies, knowledge of classroom expectations and norms, and accessing available resources (Karp, 2011). Thus, cultural capital is one means through which inequalities are transmitted and reproduced, but cultural capital does not encompass the entirety of social reproduction. Social reproduction theory addresses more broadly how status quos are maintained and the impact of using dominant values as a means of upholding social hierarchies. Cultural capital is a reflection of the success of social reproduction, as it serves to reflect the inequalities in social class, but is not the mechanism of reproduction itself.

A primary critique of social reproduction theory is that it uses class as the principal means of assessment and analysis, but does not acknowledge the importance of race and racism (Akom, N.D.; Lee, 2011; Morrow & Torres, 1995; Roscigno, 1998). In the words of Antwi Akom, "theories of reproduction have become normalized

around a discourse that privileges class as the principal determinant of social and political life, while assigning race to a subordinate position” (Akom, N.D., p.7). This is problematic, as class does not exist in isolation—institutional and societal structures are heavily influenced by racism, but it is inaccurate to conflate race and class in assessments of the impact of these structures on those who do not come from the white middle-class. Social reproduction theory originated in an attempt to understand how class status is transmitted generationally, although it was applied to education beginning in the 1970’s as a way to analyze the impact of education on social mobility, primarily through the discourse of meritocracy. However, this narrative does not acknowledge structural racism or the privileging of whiteness that is embedded into social reproduction theory (Akom, N.D.). Meritocracy and social mobility are concepts that exist to support white privilege, but the application of these concepts without an analysis based on race does not serve to those who are not part of the white middle-class, as the challenges faced by those who are from different racial and lower class groups is compounded at every step by racism and classism—they are false narratives for much of the population.

The banking system of education operates as a tool of social reproduction by creating and maintaining systems of oppression by systematically integrating oppression of consciousness into educational systems. Freire (1972) is critical of the

dominant framework in education, which places teachers in positions of power and disempowers students to play an active participatory role in their own education. In fact, Freire proposes that this disempowering framework is oppressive and propagates social inequities. The banking system of education, which is defined by contrasts of knowledge and power (teachers possessing both, and students possessing neither), is one that does not allow for the development of critical consciousness and promotes oppression and dehumanization.

The banking system creates a dichotomy between student and teacher in which the teacher possesses knowledge, thinks critically, talks, disciplines, dictates information and content delivery, and is the active member of the learning process (Freire, 1972). Students are seen as knowing nothing, as objects, expected to listen and not question the information (and by extension, authority) of the teacher, obey, and passively absorb information. Students are not taught to think critically or question information that they are given. Freire argues that the banking system of education creates and maintains systems of oppression by systemically integrating oppression of consciousness into educational systems.

In education, the literature on social reproduction theory has generally focused on comparative academic outcomes. Serving as the foundation of extensive theorizing and research on differential educational outcomes among various groups of students,

usually K-12 students who are of the white, middle-class as compared to those who are not. For example, in their study of impact of race, cultural capital, and educational resources, Rosigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) compare the academic achievement of Black and White 10th graders. The banking system of education is a reflection of systems and processes that are in place that support social reproduction, primarily to maintain the dominance of whiteness. Given the inequities that are so deeply embedded into our social and institutional structures, Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies are used to create a more complete understanding of the impact of race and whiteness on social reproduction in the classroom.

Critical Race Theory

The civil rights movement of the 1960s showed clearly the importance of the law in ensuring societal changes, with such victories as overturning the statute of “separate but equal” with *Brown vs Board of Education* (Tate, 1997). While the successes of the civil rights era were far-reaching, the legal battles fought on the basis of racism and discrimination gave rise to critical analysis of how law is shaped by race and racism, and what the concept of legal justice actually means. These critical analyses were led in large part by Derrick Bell, a civil rights lawyer who became the first tenured African American professor at Harvard Law School (Tate). Bell is largely credited as the father of the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement, constantly interrogating the

ways in which law and courts serve as a primary means of preserving the status quo of white supremacy (Bell, 1991). Effectively, CLS is a response to white supremacy, how it has been codified in various ways, and the impact of legal statutes that perpetuate racism. In the early 1990s, several CLS scholars proposed Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework that “challenges the universality of the white experience/judgement as the authoritative standard....and challenges the dominant discourses on race and racism” (Calmore, 1992, p.2161). Once CRT was articulated as a theoretical framework, it allowed those in other disciplines to apply CRT to their work.

In 1995, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate wrote a theoretical article linking Critical Race Theory (CRT) to education in order to provide a framework with which to analyze inequities in education based in recognizing the centrality of race and racism in everyday life. Ladson-Billings and Tate recognized that educational inequities were traditionally discussed through the lenses of socio-economic class and/or gender, but those structures of oppression did not fully explain the impact of race on education. Race had not been previously theorized very deeply in educational inequality, and is necessary to account for the clear racial (in addition to class and gender) disparities that exist in the educational system.

In this study, I am using the tenets of CRT in education through a LatCrit lens. Solórzano (1998) identified five primary tenets of CRT scholarship, which have been used as guiding tenets of CRT in education research, as the following:

1. The intercentricity of race and racism. Race and racism are fundamental, widespread, and permanent parts of U.S. culture and society.
2. The challenges to dominant ideology. This includes meritocracy, colorblindness, objectivity, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.
3. The commitment to social justice. Scholarship does not exist in isolation but works to address issues of social justice in practice as well.
4. The centrality of experiential knowledge. The experience and knowledge of people of color have value and are necessary in understanding inequality.
5. The interdisciplinary perspective. Historical and contextual analyses, as well as multidisciplinary approaches, are necessary to fully understand the nuanced and multidimensional experiences of race and racism.

Together, the tenets of CRT are necessary in providing an approach to academic scholarship in education that contests the dominant narratives. Using Yosso's (2005) definition, "CRT in education [is] a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" (p.74), which is especially critical in addressing the issues that our marginalized

students experience in the pursuit of their education. In discussions of students of color, race and class are often inextricable from one another, creating points of intersectionality that can be challenging to separate (Matias et al., 2015). Class undeniably impacts the experience of students of color, especially as it relates to how closely a student is able to gain knowledge around middle-class values; however, those values are still informed by dominant, white groups. That is not to say that CRT discounts the impact of class, but posits that race is of primary importance.

The use of CRT in higher education research has steadily increased since Solórzano (1998) first applied the framework to his research. The persistence of disparate educational outcomes for students of color, despite the various interventions that have been attempted over the years, as well as issues surrounding access to higher education, have provided the impetus for much of the research that draws on CRT (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). CRT also provides scholars a means of analyzing institutional structures, practices, and discourses from a non-dominant lens that privileges the perspective of people of color, as well as operating from a fundamental recognition that institutional racism is pervasive in contexts of higher education (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, Solórzano, 2009). The following sections elaborate further on two of the tenets of CRT that Solórzano proposed, as they are most relevant to this study's focus

on higher education: colorblindness and meritocracy, and the centrality of race and racism.

Colorblindness and Meritocracy

In institutions of higher education, dominant ideologies, especially of meritocracy and colorblindness, have become completely entrenched in the institutional structures (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Colorblindness is a pervasive rhetoric that racism is personal and individual, as opposed to systemic, and that equality is achieved by downplaying distinctions between groups – categorization of different groups is a source of conflict that is ameliorated by not creating or recognizing different groups (Rattan & Ambady, 2013). In research, it is also the lack of recognition of issues of race and racism as having an impact on outcomes, especially in educational settings (Lopez, 2003; Harper, 2012). Colorblindness is inextricably linked to meritocracy, which is the belief that success is the result of the amount of hard work and effort that is exerted (Allen, 2004; Crowley, 2016). In education, meritocracy is applied in discussing student outcomes, without recognition of the influence of race and racism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Colorblindness has become a dominant racial ideology among white people (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Rattan & Ambady, 2013). The premise of colorblindness is that inequalities are produced and reproduced through non-racial means, such as “market

dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks' imputed cultural limitations" (Bonilla-Silva, p. 2). Colorblindness is practiced in microaggressions, attributing success (or lack thereof) to merit, non-racialized and politically correct "othering," and cultural justifications that allow whites to maintain their dominant positions and not disrupt the status quo. Bonilla-Silva argues that race is constructed, but has real-life effects on individuals who are racialized, and that "racial structures exist because they benefit members of the dominant race" (p. 10). Colorblindness allows whites to vindicate themselves of any culpability or accusation of racism, while still maintaining existing racist structures, worldviews, behaviors, and cultures. Colorblindness has allowed for a new ideology that implicitly maintains racist structures and society in a manner that rationalizes and validates dominant structures. Critical Race Theory challenges the hegemonic "colorblind" perspective in education, and proposes a framework that allows for race to be theorized in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Meritocracy is a dominant discourse in education, and especially in higher education (Patton, 2016). Higher education is seen as voluntary and largely merit based given the exclusive admissions policies of many colleges and universities. In order to gain entrance, a student must have met a set of standards that indicates that they have worked sufficiently hard to be afforded the opportunity to attend college (DeCuir &

Dixson, 2004). While community colleges are open admission, meaning no criteria need to be met in order to enroll, there are still restrictions on such things as English and math placement and transfer that enact the meritocratic ideology. Meritocracy is such an entrenched part of the culture and structure of higher education that no discussion of faculty expectations would be complete without recognizing meritocratic discourse.

Meritocracy, while ascribing all success to individual effort, also ascribes failure solely to individual lack of effort (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). The narrative of success is embedded in every aspect of education: if you study hard and exert effort, you will be able to get into a good college and do well. In equal measure, this rhetoric attributes failure to “not trying hard enough;” this failure translates directly to lower socioeconomic status, potentially for generations (Reardon, 2011) for those who are not willing to exert themselves and persevere—they have not earned, and thus do not deserve, success. While CRT and social reproduction theories recognize that the myth of meritocracy serves to reproduce the existing status quo, meritocratic discourse remains entrenched in classrooms and institutions of higher education (Brennan & Naidoo; Brunnsma, Brown, & Placier, 2012; Gillborn, 2006).

Centrality of Race and Racism.

Racism is endemic in U.S. society that serves to promote and reinforce the interests of whites and subservience and oppression of other groups, especially people

of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). This reinforcement of white supremacy is enacted through dominance and control of the political, economic, and social realms that maintains the status quo of the existing power structures, and is continually fortified (Stovall, 2006). Though the legal system in the U.S. may make the claim to operate race-neutrally, there is a clear history of reified racial disparities in our country. For example, though the argument is often made that the explicitly racist Jim Crow era laws no longer exist, people of color constitute an overwhelming majority of those who are incarcerated, a number that must also include those who are formerly incarcerated and have lost access to many participatory rights (Alexander, 2010). Mass incarceration is one example of a convergence of political, economic, and social interests that disproportionately impacts people of color and serves the interest of white supremacy by effectively oppressing huge numbers of people of color under the guise of neutrality and justice.

Race is a constantly shifting social construct with real implications in daily life and interactions (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Sarcedo, Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Taking the example of the U.S. Census, the definition, creation, inclusion, exclusion, and categorization of racial categories has shifted significantly since 1890, when the “What is your race?” question was first introduced (Ladson-Billings, 2005). In fact, it was only after 1960 that people could select their

own race (previously it was assigned to them by census takers), and not until 2000 could an individual select more than one race on the Census (Brown, 2015). In the history of the census, however, one of the most important considerations of the race question is who has been categorized as “white” and how that has changed over time, as Latinos, American Indians, Indians, Germans, Jews, Italians, Irish, and Arabs, among others, have all at different times been classified and declassified as “white.” In effect, the census “generated a set of categories that enabled the basic hierarchy of white supremacy and nonwhite subordination to be maintained” (Hochschild & Powell, 2008, p. 61). This categorization has been used intentionally and strategically to support and reinforce white supremacy and power largely as a result of social, political, and economic factors at any given point in the U.S.

Whiteness is used to create exclusionary schooling practices towards students of color, which, for example, impacts schools, programs, resources, and funding streams that are shrouded under claims of openness and accessibility, when in fact there are clear inequities at every layer of the educational system (Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solórzano, 2009). These practices, such as standardized tests, teacher expectations, and teaching style, become normed to white middle-class standards and institutionalized in ways that serve to reproduce inequities and maintain the status quo (Brown, 2004;

Patton, 2016; Picower, 2009; Sarcedo, Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

According to Yosso (2005), Bourdieu and others who argue that cultural capital is the reason that students of color do not succeed at the same rate as white students are using a deficit framework. This framework proposes that lack of conformity with, and access to, white cultural, societal, and economic norms prevents social mobility in students of color. This deficit framework inherently assumes that all non-white cultures are lacking and prevent student success. CRT challenges the inherent racism in the cultural capital theory and educational/institutional “structures, practices, and discourses” (Yosso, p. 74). Reflective of a large body of literature and research on racism, Solórzano and Yosso (2001) articulate four dimensions of racism that has been identified in CRT literature: “(1) micro and macro components; (2) institutional and individual forms; (3) conscious and unconscious elements; and (4) a cumulative impact on both the individual and group” (p.2). These dimensions of racism recognize more nuanced interpretations of the experience and effects of racism, on individual and structural levels.

In education, we have long recognized the problem of differential outcomes for students of color. One of the most utilized theories and frameworks of student retention in higher education is Tinto’s theory of social and academic integration (Tinto, 1993).

Tinto posits that, in order to succeed, a student must assimilate into both the academic and social domains of a college. For those who do not know how to do this when they enter college, which are usually underrepresented and first-generation students, the suggested intervention is to teach them the skills and knowledge that they need to successfully integrate. The skills and knowledge that are being taught to them are grounded in the dominant norms of the white middle class—for example, going to a professor's office hours or prioritizing class over family obligations (Karp & Bork, 2014). From this, countless student support programs and learning communities have been created with the positive intent of increasing student success, but have done so in a way that is both deficit oriented and colorblind (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015). Tinto's theory does not leave room to recognize that students of color and first-generation students have strengths that would allow them to be successful and to work from those strengths, but operates from a deficit view of non-white students, as it does nothing to privilege the knowledge and skills of students of color, nor does it acknowledge the role of racism and whiteness in creating and maintaining hegemonic structures (Tierney, 1999). The theory, and student support programs, seek to alleviate the deficit of these students in the cultural and social capital domains by assuming that they must take on the characteristics of the dominant culture and learn to navigate white structures in order to succeed.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

While CRT is concerned with providing a theoretical framework with which to analyze issues of race and racism, in education there is a necessary element of making changes in practice. Culturally sustaining pedagogy is an application of CRT to practice. Initially theorized as culturally relevant pedagogy by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally sustaining pedagogy was proposed as a means for students who traditionally are marginalized to maintain a valued cultural identity in school in order to promote academic outcomes and help students grow within the culture of their community so that they remain anchored and relevant to that community. In reaction to culturally relevant pedagogy being treated as a superficial intervention and knowledge base, for example having more “diverse” images of students, Ladson-Billings proposed the change to culturally sustaining pedagogy to better reflect the complex and constantly changing cultural reality of students. Culturally sustaining pedagogy consists primarily of three dimensions: academic success, cultural competence, sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014). Academic success focuses on the learning and intellectual growth that takes place within the classroom; cultural competence refers to the ability to celebrate and recognize the value of cultures of origin in the educational setting while developing fluency in other cultures; and sociopolitical consciousness emphasizes the ability to take learning beyond the classroom and apply it to engage

with real world problems. While enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy in the classroom benefits all students, students from traditionally marginalized groups, including first-generation students and students of color, especially benefit from pedagogical changes, as the primary purpose of culturally sustaining pedagogy is to prevent the marginalization of these student populations from occurring to begin with by privileging their cultural values and context.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Though CRT works to recognize and address the systemic ways that racism impacts education, it is necessary to also acknowledge the role of whiteness as the primary mechanism in maintaining a racist system (Matias et al., 2014). Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) engages primarily with analyzing the ways in which white hegemony is maintained through a carefully constructed system of domination (Allen, 2004; Gillborn, 2006; Leonardo, 2004). Individualization of white privilege ignores the systemic and institutionalized ways that white dominance is reproduced, and it also serves to assuage white guilt and responsibility for participating in systemic repression of people of color for the express benefit of white folks' positionality, opportunities, and even the core of their self-concept (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). While racism is recognized when displayed in violent actions and virulent words, the "passive racism" of white domination is perpetuated through such things as the universalization of

experiences, the privileging of a white narrative of history, and the standardization of language (Leonardo, 2004).

In the process of making white dominance visible, which equally entails privileging the narratives of people of color and their experiences of domination, the narrative still is tailored to and co-opted by whiteness (Allen, 2004; Leonardo, 2004). Conversations around privilege, dominance, racism, and whiteness cater to white comfort, and resistance and white guilt are addressed before any other conversations can take place beyond the white experience. Oftentimes, the discourse becomes so steeped in individualism that a blatant disregard, or even complete lack of acknowledgement, of white hegemonic structures results in no change being made. As Leonardo (2004) points out, “racial understanding proceeds at the snail’s pace of the white imaginary” (p. 141), meaning that any progress forward is limited by the willingness of white folks to genuinely engage in the difficult work of examining white privilege and domination. The process of engaging in conversations about racism and white privilege produces extreme cognitive dissonance between the desire to achieve racial justice and the necessity of both admitting complicity and the real implications of sacrificing privilege. This renders forward progress in challenging and dismantling systems of oppression and dominance dependent on the psychological comfort of white

folks, which just goes to reinforce again the privilege of white dominance (Allen; Leonardo; Matias et al., 2014).

Whiteness has long been institutionalized in higher education, resulting in systemically racist and exclusionary structures (Closson, 2010; Matias et al, 2014; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, Solórzano, 2009). The importance of identifying and engaging with whiteness at all levels of higher education cannot be overstated. Institutions of higher education, especially, operate on the norming of white cultural and social expectations, which has led to an exclusionary deficit-based assessment of non-dominant groups (Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, and Terenzini, 2003; Yosso, 2005). However, study of whiteness and white privilege has not extended to the community college setting. Woodall (2013) argued that learning about the power and privilege encapsulated within whiteness is essential to challenging the racism and discrimination that is perpetuated in our society, and especially in our educational and labor systems. If students and teachers, especially white students and teachers, are able to garner an awareness of privilege bestowed because of their whiteness, then they can work to actively disrupt the structural and societal mechanisms that maintain inequities and “perpetuate racialized human suffering” (p.3). However, this requires white students and teachers to overcome both lack of training and resistance to engaging in examinations of whiteness.

CRT and CWS share many of the same perspectives and goals. Though a compliment to CRT, CWS focus explicitly on the often invisible, unacknowledged, and insidious pervasiveness of white power and privilege. According to Matias et al. (2014), CWS “focuses on problematizing the normality of hegemonic whiteness, arguing that in doing so whites deflect, ignore, or dismiss their role, racialization, and privilege in race dynamics...[and] provides a framework to examine why whites believe they are not a part of race when they actively invest in white racial production” (p. 3). David Gillborn (2006) also addresses the complimentary nature of CWS to CRT, stating, “it is insufficient to merely state a concern with how whiteness is organized and understood. What matters for whiteness studies within CRT is the deeply critical and radical nature of the questioning” (p. 26).

Care

One of the ways whiteness is reproduced in education is through student-teacher interactions. Authentic care is informed by Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and acknowledges that classroom space is one way of discussing whiteness, but that faculty who are centered in whiteness are unable to relate to students culturally and do not have desire to bring that in pedagogically, which limits teacher ability to have authentic care for students (Valenzuela, 1999). Authentic care has its origins in Nel Noddings’s (1984) framework on caring posits the role of the caring teacher to initiate a relationship with a

focus on student welfare—student needs and well-being are central, but those needs are generated by the student. In Noddings's (2012) words "it is important not to confuse what the cared-for wants with that which we think he should want. We must listen, not just 'tell', assuming that we know what the other needs," (p.773). Students are empowered to express their needs and have their needs addressed by a caring teacher who has taken the time to establish a relationship of trust with them. Once this relationship exists, reciprocal interactions occur in which students feel cared for, and are thus able to care about school.

In most educational settings, students are asked, or even commanded, to care about impersonal content, things, and ideas, but are not given any indication that school or teachers care about their subjective reality (Noddings, 1984; Valenzuela, 1999). Often, the caring that is displayed in schools is superficial, in that it focuses on the teachers and not the relationship with the students itself. Teachers may work hard to teach students what they believe students need, or to help them succeed in ways they feel that students are failing, and are often lauded for displaying a "moral character of caring" (p.773, Noddings, 2012). However, superficial care is a display of power and paternalism that does not acknowledge the student as more than a recipient, thus negating the true caring relationship. Literature applying care to higher education settings is limited, with most research taking place in nursing program settings. In a

study focused on MBA students, Hawk and Lyons (2008) found that students experienced lack of care by at least one faculty member in the course of their program.

More recently, caring theorists, including Noddings herself, have begun to recognize the importance of explicitly addressing issues of race, culture, authoritarianism, and white privilege (Noddings, 2012; Pennington, Brock, & Ndura, 2012; Rolón-Dow, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Though caring theories initially operated with overt colorblindness, theorists are increasingly taking a critical view of caring that is race-conscious, known as critical care (Rolón-Dow). Critical care challenges the dominant white narratives of what caring looks like and the supposed neutrality of merit-based systems, and focuses on building authentic relationships that address dynamics of power, marginalization, and difference that many students experience. Critical care also seeks to dispute deficit-based beliefs of students, and engage teachers, especially white teachers, instead in understanding their own privilege and the insidious supremacy of whiteness in educational systems, then engaging authentically with students (Pennington, Brock, & Ndura; Rolón-Dow).

Schools have long engaged in violent processes of forced assimilation that supports the dominance of whiteness and often leaves students feeling devalued (Valenzuela, 1999). Part of critical caring lies in the process of rehumanizing education for students who have been constantly dehumanized as they encounter explicit and

implicit messages that who they are and the cultural values they hold are meaningless in schools (Gutierrez, 2018). Rehumanizing education happens through countering the marginalization and othering that students of color experience in the course of their education by privileging distinct, non-dominant narratives, valuing cultural practices and norms that are different from those of dominant, white culture, empowering students to be part of their own education, and engaging in authentic, critical caring relationships.

First-generation College Students

First-generation college students have been found to be less likely to graduate college than continuing-generation students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). As such, their parents typically lack the preexisting knowledge about essential skills that students need in order to successfully interact in academic settings (Collier & Morgan, 2007; Karp & Bork, 2014). These skills range from recognizing that various instructors have different expectations and rules from one another, to knowing how to fill out an application for financial aid. Thus, first-generation students in general are at a disadvantage when entering the higher education system, as they do not have family they can turn to for contextual clarification and academic support (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). It follows logically that if first-generation students are graduating at lower rates than continuing-generation students, they also have more limited career opportunities

and access to resources. The constructs of social and cultural capital are of central importance in the discussion of first-generation college students' resources and imperative to any program directed at serving this population.

As discussed earlier, one of the characteristics in the definition of first-generation college students implies that they lack social and cultural capital (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1973) —contextualized, in this case, with the knowledge and networks to successfully navigate the higher education system. Key to understanding social and cultural capital in education is that the dominant social codes and practices are those of the white middle class (Karp & Bork, 2014; Yosso, 2005). On a systemic level, this means that students who do not possess knowledge of cultural codes as well as relationship networks are at a distinct disadvantage. It is also critical to consider that, as the educational system is a primary setting for disseminating these cultural values, the system is set up to assume that students have the background knowledge to properly navigate it, thus excluding those who are unfamiliar with that system, such as first-generation students (Dumais, 2002). This then leaves the family as a primary provider of dominant cultural knowledge, which, as Dumais critically highlights, “the acquisition of cultural capital and subsequent access to academic rewards depend upon the cultural capital passed down by the family, which in turn, is largely dependent on social class”

(p. 44). Educational knowledge, access, and success then become very intertwined with social class and socio-economic standing.

First-generation students have been shown to be more likely than continuing-generation students to be low-income (Hottinger & Rose, 2006; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Somers, Woodhouse, & Cofer, 2004), thus further disadvantaging this population. For first-generation students, many of whom are not part of dominant groups, marginalization becomes part of their experience in higher education, especially when coupled with lower levels of academic preparation and performance that this population experiences (Sarcedo, Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2015). This has an impact on educational aspirations, and, consequently, success and persistence rates of first-generation college students.

One of the additional challenges that first-generation and low-income students increasingly face is food and housing insecurity (Blagg, Whitmore-Schanzenback, Gundersen & Ziliak, 2017). These challenges in meeting basic needs have an impact on students' academic performance and outcomes. Recent research shows that the number of students experiencing food and housing insecurity has increased since the last economic depression, with over half of the country's community college students experiencing food insecurity (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). In response to the needs highlighted by this research, legislation with attention to food insecurity issues for

college students has recently been passed in California. SB 85 allocates one-time funding of \$7.5 million to the UCs, CSUs, and community colleges towards this problem (SB85, 2017).

The dominant cultural capital in higher educational systems is considered to be that of the white middle class (Yosso, 2005; Karp & Bork, 2014). As the dominant groups among faculty and administration, in governing and creating policy, as well as of the students at institutions of higher education, white middle class values and perspectives permeate all aspects of colleges and universities. Karp and Bork (2014) found in their study of community college students and faculty attitudes at community colleges in Virginia, white middle class values prioritize education over other responsibilities, such as work; but this assumption does not recognize the reality of many low-income students who need to work in order to cover the costs of school (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). For first-generation students, this difference has an impact on how socially and academically integrated they feel into their college (Sarcedo et al., 2015).

Inherent in the definition of cultural capital is the assumed implicit transmission of these values by those who are part of the dominant groups, effectively marginalizing those who do not come from a white middle class background (Tierney, 1999; Yosso, 2005). Curriculum is taught many times from the white narrative and history—for

example, Dixon and Rousseau (2005) found in their analysis of critical race theory in education, the choice of books/authors used in English classes many times are white and from the literary canon; the types of history courses offered, which center around United States and state history as told from traditional perspectives, and information that represents those perspectives presented as fact, as opposed to one part of a multifaceted narrative.

An additional aspect of the lack of cultural capital first-generation students encounter is related to faculty expectations. In their study of students and faculty that teach first year students at a large, public, four-year university, Collier and Morgan (2008) examined differences in student and faculty perceptions of the student role and expectations faculty have of students. They found that, in looking at the skills and knowledge that students are assumed to possess when they enter college: knowing the purpose of a syllabus, access and knowledge of computers, navigating financial aid applications are examples of activities with which first-generation students struggle. Other studies (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Sarcedo et al., 2015; Tierney, 1999) have found similar outcomes, which the authors attribute to dominant, white middle class capital. As first-generation college students tend to be low-income and of underrepresented minority groups, they do not possess the implicit knowledge of white middle class capital that pervades colleges and universities, thus they either learn that

information or face serious barriers to success (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Karp & Bork, 2014).

In terms of academic preparation, social and cultural capital are critical to providing information and resources that students need to succeed. First-generation college students tend to be not as well-prepared academically as their continuing-generation peers. In a seminal study of characteristics of 4,000 first-generation college students, Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, and Nora (1996) found that first-generation college students have lower levels of academic performance and achievement, lower degree aspirations, and do not interact as much with peers or teachers as continuing-generation students. Further research has supported the findings of this study, and found additional nuances of first-generation student characteristics. Perception of abilities, which is tied directly to academic preparation and how academically successful student's perceive themselves, is hugely influential on the goals first-generation college students feel they can accomplish, which is also closely tied with persistence in achieving their academic goals (Petty, 2014).

For first-generation students, forming relationships with professors, who potentially constitute incredibly valuable sources of support, is also difficult. Faculty are in a unique position in that they are the primary purveyors of academic and cultural capital for first-generation students. However, these students do not necessarily know

how to reach out to their professors, or may not be able to do so during set office hours (Garcia & Tierney, 2011). Building a relationship with first-generation students is a crucial step for counselors and faculty to take. In their study of first year students at a four-year university, Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, and Salomone (2002) found that when a student has made close ties to someone they feel they can go to for guidance on their academics as well as other aid, they were able to perform better. However, in a study of 2,685 first year students at four and two year colleges, Terenzini et al. (1996) found that first-generation students were more likely to feel that faculty and staff were not genuinely concerned with their development. First-generation students do not necessarily lack the ability; they just have not had access to the knowledge and resources that continuing generation students have (Collier & Morgan, 2007). Student-faculty interaction is a critical means of transmitting information, expectations, beliefs, and behaviors between the two groups. Faculty have the potential to make some of the largest impacts on first-generation college students; yet very few studies have researched this, and even fewer in the context of community college (Karp & Bork, 2014).

Cultural and social capital, representing white middle class values, are essential knowledge, skills and behaviors that college students are expected to possess in order to succeed in systems of higher education. This knowledge is also necessary for academic

and social integration into higher education institutions. Many first-generation college students do not possess this capital and are underprepared academically, which poses a barrier to academic integration. First-generation students enter college at lower levels of math and English, and tend to report lower self-perceptions of ability (Núñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 2010). These factors are important in influencing first-generation students' ultimate academic goals and their perceptions of being able to accomplish those goals.

Using the concept of social reproduction as a focal point of analysis, CRT and CWS will guide this study by allowing me to conduct research that acknowledges not only the salience of race and racism, but also the pervasiveness of whiteness and privilege, as well as reframe how first-generation students are thought about, specifically in the community college setting. Whiteness is deeply embedded into systems and structures, and schools are an efficient means of reproduction of whiteness. For first-generation college students, who do not have the knowledge or context through their families of how these systems function, entering college becomes an experience that is fraught with learning to navigate new systems. These systems privilege white values, and often first-generation students are forced to disregard personal and cultural values they hold that do not align with the systems they are trying to navigate.

Chapter Three: Methodology *Introduction*

Research Design and Methodology

The research design and methodology for this qualitative study are presented in two main sections: 1) an overview of the design and research question; and 2) the methodology section which describes participation and sampling, data collection procedures, and data analysis of this qualitative study.

Aim and Research Questions

Overview

The purpose of the study was to better understand the ways social reproduction, and in particular white privilege, is enacted in the community college classroom as perceived by first-generation college students, with the hope of obtaining further information on the factors that impact the success of first-generation community college students.

While there has been little research on social reproduction in the community college setting or with first-generation college students, there has been research on social reproduction in K-12 contexts as well as, separately, research on first-generation college students in the community college setting.

In this research study, I sought to examine the research questions: How is social reproduction enacted in the community college classroom? How do first-generation students perceive social reproduction in the community college classroom?

As the researcher, I conducted a qualitative study, since the goal of the study was to become familiar with the perception of social reproduction of first-generation college students (Creswell, 2014; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). The intent was to explore an aspect of first-generation community college students that has not been well researched. Straus and Corbin's (1990) assertion that qualitative research methods can be effectively employed to improve our understanding of a practice about which not much is known was applicable. Through the use of qualitative research, the participants' voice is used to uncover their views. According to Eisner (1991), because qualitative research is descriptive, it incorporates the "presence of voice in the text" (p. 36). The constructivist view posits that individuals create subjective meanings of their experiences and environment. These meanings are numerous and complex, and allow individuals to understand the world they live in. The goal of research in the constructivist stance is to unearth the complexity of meanings and allow the subjective voice of participants to manifest – the participants are the experts of their subjective meanings, and the researcher works to understand the subjective meanings. It is important to note that in the constructivist view, social, historical, cultural, and

relational contexts all play a part in the formation of subjective meanings, and are also an area of focus in the research, as the various contexts influence the individual greatly. The individual contexts are often formed through interactions with others, thus researchers also focus on the process of interactions among various individuals to aid in understanding and interpreting subjective meanings. Researchers in the constructivist view also recognize that their own background, context, and subjective meanings influence the data interpretation, and acknowledge that these things affect the research process (Creswell).

Given the importance of understanding context and subjective meanings to the constructivist view (Creswell, 2014), this qualitative study was conducted in the constructivist stance, as the goal of the research is to become familiar with how social reproduction is enacted and reproduced in the community college classroom and understand the subjective meanings of the first-generation students who experience social reproduction. The intent is to explore an area of community college teaching and learning that has not been well researched. Straus and Corbin's (1990) assertion that qualitative research methods can be effectively employed to improve our understanding of the enactment of social reproduction in the community college classroom, for which not much is known, is applicable.

In this study, the grounded theory approach is used in tandem with theoretical lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), which are premised on the existence of race and racism, and the prevalence of whiteness. In the grounded theory approach, coding is an iterative process in which data collection and analysis occur simultaneously (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Codes, categories, and themes emerge from the data as it is being collected and analyzed, and not from any predetermined or a priori coding categories. The use of these two critical frameworks with the grounded theory approach ensures that the emerging theory construction is inextricably influenced at every step by the acknowledgement of the pervasive existence of racism and whiteness.

Methodology

Population and Sampling

The study consisted of a purposeful sample of eight first-generation college students and three tenured English faculty. Purposeful sampling was used because a random sample was not appropriate, desirable, or feasible from a methodological or practical perspective. There are a number of concepts and terms associated with the sampling process used in this study. The sampling population used in this study was small so it does not allow me to generalize to a larger population. A population is a set of individuals that meets sampling criteria and the target population is the entire

population that the researcher would like to learn more about and understand (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2005). In this study, first-generation college student enrolled in the first transfer level English course, and tenured faculty members who taught the first transfer level English course were the target populations.

The accessible population is one that meets established criteria and is accessible in terms of researcher availability, time and funding. The accessible sample was first-generation community college students enrolled in the first transfer level English course, and tenured faculty members who taught the first transfer level English course within a specific community college in California's San Francisco Bay Area.

Description of the Setting

College of the Bay Area (CBA) is a community college in the San Francisco Bay Area with a student population of approximately 10,000 students. About two-thirds of the students are enrolled part-time, and approximately half the student population is under the age of 22. The college is a minority majority school, with 28% of the student population identifying as white, 29% as Latino, 23% as Asian, 7% as Filipino, 3% as African American, and 2% as Pacific Islander (CCCCO Datamart, 2017a). The faculty breakdown is 60% white, 12% Asian, 5% Latino, and all other groups are under 2% or not represented (CCCCO Datamart, 2017b). About 23% of the students enrolled at CBA are first-generation students.

College of the Bay Area was chosen for this study for several reasons. CBA has been fairly stable in terms of employee and administrative turnover for quite some time, meaning that faculty members who are hired tend to remain at the school. Faculty are familiar with the student population and, in addition, gain consistent teaching experience. Furthermore, as an employee at the college, I have access to faculty and students that I may not have at a college that I do not work at.

I gained access to the participants in this study through various methods. The faculty members, once identified in collaboration with the division dean and faculty chair of the English department, were contacted individually requesting participation in the study after outlining the study design. I also met individually with the faculty members to further discuss the study, expectations and commitment on their part, and to ensure that they fully understood all the components of the study. Once the faculty members agreed to participate, I scheduled and conducted three class observations with each of them. I scheduled faculty interviews after the three class observations took place so that the faculty members would be somewhat more familiar and comfortable with me, as well as to avoid influencing interactional patterns in the classes. For the student participants, I gave a short presentation in each of the participating class sections outlining my study and introducing myself, and gave the students the demographic survey that would identify them as first-generation students. Once the first-generation

students who were willing to participate were identified, I contacted them to arrange participation in a focus group with a description of what would be involved. I intentionally scheduled the focus group for after the three class observations took place so that the students would be somewhat more familiar and comfortable with me.

Role of the Researcher

I currently work as an academic counselor at College of the Bay Area. The faculty members that I interviewed are work colleagues. The students are incoming first-generation college students, and as such, do not have any existing relationship with me. I have been a full-time faculty member at CBA for two years. I have previously worked in programs at other community colleges directed specifically at supporting first-generation college students, who tend to have lower academic outcomes than non-first-generation students. I am also aware of the fact that, in California, first-generation students comprise 40% of the community college student population. Over the course of the last several years, it has become increasingly clear to me that most interventions to increase academic outcomes for first-generation students operate from a deficit frame. They are structured to provide information and interventions to students who “don’t have the skills or proper behaviors” to successfully navigate the bureaucratic and systemically inequitable structures in which our intuitions of higher education operate. These programs focus exclusively on teaching the students to adapt to a system that

operates on the Freirean banking model of education, in which faculty are viewed as authority figures who deposit knowledge into passive and dependent students (Freire, 1972), but does not address one of the primary, and arguably one of the most influential, factors in learning: the teachers. As such, I wanted to look at both the students and the faculty interactions, behaviors, and beliefs to provide an alternative view as to the outcomes of first-generation students: that of social reproduction.

Given the use of the constructivist stance in this qualitative study, it is also important to discuss my own background and context. I was raised in a semi-rural area of New Mexico as the elder of two in a white, middle class family. In my upbringing, I was instilled with a very strong sense of fairness and taught to speak up if something was wrong, which formed the beginnings of deeply ingrained beliefs in equity and advocacy. In the course of my education and personal relationships, I also began to acknowledge, learn about, and understand white privilege. Power and privilege were two concepts that were central to my master's program in counseling, which I was fortunate enough to complete at the diverse and social justice oriented San Francisco State University. In the course of my master's program, I also began to learn about the experiences of first-generation college students. Once I began working, I coordinated a program for incoming students, many of whom were first-generation, and I worked closely with them as they navigated college for the first time. This position allowed me

to see the institutional and systemic barriers that this student population faces, such as assuming that all students have access to internet and technology, that they know to fill out FAFSA to qualify for financial aid, or that they go to a professor's office hours if they have questions or want additional help. These are things that I did not face as the daughter of parents with college degrees. Now, given my position and role, I am able to advocate for institutional changes to begin to address some of the barriers that students face. Since then, in the course of my doctoral studies, I have come to see more clearly the systemic inequities that many of my students contend with on a daily basis, and that so much of it is inseparable from white privilege.

Participant Selection

The participants in the study consist of three tenured English faculty members teaching the first transfer level English course in the Fall 2017 semester and eight first-generation community college students over the age of 18 who are enrolled in the identified first transfer level English courses at the College of the Bay Area. The faculty members are work colleagues, but do not have any other relationship with me. The students are both new and continuing students in the Fall 2017 semester and were not known to me prior to conducting the initial class visit.

In selecting the faculty participants, it was important to identify a faculty group that had increased probability of working with first-generation students, and where the

faculty pool was large enough that there would be a diverse amount of teaching experience and individuals. It is also important for the faculty involved to be tenured, as tenure ensures that each faculty member has taught a minimum of four years, thus have teaching experience they can draw on. The English department was selected, given that most students need to take English classes, as they are required for a degree or transfer, and so there are a large number of sections offered each semester, and many students take English in their first semester. The first transferable level of English was identified as the best course level option as there were at least three tenured faculty members teaching sections of the course, and given recent changes to the English placement process, a large number of first time students are placing into this level of English. Faculty participants were identified using the following criteria: tenured faculty teaching the first transferable level of English course at community college, and having no relationship with me other than being work colleagues. Three English faculty were selected, as this provides a varied enough participant pool to expect different teaching styles, pedagogies, and levels of experience to be able to gather data that might reveal contrasts.

All of the participating students were enrolled in their first or second year of CBA, which enabled me to better capture their experience as they transitioned into college. Student participants self-identified as first-generation students and voluntarily

participated in the study, which happened through filling out a demographics form that each of the instructors distributed to the observed class. Student participants were identified using the following criteria: first-generation student, defined as highest parental education level is less than achievement of a bachelor's degree, a student in one of the English classes being observed, and indicated that they were willing to participate in the research study. Two to three student participants were chosen from each classroom to participate in student focus groups to be able to provide a varied perspective of the experiences of first-generation students.

Participants

Faculty participants consisted of three tenured English teachers. Two identified as male and one as female, all in their 50s. All participants identified as white. All had been teaching English at the community college level for over 15 years, most of that time at CBA. All three participants were also native to the Bay Area.

Student participants consisted of eight self-identified first-generation college students who were taking one of the three section of transfer English classes that I observed. Six identified as male and two as female, and ranged in age from 18-20. Two participants identified as Pacific Islander, one as African American, one as Latino, one as Arab, one as white, and two as mixed African American/Mexican and

Tongan/Salvadorian. All student participants were in their first or second year in college.

The three observed English classes had slightly different demographics across them. One section had 16 students, was split 50% male/female and 50% first-generation/non-first generation, and ranged in age from 17 to 31, with 31% of students identifying as Latino, 31% as Asian, 19% as white, 13% as Pacific Islander, and one student identifying as mixed. The second section had 19 students, was split 42% female/58% male and 74% first-generation, and ranged in age from 18-24, with 47% of students identifying as Latino, 21% as white, 10% Asian, 10% Pacific Islander, and 10% Filipino. The third section had 21 students, was all male, as the section was also designated for student-athletes on the football team, had 71% of students identify as first-generation, and ranged in age from 18-20 with 52% identifying as African American/mixed, 24% identifying as Pacific Islander, 14% identifying as mixed, one identifying as Arab, and one student identifying as white.

Ethics and Protection of Human Subjects

A proposal for this qualitative study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board and Office of Human and Animal Protections for review. Approval by the Institutional Review Board for this qualitative study was obtained on June 13, 2017. The proposal included a description of potential risks of participation in the study, as

well as measures taken to address those risks, which are outlined here. Participation in this research study involves risks; one such risk may be potential loss of privacy. The risk will be lessened by keeping the research data in a password-protected program on a device that only the researcher and advisor have access to. Another risk may be loss of confidentiality. The risk will be lessened by providing pseudonyms at all steps in the data collection process and analysis for all participants. A risk may be potential impact on grades of student participants if faculty had access to focus group data. The risk will be lessened by providing pseudonyms to all participants, and only allowing faculty access to the aggregate, which will be destroyed in three years after completion of doctorate. A potential risk to faculty would occur if management gains access to the raw data. The risk will be lessened by providing pseudonyms, only working with tenured faculty, and only allowing management access to the aggregate, which will be destroyed in three years after completion of doctorate. Minimal deception may be required in gathering data from participants. Research designs often require that the full intent of the study not be explained prior to participation. Participants received a full debriefing on the purpose and the procedures of the research upon completion of the study. All participants were given an informed consent form to sign alerting them to the possible risks of participating in this study. The initial interview protocols and student demographic questionnaire were also submitted for review.

Data Collection Methods

In Fall 2017, I conducted three class observations each of three sections of transfer level English for a total of nine observations. The class observations were audio recorded, I took extensive notes during each class observation, and additionally I used a class observation rubric to numerically record the number of times certain behaviors or interactions occurred (see Class Observation Rubric – Appendix A). Class observations were conducted first, with an average of two per week. Class sessions were recorded, but I also wrote detailed notes for each class session I observed that recorded student-teacher interactions, body language, student and teacher movement in the classroom, and tone. I interviewed each of the three faculty participants individually for 1-1 ½ hours (see interview protocol – Appendix B). The faculty interviews focused on educational philosophy, teaching experience, perception of student challenges, and student interactions, and were all recorded and transcribed. I conducted three focus groups with self-identified first-generation college student participants who were enrolled in the identified transfer English courses, with a total of eight students, no more than three students per focus group, and each student participating only once (see Focus Group Protocol – Appendix C). The student focus groups were asked questions on interactions with faculty, student experiences, reflections on challenges and responsibilities, and were all recorded and transcribed. During this time, I also conducted a review of the

syllabi for each course. During this review, I looked for information on student behavior, expectations, the student and teacher roles, expressions of faculty values, and other salient information. The reviews of the syllabi, the class observations, and the faculty interviews were then compared to see if data from each could be triangulated. The research took place on the College of the Bay Area campus.

I created interview and focus group protocols to help ensure consistency across the interviews. In addition, a demographic survey (Appendix D) was given to students in the classes I observed in order to identify and contact those who self-identified as first-generation college students. These students were contacted and asked if they would be interested in participating in a focus group, and eight agreed to do so. I collected data from October 2017-November 2017. Participants were not compensated for participation, though each of the student participants was provided food of their choice during or following the focus groups. All participants received a copy of the interview questions in advance. During the interview process, especially with the focus groups, I found that multiple questions were often answered in a single participant response, and thus adjusted the protocol administration accordingly.

The data collection procedures allowed for a variety of data to be collected. Curricular materials, class observation notes from multiple observations, multiple individual interviews, and student focus groups resulted in a large amount of data,

which then permitted me to analyze for triangulation across the data. The data collection procedures outlined above are also appropriate for addressing the research questions of this study, relating to the factors that impact the success of first-generation community college students looking at the influence and impact of social reproduction in the classroom on students.

Data Analysis Methods

I used interpretive approach for the qualitative data analysis, particularly a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and coding of themes to discover emergent categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data was gathered and analyzed in tandem, and the initial data analysis of early data collection informed the data collection and analysis of later processes. Initial coding was conducted on collected class observation data, interviews, and focus groups. In Vivo coding, Process coding, and Descriptive coding were utilized during the initial coding phase of data analysis. In Vivo coding “uses participants’ terms as codes to uncover their meanings and understand their emergent actions” (p. 134, Charmaz, 2014). Process coding utilizes gerunds (-ing words) to shed light on participant actions and meaning (Charmaz; Saldana, 2013). Descriptive coding “summarizes in a word or short phrase...the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (p. 87, Saldana). Syllabi were coded using descriptive coding for the initial coding phase, then using focused coding during the

second round coding phase. Each of the class sessions was analyzed in groups of three taught by the same teacher, primarily drawing on descriptive coding for the initial coding phase, then using focused coding during the second round coding phase. While first and second round coding was taking place on the data collected during class observations, I was conducting student focus groups and faculty interviews. Upon transcribing the interviews and focus groups, I engaged in initial coding of the data. Each student focus group was color-coded by participant, then coded using *in vivo*, process, and descriptive coding methods simultaneously. Each faculty interview was color-coded by participant, then coded using *in vivo*, process, and descriptive coding methods simultaneously. Following initial analysis of the interview and focus group transcriptions, I engaged in focused coding to find significant and frequent themes, ideas, and experiences across each participant group. I also reviewed the transcriptions for quotes that were particularly impactful and illuminating.

Second round coding was conducted on the data using a Focused Grounded Theory Coding approach. Focused coding uses the most frequent and important codes gathered from initial coding and serves to sort and analyze large amounts of data (Charmaz). Data from course materials also may provide some triangulation for themes that potentially arise in my inductive analysis of qualitative data, meaning that the different data sources were compared to see if a phenomenon was only present in one

area, or was visible in multiple data sources (Jick, 1979). Once second round coding was completed, the student focus group data and faculty interview data were reviewed to reveal five primary findings that included both student and faculty participants in each.

Chapter Four: Results

Overview

This qualitative study began with the desire to answer two questions: How is social reproduction enacted in the community college classroom? How do first-generation students perceive social reproduction in the community college classroom? Using Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies to further examine the impact of social reproduction on first-generation community college students. I analyzed syllabi, completed nine class observations, engaged in three student focus groups with eight individual student participants, and conducted three faculty interviews, which provided important insights into the perceptions and experiences of first-generation students and faculty at CBA. Through the rich data collected, five key findings emerged: first-generation student experiences, care, faculty communication of values, faculty perception of students versus students' perceptions of themselves, and authority and privilege.

The chapter begins with student and faculty participant introductions, in which self-reported demographic characteristics are given. Additionally, for the student participants, pertinent information on student obligations and academic goals are included. For the faculty participants, information on the faculty member's own academic journey and community college teaching experience is provided.

Subsequently, each section of the key findings is presented. In each section of findings, the eight students and three faculty voices are represented to allow the reader to develop and understanding of the student and faculty perspectives as they relate to the five key findings.

Participant Introductions

Students

An is a 19-year-old second year student who identifies as Pacific Islander. She immigrated to the US after graduating from high school in the Pacific Islands, and lives with extended family. An does not work outside the home, but is charged with caring for the household and family members. Her academic goal is to become a meteorologist and she plans to transfer to a local four-year university upon completing her required lower division coursework.

Bo is a 19-year-old second year student who identifies as Samoan. He was born and raised in the Bay Area, and lives at home with his parents and younger siblings. Bo does not work outside the home, but is charged with caring for his younger siblings, as both his parents work night shifts (graveyard). His academic goal is to transfer to a four-year university and study criminal justice or sports management.

Cindy is a 20-year-old second year student who identifies as white. She is from Nevada, but moved to the Bay Area to attend community college and currently lives

with relatives. Cindy currently works over 40 hours a week as a receptionist.

Additionally, she is involved with freelancing work. Her academic goal is to work in television or film, and she is on track to transfer to a local four-year university at the end of the semester.

David is a 20-year-old second year student who identifies as Latino. He is originally from Peru, but moved to the US during high school and currently lives with extended family. He is also a member of the Army Reserves and regularly participates in training exercises to fulfill those commitments. His academic goal is to become a pharmacist, which means transferring to a four-year university then completing a graduate degree.

Eli is an 18-year-old first year student who identifies as Persian and Filipino. He is from the Bay Area and is in his first semester of college. Eli works part time with delivery apps that allow him to have a flexible schedule around his school schedule. His academic goal is to major in Business Finance and transfer to a four-year university after completing all lower division requirements.

Freddy is an 18-year-old first year student who identifies as Mexican and African American. He is from the Bay Area, is in his first semester of college, and currently lives with his mother. Freddy does not work but is part of the football team, which in addition to his up to two hours commute each way, takes up a significant

amount of his time. His academic goal is to transfer to a four-year university using football to pay for a scholarship, and he is undecided about his major.

George is an 18-year-old first year student who identifies as African American. He is from the Bay Area, is in his first semester of college, and currently lives with his parents. George does not work but is part of the football team, which in addition to his up to two hours commute each way, takes up a significant amount of his time. His academic goal is to transfer to a four-year university, and he is undecided about his major.

Hector is a 19-year-old student who is in his first year after having enrolled and dropped out last year due to an unstable living situation. He identifies as Salvadoran and Tongan. He is from the Bay Area and currently lives with his father and extended family members. Hector works part-time on weekends and is also part of the football team, which takes up his weekdays. His academic goal is to transfer with a major in business.

Faculty

Tom, who identifies as white, is a member of the English faculty at CSM, where he has taught for about 15 years. His father was an English teacher at a different community college in the Bay Area. He attended community college for a year, then transferred to UC Berkeley for his Bachelor's degree. After graduating, he travelled in

Europe and Asia and taught English abroad. Tom then attended UC Berkeley for a Master's degree and subsequently completed an MFA program at University of Oregon. He then returned to the Bay Area and followed in his father's footsteps—he found a job as an adjunct for a couple of years, then was hired full-time at CSM, where he has been ever since.

Trina, who identifies as white, is a member of the English faculty at CSM, where she has taught for over 20 years. She is from the Bay Area and both her parents were teachers. She attended a small liberal arts college in New York straight out of high school. Upon graduating, she worked and travelled for two years, then applied to a local CSU for graduate school with the intention of becoming a high school teacher. While in the program she was exposed to the community college setting and shifted her focus. After getting her master's degree, she worked as an adjunct at CSU and community colleges for four years, then was hired full-time at CSM, where she has been ever since.

Ken, who identifies as white, is a member of the English faculty at CSM, where he has taught for 18 years. He is from the Bay Area, and after dropping out of high school, he began attending community college due to pressure from his mother. He was enrolled in community college for close to six years before transferring to Ohio State to complete a bachelor's degree. Due to his community college experience, he returned to the Bay Area for graduate school with the intention of teaching at a community college.

After getting his master's degree, he worked as an adjunct at community colleges for two years, then was hired full-time at CSM, where he has been ever since.

Key Findings

There are five primary findings of the research. The findings are presented as follows: the experiences and challenges of first-generation college students; the importance of care, which was identified by students as a critical element in student success; faculty communication of values, which is framed through whiteness and meritocracy; faculty perception of students compared to student self-perception; and authority and privilege as salient elements of student-teacher interactions.

First-generation College Students

This section reviews the distinct experiences of first-generation college students as they enter college. The student participants identified issues of transition from high school, not knowing how to navigate the system, disconnect from family, pressure of serving as a role model, the lack of connection of the material in their classes, not understanding faculty expectations, and the disconnect in identity that they experience. Faculty also identified issues that they have seen with first-generation students, primarily seeing that students experience a lack of support and understanding from family, which then affects their academics.

Transition

First generation students often struggle with the transition into the college setting. Part of that is the difference in environment from high school to college, but in part this challenge is also in being asked to navigate a new and unfamiliar system. Eli discussed his transition from high school to college in terms of a stark difference in expectations and, consequently, his time commitment once he enrolled in college:

I just graduated from high school this past May, and the jump from high school to college is a lot. High school I could breeze by not doing assignments, wait late at night, do an assignment in 10-20 minutes. Studying, I could study a day before, go to the library at lunch to do a quick assignment here it's like—I know they say whatever units you're signed up for, that's how many hours outside the classroom you're gonna have to put in, and I think that's actually true. I put in more work now than I feel like I put it over my four years. (Interview: 11/17/17)

Eli's experience of the jump from high school to college was echoed by other student participants. They found the college expectations to be higher in terms of the time commitment, amount of work, and the academic level of assignments. Related to this is the challenge of being thrown into a completely new educational system without support or help in how to navigate that system. In discussing her first semester, An talks about not having the needed knowledge to literally engage in a computer science course she was enrolled in:

I remember my first class I took, was introduction to computer science and it was online. It was an accident, and I didn't know there's an online thing and in there it says we need a code, so I was doing nothing until I asked one of the girls who was in another class with me. (Interview: 11/22/17)

Bo was able to reach out to a peer for help, but other students were not so lucky. Bo spent an entire semester in a course and doing all the work, only to find out at the end that he was never officially enrolled and did not receive credit. Lack of familiarity with how the system works often plays a detrimental role in student progress, and many times the students did not have the knowledge to advocate for themselves.

Navigating the System

Entering the college system without knowledge of how these systems function puts first generation students into a situation of not knowing what they don't know, the consequences of which can range from minor missteps to dropping out of school. Bo captured that sentiment when he discussed his enrollment experience:

I came over here not knowing anything—no classes, no financial aid, no ID number, anything. I was so nervous, I don't even have an ID number, and I'm filling out sheets and it keeps asking me for an ID number, is this really gonna happen or am I gonna drop out? (Interview: 11/22/17)

In reflecting on his first semester in college, David echoed the experience of not knowing how to navigate the system and not having knowledge of resources:

I was so naïve, everything was a challenge, everything was new, getting to study, getting to take care of my units, my classes and everything—yeah, it was so challenging back then. You're new, so you don't know anything, you don't know how the system works, you don't know about financial aid, you don't know about FAFSA, you don't know about EOPS, all this stuff that you can do, you can get. (Interview: 11/17/17)

Disconnect from Family

One of the most prominent areas of discussion among the student participants centered on a sense of disconnect from family. The experience of being the first, and sometimes only, person in their family to go to college framed a complicated and nuanced balance that the students find between the expectations and reality of their family, especially parents who are not familiar with the systems and expectations of higher education in the US, and the rigid requirements of college itself. Hector explains the tensions that he has had to navigate with his family since enrolling in college:

I'm probably the only one that's even really made an attempt to really go to college [in my family]. My parents look at me like I'm still supposed to provide, like I'm supposed to give them money. I'm blessed to still be able to stay with

them—I stay with my dad, and he does pay the bills, pay the rent, whatever it is.

Then at the same time, with food, gas—I don't want to say they don't see that because they have their own responsibilities, but the whole putting yourself in my shoes... Both my parents didn't even graduate high school, so it's like they don't really even see the benefit in education. They're just like 'go to school,' but they don't even tell me anything, like I can be anything. You have other people that grow up, 'oh, you could be a lawyer, you could be a doctor, son go study this.' My parents are just like 'go do whatever you want, and don't get in trouble, don't get arrested, don't have the police calling me, don't call me from jail.' That's all I get, I never get any motivation. I don't wanna say it sucks having parents like that, but the fact that they don't see what I'm trying to do, where I'm trying to go with my life, it's pulling me down. (Interview: 11/9/17)

Hector noted the divide that he had to bridge with his family not understanding the time commitment of school and the implication that he did not have the time to work and help provide for the family. He also felt that his parents did not have a full understanding of why he would want to pursue his education and the goals he has set for himself. The tension of his own goals being at odds with the understanding of his parents exemplified a common struggle that students identified. Cindy also spoke to

how the experience of being the first in her family to attend college impacted her relationship with her parents:

It's a lot of trying to figure out how to make it work, and how to make them see where we're coming from because they don't get it, they don't. You can explain it in a million different ways, but if someone hasn't been through the same situation, they're not gonna get it. Even if I ask for help, they're like 'Cindy, we didn't go to school.' It's not a matter of 'oh we can help you,' it's a matter of 'Oh figure out who can.' (Interview: 11/17/17)

While Cindy's parents know that they do not have the personal experience to help her, she feels frustration at the lack of understanding of the school context as well, which is much more nuanced than just connecting with resources. Several students discussed that their families did not understand the much more nuanced, and often unspoken, experience of attending college: the pressures of school, the expectations of teachers, the difficulty of navigating the system without understanding it fully, and the pressure and isolation of being solely liable for all of their school responsibilities without having the support of family or most teachers. Hector expressed his disappointment when he said that "I wish my family understood that, I wish they saw what I was trying to do. I even tried to explain this to them, like I'm trying to put the family on (Interview: 11/9/17). He was trying to "put on" and bring his family up as a collective by virtue of

getting an education and securing what he felt is a better future for himself with more opportunities than his parents had, but felt that his family did not understand the reason for or reality of going to college.

Pressure of Being a Role Model

One of the other areas that the first-generation students identified was the need for and pressure of serving as a role model. George articulated the difficulty of not having a role model, but also being put into the position of serving as a role model:

I have four sisters that didn't go to school, I have no one to look up to. I'm the one they look up to—all their kids look up to me cuz I'm going to school, so this is harder on us, so we have to get good, we have to pass. They're just putting pressure on our shoulders and they don't even know. (Interview: 11/9/17)

Many of the students discussed the feeling of not having anyone who could show them or serve as an example of how to navigate college successfully. However, at the same time, they find themselves suddenly in the position of being that example for younger siblings or nieces and nephews, even their community as a collective, which, as George said, adds a lot of pressure to succeed in a system they are unfamiliar with because they are now accountable to family members. An illustrated that position:

Being the first student in our family that's like the first person to go to college is so hard. It's a burden on my shoulders because I had to prove to my family that I

can do it, that I do not need to drop out or make excuses. It's really tough because I come from a family where I have to be part of a lot of things like church functions or the community. (Interview: 11/22/17)

While these first-generation students oftentimes struggled to succeed and felt that their families did not understand fully the nuanced reality of what being a student entailed for them, they also felt the strain of the responsibility that came with being the first college student in their family—becoming a role model for others.

Lack of Connection to Class Material

Lack of connection of the material in their classes was an issue that surfaced repeatedly as well. Students overwhelmingly did not feel that the material in most of their classes related to them or were relevant to their lives. As David stated, “some professors they choose all books that are outdated, like that's not me, your class is not helping me at all, there's no meaning. I'm just taking your classes just to like pass but I'm not learning anything” (Interview: 11/17/17). The lack of meaning in classes and just attending because the students need to meet requirements, but not because they felt they actually learned something they could relate to, was mentioned frequently. Cindy also articulated this point when she stated:

I'm taking a statistics class that I feel did not help with the statistics that I wanted to figure out—being able to figure out demographics and stuff like that, that's

what I wanted to be able to learn, but it's not meant for that, it's just statistics.

(Interview: 11/17/17)

When Cindy stated, “it’s just statistics,” she was referring to the lack of relevance she felt the class held for her. It is not that she was not interested in the material, but the material was not connected to her interests or life.

Several students also talked about the struggle they faced in not understanding faculty expectations. For example, George discussed his frustration with this issue as follows:

All my work that I turn in, even though it's good, I'll still get a bad grade on it. I can follow the instructions. I follow the instructions exactly how it went, and I still got a bad grade on it. I was like, I follow the instructions, and he'll say I have to put more detail, but literally I answered every single question the assignment, and I'm like just sitting there confused. (Interview: 11/9/17)

George’s example illustrates the often-unspoken expectations that faculty have for students and student work, and the assumption that students know what something like “put more detail” means without providing explicit examples.

Disconnect in Self-identity

Several students talked about having to navigate a disconnect in self-identity in the process of becoming a college student. Much of the pressure that students felt they

connected to family and teachers not fully understanding them—family not understanding the academic side, and teachers not understanding the non-academic side of their lives. An articulates this struggle with feeling that she is part of “two different worlds” that do not align with one another:

When I sit in the class, it’s really complicated because I’ve seen the professor looking at me as if I’m different, I’m a whole different person regard to my background or to my work that I had to turn in, so it all depends on the professor how he or she viewed me. So it’s hard because I feel like I need to commit to the process of my working in the class, and I feel like I want to make a good relationship between me and the teacher, but I also feel like we have two different worlds. It takes a lot for those two worlds in order to know what I have to value about that class, or how the professor has to value myself as a student, as a student that he or she does not know at all, within only that space.

(Interview: 11/22/17)

An's comment illustrates a challenge for many first-generation students, in which the multiple identities that they have do not align with one another. This creates dissonance, and for many students, a feeling that they are forced to choose which part of their life is most important – the academic or non-academic. However, this disconnect also takes the form of family not understanding the academic identity that they have created.

Hector speaks to it when he says that “Both my parents didn't even graduate high school, so it's like they don't really even see the benefit in education,” (Interview: 11/9/17). Cindy was equally as frustrated when she said that in talking to her parents about college, “It's a lot of trying to figure out how to make it work, and how to make them see where we're coming from because they don't get it, they don't,” (Interview: 11/17/17). This creates a pressure that pulls students in different, and sometimes opposing, directions. One of the faculty participants, Tom, identified the same issue with one of his former students. Tom had been working with a Pacific Islander student in one of his classes and talked about the tension of trying to instill within her the “culture of education,” which he felt was at odds with her family’s expectations for her: “I met the father for the first time, and he and I had been pulling on one or the other of her arms for the whole semester until the point where she was stretched out” (Interview: 11/13/17).

Faculty Perception of First-Generation Students

The faculty participants discussed their experience working specifically with first-generation students in their classes. There was a general sense of frustration with, and multiple stories about, first-generation students who stopped attending class for at least two weeks, for reasons usually associated with a family obligation, then wanted to return and complete the class. Tom shared a story of one of his students last semester:

I have one student who disappeared – she has been gone for the last month. I didn't drop her, but didn't expect her to come back. She emailed me out of nowhere saying that her brother had gotten extremely ill and she had to take care of him, but that she was ready to come back and sure she could catch up and wanted the work she had missed. I hadn't heard from her all month – there is no way. But to her, she doesn't know that here they have to show up and can't just disappear and expect to come back or do well. (Interview: 11/13/17)

Tom's story illustrates the faculty perspective, which focuses on students not doing what faculty feel they are supposed to do—communicate quickly about issues, attend class, and prioritize school. These are all part of the “culture of education” that Tom references, which speaks to ideal student characteristics. In the eyes of faculty, first-generation students should know, understand, and participate in the culture of education if they want to do well in college. Students need to take responsibility for their education, and when that does not happen to the satisfaction of the faculty, whose expectations are often not communicated in any explicit manner, first-generation students are penalized.

Faculty identified the tension between school and family expectations that first-generation students are often forced to navigate. Ken identified this issue in his comments: “for first-generation students, sometime support is lacking from their

family—in fact, they get the opposite of support, where the family doesn’t understand why a student isn’t working full-time and why they want to go to school” (Interview: 11/7/17). Faculty felt that the family of many first-generation students serves to inhibit academic success because they feel that the cultures students come from do not ascribe to the white understanding of a culture of education. Tom illuminates this point when he states:

First-generation students, they hold on to cultures that hold on to them and that hold them back. You don't want them to abandon anybody, but the conflict is often so stark, it's like yeah family comes first but what about you? If you're a first gen student then that means family doesn't know about education or hasn't gone there or hasn't had that privilege and it doesn't seem like an option—in fact, doing well in school is a betrayal of family. Their family’s culture so often becomes something that restrains them rather than supports them; they don't have role models, they don't have a culture of education, they have not had these goals instilled in them. (Interview: 11/13/17)

The deficit view of first-generation student backgrounds is starkly visible in the faculty comments. Tom’s statement that first-generation students “hold on to cultures that hold on to them and that hold them back” illustrates the belief that, in order for first-generation students to be successful academically, they must leave behind their family

and home culture, as the family and home culture of those who have not attended college are incompatible with academic attainment.

The student participants clearly articulate the many challenges that they face as first-generation students—the transition from high school, not knowing how to navigate the system, disconnect from family, pressure of serving as a role model, the lack of connection of the material in their classes, not understanding faculty expectations, and the disconnect in identity that they experience. They also have to contend with faculty beliefs about their personal values and competence, as well as the implicit message that they will need to choose school over family, leave behind cultural values, and embrace the individualism and meritocracy that is inherent in systems of higher education in order to be successful.

Care

The most salient finding of the student focus groups was the importance and role of care for the students. Every single student spoke to wanting to feel empathy from teachers, feel understood, and feel genuinely cared for. They also discussed at length that most of their teachers, not just the English faculty members but other teachers in the college, did not display these characteristics, though there were a few who did. Faculty also commented on positive displays of care, lack of showing care, and the role care played in interactions with students.

Importance of Care

The positive teacher-student interactions that students experienced were ones in which they felt acknowledged and valued. This took various forms, some seeming basic, as David identifies: "...when they actually get to know your name. Getting to know you or asking like 'hey how you doing, how's everything?'" (Interview: 11/17/17). Even though it may seem simplistic, the acknowledgement and effort of learning a student's name was impactful for the students. Cindy worded her experience in this way: "I feel like some professors want to make the effort to try to get to know you as a person not just as a student" (Interview: 11/17/17). Distinguishing between being a person and being just a student is significant—the participants felt that the role of a student automatically created an impersonal relationship that was transactional. To move beyond the superficial nature of that interaction required intentional effort on the part of the faculty, in which students were acknowledged as being more than just a student—they are multidimensional individuals who exist outside the confines of the classroom. David recounted an experience he had with a history professor in which this process unfolded:

I remember one time I went to her office hours and I spent like three hours with her, we were just talking about like a lot, we talked besides history, like she

actually got to know me, I got to know her. There's some professors that really care about you, they really want to know about you. (Interview: 11/17/17)

As a result of the teacher's investment of time, as well as her curiosity about the student's life and willingness to disclose information about herself beyond just what is presented in the classroom, David felt humanized in that interaction. Freddy discusses a similar sentiment in how he wished his teacher would interact with him in a genuine and caring way:

You'd be surprised if you're a teacher, and like me sitting there going 'this guy doesn't give a fuck about me, this guy doesn't care that I'm failing.' But if you were to just come up to me say, 'hey, I know that you're struggling right now, but how can I help you?' or 'keep trying'—to say something little like that makes so much of a difference because it's like, 'fuck, alright this dude knows I've been struggling, but he's telling me to keep going when I want to give up.' I feel like that would do a lot for me right now in the position I'm in. (Interview: 11/9/17)

For Freddy, the acknowledgement that the teacher sees him, sees that he has been struggling but also that he has been trying, would be very impactful. In this case, though part of Freddy's struggle was with the material, it could be compounded or improved on based on the interaction he has with his instructor. Importantly, the teacher

acknowledgement that what he discussed is not based in a student deficit framework about what the student is doing wrong, or not doing, but is framed around student strengths—in this case, continued effort and not giving up.

Students also discussed examples of teachers who went beyond what most faculty consider the constraints of their job—who went outside the walls of the classroom. For the student participants, expressing concern about a student's life and situation outside of school was incredibly impactful. An recounted how one of her teachers showed care through actions that centered on the outside situations of her students:

Usually every day after class, she gathered everyone who came from the city and then she'd be concerned with those students because they're coming all the way from the other side, so she gave us money for gas or just give us rides here to school or when we go home. That's how I know that there are professors here that care more about students. (Interview: 11/22/17)

The acknowledgement that students have struggles and lives outside of school is critical for students. It is also important to highlight that students feel their teachers can be impactful on both personal and academic fronts. Bo talked about experiencing this with one of his teachers:

Dr. G really cares about us. Dr. G picks me up every morning and takes me to school, he brings me here and then he even takes me home. Dr. G really is one of the professor's that helped me out, and his classes were pretty cool too, he was another one that was very understanding of my situation, what I was going through. I could really talk to Dr. G about everything, so it was pretty cool taking him. He's very motivational to us, he's been really inspirational.

(Interview: 11/22/17)

Bo's comments about Dr. G demonstrate a relationship and interactions of genuine caring on the part of the teacher, and the impact that had on him as a student—he felt motivated and inspired. He also was able to overcome the barrier of transportation, which is a significant issue for many CBA students, because his teacher was willing to reach beyond the classroom. The humanization of students and recognition of the life and multiple roles and responsibilities outside of school that they carry was so important to these students, and it had the effect of motivating them in school because there was a mutual relationship of care that was created as a result.

Lack of Care

Just as important to the students as displays of care by faculty were their experiences with lack of care. From the students' perspective, this was shown in different degrees of care, from superficial care to nonexistent care by faculty. Cindy,

who experienced her share of personal challenges during her time as a student, expressed superficial care by faculty in this way:

I feel like they care to an extent. They care until it affects your work in their class, and then they are like ‘oh, we cared to a point.’ There's a point that like ‘oh you've missed four classes, and they're four of my classes. I care if you come to me and you told me that you had to miss your Tuesday/Thursday class, but now that you're missing my class, I care a little bit less.’ When it comes down to trying to make time, they care to an extent. It’s ‘we care until it affects what we have to do with you and when we have to put things aside for you.’ (11/17/17)

The insight that faculty “cared to a point...until it affects what [they] have to do with you” epitomizes the essentially meaningless attempts of faculty at showing concern of students. They may take time to have a conversation with a student or engage in class activities that focus on students sharing personal information, but refrain from engaging with students when they face situations outside of the classroom that impact them. Eli expressed a similar sentiment with the depersonalization he experienced:

Professors, they really care about your work, not as much what is going on with you. How you're doing in their class, if you're slipping in the class, they'll probably bring it up and they'll work with you. Academic-wise, they're usually

all there, but anything outside of that doesn't seem like they have much interest.

(Interview: 11/17/17)

Eli's comments are reflective of faculty being concerned with only the things that are directly related to them, and not particularly concerned with student circumstances outside the classroom. While student participants identified a large number of challenges that they experience outside of school, they did not feel that faculty understood, or even cared to recognize those struggles. Hector expressed his frustration at feeling like faculty lack understanding of the impact of his non-academic life on school:

I feel like they don't know where I'm coming from, they don't understand what I got to go through on my day to day. It could affect my motivation and it could affect the way I want to learn, whether I want to learn or not. I just wish they knew more, so they can understand a little bit more. (Interview: 11/9/17)

Hector's comments are particularly meaningful because he experienced this lack of understanding in a very significant way—he was forced to drop out of college his first semester and work, and expressed how the stress of what he was experiencing in his personal life interfered with his ability to be productive and present in his schoolwork. Freddy articulated this tension when he stated:

I just want the teachers to know, I want to do good in class, I want to excel, but there has to be that in-between where there's some understanding that students go through shit outside of just your little world when you're in the class for 50 minutes, and whether they did their homework or not, that really shouldn't dictate the student they are because everyone goes through shit. (Interview: 11/9/17)

Freddy's comments on faculty needing to have "some understanding that students go through shit outside of just your little world when you're in the class for 50 minutes" expresses the reality of the student-teacher experience at the community college for the student participants. Faculty expect students to care first about the class they teach, then about everything else that may be happening in their lives, but students cannot separate the intertwined responsibilities they have so easily.

Students who experienced an absolute lack of care on the part of faculty described the lack of understanding and empathy of their personal lives extending to their academic experiences. These students felt the inexistence of care was also tied to not having their experiences be acknowledged, or even being belittled. Hector articulated this sentiment in a discussion around challenges:

When it comes to challenges in school, it's just the simple fact that teachers don't know what we go through. They don't put themselves in our shoes and

understand the challenges we got to go through, so they just push us off to the side or talk down on us. (Interview: 11/9/17)

The faculty have no connection to the students, and this impersonal interaction becomes reciprocal. In discussing the lack of connection to teachers, George commented that “sometimes you feel like your teacher is a stranger even though you've seen them pretty much every other day” (Interview: 11/9/17). He went on to illustrate this sentiment when he talked about his math teacher: “he just comes in, teaches, and dips, so you have no connection, you're just a number to this dude.” Unfortunately, George was not the only one with the experience of feeling so dehumanized as to be reduced to a number. Cindy expressed a similar sentiment when she commented “I think that a lot of professors just see us as numbers. You're a statistic,” (Interview: 11/17/17).

Nonexistent care led students to reflect on the motivation of their teachers. Cindy felt that the teachers she had taken classes from who were most impersonal were motivated by financial and job security: “they want that paycheck or they have tenure and they're just looking to be done; they're just like 'okay I've already got my money squared away I'm just here to keep clocking in,'” (Interview: 11/17/17). Bo shared a similar sentiment in which he felt that faculty were apathetic towards students:

There's some teachers that just are there for their job, like no matter what, they're still getting paid, so they don't really connect. There are teachers here

that just don't really care, basically some of them are there just to get their money. (Interview: 11/22/17)

The faculty lack of connection communicated to students that faculty did not care about them. When they felt faculty did not care about them, they also concluded that faculty did not particularly care about teaching or student learning. Freddy commented on the lack of investment in student learning when he stated:

We don't even establish no relationships, no comfortability, we don't know anything about our teacher, he rarely talks, and the only time he talks to us is about curriculum, so it's so bland. It's not really doing any students justice.

(Interview: 11/9/17)

When describing the teachers' lack of care, George stated very blatantly: "some teachers don't care, they lose sight of the fundamental part about their job—it's much more than getting a paycheck. Why'd you become a teacher?" (Interview: 11/9/17).

George's question is perhaps the most insightful in interrogating teacher care—if a teacher does not care about their students and their students' success, what is the point of teaching?

Teacher Comments on Care

While faculty comments were limited on care, and several of them were given through the lens of being a "white savior", faculty did have some observations on the

subject. The importance of care as well as instances of nonexistent care were both discussed. Trina spoke to the importance of students feeling seen:

I think them feeling literally like they are seen, like when they tell you ‘I see you,’ that is so important. Once they feel like you know who they are, they feel more invested in the class, it's you know it's harder to hide in the back. Once they realize that you're really there to help them succeed—I'm not there to stand around and watch them fail, I'm never there to trick them. I think that then their guard goes down, and then they're willing to be vulnerable, they're willing to learn, they're willing to ask the dumb questions. When they're guarded—you can't learn when you're on guard, when you're a little bit afraid to be where you are. (Interview: 11/19/17)

Trina's comments highlighted the importance of student recognition. She also mentioned the reciprocal cycle of care, where students are more likely to care about the class they are taking if they feel that their teacher cares for them individually. Her insightful final comment that “you can't learn when you're on guard, when you're a little bit afraid to be where you are” also speaks to the student experience of dehumanization in the educational system.

Faculty expressed care in what appeared to be a superficial manner. For example, they all identified student challenges, and were willing to connect students to

resources, however these issues took place outside the confines of the classroom and did not seem to impact their interactions with those same students in the classroom. Tom discussed interactions with students in this way:

I really want them to be able to trust me and to be able to share what's going on with them. Every semester, I have students breaking down in tears in my office. Sometimes there isn't really anyone else to hear what's going on with them and so that ends up being me and I ended up taking students down to psych services.

(Interview: 11/13/17)

While appropriate in connecting the students to needed resources, this comment also demonstrates the insincere expressions of care that faculty often exhibit – wanting students to confide in them, but handing them off to someone else when the issues the students are experiencing are more than superficial—caring, as Cindy previously stated, to a point.

For faculty, the concept of nonexistent care was expressed more in terms of impersonal interactions. As Trina stated: “I think too many of us around here do not really care about our students. Not that we don't care, but we're distant, we're frustrated, we get mad at them for not doing well” (Interview: 11/19/17). Nonexistent care is inextricable from having a deficit view of students, as issues then are solely the problem

of the student. The displacement of responsibility for student outcomes is reflected in Trina's comment:

We are too often getting mad at kids for not understanding...I hear people in the hallway just kvetching, and not that I haven't done it too, but just like 'oh they don't even listen, I explained it three times in class, we went over this.'

(Interview: 11/19/17)

Blaming students for lack of success or understanding the context of their lives creates an automatic defensiveness in students and limits the opportunities to develop authentic relationships. As the students identified, faculty care was often communicated in smaller gestures. Trina stated it as follows:

The smallest things make such a difference, and too many people are not willing to do that small thing. It's easy to do, like knowing somebody's name, trying to pronounce it correctly, learning how to spell it right. Even that just goes such a long way, and the number of people who, for whatever reason, are not willing to do that is just—I feel like 'why are you teaching at a community college?'

(Interview: 11/19/17).

Interestingly, Trina posed the same question as George—if a teacher does not care about their students and their students' success, what is the point of teaching?

Faculty Communication of Values

The faculty participants I interviewed expressed their personal values around education in implicit and explicit ways. Faculty communicated very clear beliefs on the role of teachers, behaviors and expectations for students, displacement of responsibility, the ultimate purpose of college, ideal student characteristics, and cultural tensions, all through the lens of meritocracy. Students also discussed expressions of faculty beliefs and racial and cultural issues they have experienced.

The beliefs of faculty are centered in a fundamental belief in meritocracy, that success is the product of diligence, the level of success a student can attain correlates to the amount of work the student puts in, and responsibility for learning rests solely with the student. These beliefs are inextricable from the lens of whiteness that they were developed through and that permeate academic structures, where they are constantly reinforced and perpetuated. Whiteness is unrecognized but ubiquitous, and serves to reinforce existing power structures. One of the most powerful means of doing so is by reproducing systems and structures of education—in essence, how and what students are taught.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is practically synonymous with traditional education, and is what most of our systems, especially in higher education, operate in. Expressions of meritocratic ideals are present in all aspects of teaching and schools. In this study,

values that are based in meritocratic beliefs were expressed in multiple areas. The role of teachers as experts who impart knowledge onto students was clearly visible. That faculty serve to “guide,” “teach,” “provide,” and “help” students was articulated on course syllabi. However, this role is not enacted without limits; for example, while all faculty encouraged students to meet with them and utilize office hours, that came with the caveat that, “because of the number of students enrolled, I do not have time to meet individually with you for every paper.” In class, faculty also expressed that students should not question their expertise. During a class exercise, Ken dismissed a student who questioned the materials provided by reinforcing his knowledge expertise: “you might decide that an article is not relevant, but I picked them because I thought they were interesting” (10/13/17). This statement clearly emphasizes the authority of the instructor and discounts student opinion.

Positive Student Characteristics

In discussing what contributed to student success, the faculty interviewees identified what they consider to be positive student attributes. While traits that are used to describe ideal students’ behavior may not be considered noteworthy, they are actually very important in conveying beliefs about students, as well as in identifying the worldview that the faculty are centered in. These beliefs become expectations that students are held to and that get communicated to them in explicit and implicit ways. In

this case, the faculty beliefs about positive student characteristics are centered in whiteness and knowledge or enactment of dominant cultural values. In discussing one of his community college students, Tom complimented her when he stated that “somewhere along the line she picked up on the culture of education, and she's a really good student and a good writer” (Interview: 11/13/17). In other examples, the course syllabi speak to ideals of having students who “think, write, and read critically” and can “think for yourself,” though in reality faculty are asking students to think as they do, within the norms of dominant cultural values, and that anything outside of that is not acknowledged or valued but labeled as incorrect. Trina echoed this when she said that she believes students “need to be able to think about [time management and prioritization], like look at their schedules and figure out how to do things” (Interview: 11/19/17). This becomes a teachable skill when the instructor does not believe that the students know how to do things like plan and schedule effectively.

Perhaps most telling is a comment that Tom made in discussing the students he taught at Stanford University:

My Stanford students they were like powerful fast cars, they could do all kinds of things. They would actually do their work when you told him to do it and they read really well, and some of them had 1600s on the SATs. They were remarkable, and the conversations were really rich and there was so much

enthusiasm amongst them; but I just felt like they were fully formed already because they had been cultivated as much as they had before getting into Stanford. (Interview: 11/13/17)

Tom discussed a list of student ideals, and what values those ideals are actually communicating: do their work when you tell them [obedience/respect for authority], read really well [high skills], 1600s on the SAT [perform well in traditional academic structures], rich conversations [privileging dominant language and diction], and enthusiasm [engaging successfully with traditional teaching]. His final comment, however, is also telling: “they were fully formed already because they had been cultivated as much as they had.” Tom felt like he did not have a significant role to play because the Stanford students did not display deficits that needed to be addressed, unlike community college students, because they already were inculcated in the social, cultural, and informational capital of the dominant, white culture.

Behaviors and Expectations

Another area where faculty expressed values based in meritocratic ideals was in discussing student behavior and expectations. Attendance, participation, and timeliness were mentioned repeatedly as being required elements of class (“be on time,” “I expect you to be in class every single day”). The lack of adherence with this was, in fact, the cause of a considerable amount of concern and discussion among faculty when asked to

consider reasons students do not succeed in college. Tom states his belief that “student absences are critical in determining student failure most of the time” (Interview, 11/13/17), and Ken expressed that for him:

The biggest challenge of all is the ones who don’t show up, obviously, or who disappear, sometimes for weeks, and then return. I’m still surprised by this, and sometimes annoyed...I admit to still being flummoxed by those who return and attempt to blend in, as if maybe I won’t notice and they can bluff their way after missing, say, six weeks of instruction. (Interview: 11/7/17)

While six weeks of instruction is a considerable amount of the semester, students who miss one or two more classes than is listed as permitted in the syllabus are viewed in the same light, regardless of their skill level, content understanding, or ability to succeed in the next level. These rules then become arbitrary, as they are applied through the white lens of equality as opposed to equity. In her syllabus, Trina summarized her expectations in the following way: “don’t finesse or cheat; don’t cat off; be on time; keep track of what I tell you to do; ask me if you don’t understand something.” She has outlined the burden of responsibilities of her students in a way that simultaneously reinforces her position of authority. An additional expectation that faculty collectively identified was the importance of student communication with instructors. While espousing the view that “communication with instructor is critical,” faculty also made a

point of reinforcing the belief that this is the responsibility of the student, not the instructor.

Displacement of Responsibility

Placing the burden of responsibility solely on the shoulders of students, in that their success or failure in college is dependent only on the student, leaves faculty playing a passive role. In his syllabus, Ken repeatedly discussed an expectation of students, such as be on time, followed by “don’t blow it!” and “don’t make me do this!” This way of placing responsibility on students to follow through with teacher expectations not only negates any teacher responsibility in student outcomes, but also presents faculty as reluctant rule enforcers. In his discussions of student challenges, Tom ran through a list of negative student characteristics that place responsibility for academic failure on students: “inattentiveness in class, poor attendance, never doing work at home, not reading, having a crappy attitude about things, being sort of unconcerned with doing what it's understood needs to get done for them to move forward” (Interview: 11/13/17). Even when discussing interactions with struggling students, faculty participants place the responsibility and blame solely on the student, as is shown in Ken’s comment:

I’m meeting tomorrow with a struggling student who is on his second (at least) try in English 105. He has never told me about his learning disability, though

that is the only explanation I can see for his struggles (inability to generate his own text/participate in class discussions). My past attempts to hint at the issue have not worked. I'll try again tomorrow, but it is really too late for him this term and he has never come to office hours without being required to.

(Interview: 11/7/17)

In this example, Ken blames the student for not disclosing a learning disability that he may or may not be aware of, and additionally blames the student for not coming to meet with the teacher sooner about his coursework. However, there is no recognition that the teacher could address the issues the student is having in class in an active way – even just by having a conversation at an earlier point in the semester where additional supports or interventions could have been implemented.

The burden of student failure or success being placed exclusively on students is also reflected in discussions about academic failure. One of the class syllabi had the statement that “You will pass or not pass this course based on your performance,” which explicitly identifies individual effort as the basis of academic outcomes. Tom embraced the view that students have a right to fail, which is an embodiment of meritocratic values of individualism and hard work—basically, the narrative that if a student is failing, it is their fault and it is because they have not done enough to pass. Reflecting on the classes he was teaching, Tom stated:

I mean there are papers that I read that, there's no way those students should be in [transfer level English], and they're probably not gonna pass. I'm not gonna tell them to withdraw because they're coming to class—let them fail. (Interview: 11/13/17)

This narrative is problematic because completely ignores the reality that faculty play an active role in student learning and success, as the implication of that is that success rates are faculty responsibility. Given that student success rates need improvement, it follows that if faculty are responsible for student success rates and the current rates are reflective of current teaching, then teaching may need to change in order to change success rates. One of the faculty participants, Trina, recognized this issue when she questioned faculty pedagogy, or lack thereof:

I think too many people don't have any training in teaching—it's like they're mathematicians or economists or artists. They're not teachers, and they didn't get any pedagogy. They know their subject and they can explain it to someone who's interested and adept, but for someone who's forced to be there, which is most of our students in most of our classes because of the requirements, and they're like 'I kind of don't get what you're talking about,' and your solution is you just say it exactly the same way and say 'why don't you understand?' (Interview: 11/19/17)

Trina's frustration with faculty who are content experts but who lack pedagogical training—learning about how to teach, represents the embodiment of meritocratic ideals. It reflects the value placed on content knowledge and the position of faculty as authoritative content expert, but it is the responsibility of the student to learn and understand the content that is presented to them in a way that is often ineffective, and then blame them for not learning successfully on their own.

Students, however, recognize the hypocrisy of faculty placing blame and responsibility solely on the students when faculty are the ones who are responsible for student learning. As Hector powerfully states:

If your teacher doesn't even make you feel comfortable enough to be able to go to class, what makes you think you're gonna feel comfortable enough to want to learn? When it's like that, then you don't learn, then you don't pass the class, then how do you look as a teacher? If you're not passing your students, you're not doing your job as a teacher. They might have learned something, they might have not—it could go hand in hand, it could go both ways, but if your students aren't passing your class, you're not doing your job. (Interview: 11/9/17)

Hector's closing statement, that "if your students aren't passing your class, you're not doing your job," speaks to the fundamental problem with faculty displacement of

responsibility, which is that faculty are responsible for teaching, and failing students is an indicator of ineffective teaching. Trina speaks to the same problem when she recounted a conversation with the history department:

The history program was like ‘well students won't read anymore so our success rates are like 40 percent but if the students won't read, what can I do?’ That right there, you're the teacher, you teach them to read in history, is what you do. That ‘oh well, I can't do it, they can't even add. What can I do?’ How about, teach them how to add? If someone's like 18, 19, 25 and they can't do fractions? Think of a better way to teach fractions. Obviously, the way it's being done is not working, obviously they can do fractions—they can make change with money. (Interview: 11/19/17)

Unfortunately, there is strong faculty resistance to taking on responsibility for student outcomes and learning, because doing so would then imply that there is something that faculty need to change. This implication serves to undermine the meritocratic view of teacher as the expert and the narrative that student failure is due to lack of student effort.

Purpose of College

The faculty participants had very strong beliefs about the goals of college. In recounting their own college experiences, all faculty interviewees emphasized that they were “absolutely committed to just learning for learning’s sake” (Trina, Interview: 11/19/17). In Tom’s words,

College was a place where you could figure out where you should be—it wasn't about getting degrees, getting credentials, or getting a job that I had figured out before, it was really about using the resources here to understand who I really was. (Interview: 11/13/17)

The view of college as a vehicle for introspection and self-discovery, while aligned with dominant cultural ideals centered in white and class privilege, is not necessarily representative of the student view of the purpose of college. Tom also expressed his exasperation with students who conveyed that their goal for college was not aligned with what he thought it should be:

I think getting them to have goals for themselves other than a degree or an amount of money they want to earn, but to have something that it isn't a kind of external goal like that. I get frustrated with students who say, well you know I'm just here for my piece for a piece of paper. No! You've got to be here for an education, and you've got to really think about what that is! (Interview: 11/13/17)

The emphasis on an education as an end unto itself is at odds with the student perspective that college and a degree is a means to an end. For many of them, a college degree will open doors to job opportunities and higher income levels. That is met with the paternalistic judgment that student goals are not realistic and do not merit being supported. Ken stated that he struggles to contain his pessimism when he questions “if student goals are really realistic, for example, the student who wanted to be an astronomer but hadn’t passed math yet” (Interview: 11/7/17). The faculty participants, however, exhibit privilege at the expectation that their role as teachers serves “larger goals of making [students] whole curious people or have their own agency and who understand their place in the world” (Tom, Interview: 11/13/17). Faculty thus support their own beliefs as to the goals of college and discount the beliefs and goals of the students they work with, while also not acknowledging that for people of color and those of lower economic classes, access to higher education has long been a struggle.

Cultural Beliefs

One of the additional areas in which faculty expressed their personal beliefs was in discussing issues around culture and ethnicity. Faculty generally did not see cultural or racial issues as being important enough to be addressed in course content, as Ken’s comment illustrates:

I was somewhat misled by critical pedagogy and the “canon wars” that took place when I was in college—misled by the focus on ethnicity as a major concern. It isn’t that a class focusing entirely on dead white males is a good idea, but students are, I think, much less preoccupied with these issues than some of us imagine. (Interview: 11/7/17)

The assumption in this statement is that cultural or ethnic representation is not important to students, without the recognition that how those things are taught is critical. The course content of the classes discussed issues of gender, social class, and ethnic cleansing, but the latter was framed as an opportunity to learn about issues that affected distant “others” and find ways to help “those poor people.” During the interview, Tom was very vocal in voicing his opinions on Pacific Islander students and culture specifically:

My Pacific Islander students are also ones that are absent. Their family is so huge – there are like 160 people in what they consider to be their immediate family, and they seem to be dying all the time. Students are always out at funerals, and they are out for a whole week because that’s how long these things take for that culture, and with the girls it is even worse because they are so discouraged anyway from getting an education, but the absences are such a huge

problem and these people just don't seem to understand that. (Interview: 11/13/17)

Tom's frustration centers blame on "these people" who do not share his values of individualism and prioritization of school over family, nor his position of privilege. This problematic othering also gives voice to the paternalistic devaluation of Pacific Islander culture and Tom's belief that his role as a teacher is to, in essence, 'help the poor people understand the right way of doing things,' which he expressed in this comment:

How do you how do you help Pacific Islander students escape from the thrall of the family to actually finish their work and be involved, and to live out their potential as students and not go to funerals every week? (Interview: 11/13/17)

Tom was not the only one to talk about the belief that part of the role of an instructor was to teach students how to be students. However, this belief lacks the fundamental recognition that the faculty view of the student role was created through the lens of whiteness, and part of whiteness is to reinforce white supremacy through the devaluation and denial of cultural values that are different.

Student Perspective on Faculty Communication of Values

Student participants expressed the often-implicit values that faculty communicated to them about their values. Students noticed faculty present themselves

as content experts and figures of authority in the classroom, as well as how race and ethnicity issues were communicated to students.

Content, Not People

One of the central elements of the student comments focused on how they felt their instructors were teaching content, not people. As Freddy stated:

My math teacher, he doesn't really interact with us at all, and I feel like in the class like that, in a math class, I feel like it helps to interact a little bit more with the students just because of the type of class that it is. He teaches, and then he leaves, he doesn't really have that many office hours. (Interview: 11/9/17)

The teacher views their role as focused on content delivery, but does not show any kind of concern for student understanding. Negative comments on student ability in explicit ways, as well as implicit insinuations that faculty did not believe that a particular student was capable of succeeding, abounded during the focus groups. David told the story of one of his friends attempting to ask her teacher for help:

My friend told me in her calculus class, the first day of the class, after class she asked the professor, "Professor to be honest I really don't get this, can you show me how to do it in a different way?" And the professor was like, "Okay you you're not getting this right now? Just drop. You're not gonna make it. Just drop. You don't need to be here, just quit." (Interview: 11/19/17)

This story illustrated the lack of validation and trust that students felt from their teachers, and in fact showed the absolute disregard that some faculty display towards their students. Students felt that the focus on content, and student ability to understand content, was reflective of faculty unwillingness to engage with the students.

Traditional banking system teaching reinforces power dynamics that place the instructor in the role of an authority figure. Students are expected to play a counter role to that, where they absorb content and are passive learners. Hector talked about two experiences he had with different instructors that illustrate the traditional teaching role:

My communications teacher, she's teaching the class, she expects the class to do work, and if they're not doing work, it's like what the fuck. [The political science teacher I had last year], he gives hella unnecessary work he just wants you to do. To me, he's just a regular white teacher, he gonna give you a bunch of work and you gonna be expected to do it, and if you don't do it, he's just like 'whatever.'

(Interview: 11/9/17)

In talking about “just a regular white teacher,” Hector is speaking to the traditional banking system teacher role. While not explicit, his experiences show how faculty communicate values of student responsibility, respecting authority, and not questioning the expert, and that students are very adept at understanding faculty beliefs.

Race and Ethnicity

When asked about interactions with teachers, students also commented on experiences they had with teachers around issues of race and ethnicity. In recounting a discussion in one of his classes around issues of racism, George commented: “it's just it's just weird how they have to baby white people on talking about how they feel about black people and black people have to deal with it every day.” His experience as a black, adolescent male at CBA conveys the privileging of the white experience. Hector also discussed the microaggressions he experienced in class:

I took his political science class last year, state and local government, and just the way he taught it was... I got this sense he was looking at like minorities a certain way. It was the time when Donald Trump getting elected and everything like that. I remember we used to watch videos and he used to—like I don't want to say be racist, but he say some shit that'd be a little extra, or like a white thing to say, and just be like what the fuck. (Interview: 11/9/17).

In both of those examples, students felt that their identity as students of color was ignored in order to protect white fragility and privilege whiteness. Tellingly, when asked about why Bo connected so positively with one of his instructors, he said: “To be honest, he's an African American teacher, that really stands out, he connects” (Interview: 11/9/17). While faculty may discount the importance of culture, race, and

ethnicity in the classroom, to students who are not part of the dominant culture, cultural competency and connection is important.

How Faculty Perceive Students and Students' Self-perception

Faculty perception of students is important to interrogate because those beliefs affect how faculty interact with students. One of the interesting outcomes of the data I collected lies in juxtaposing the faculty perception of students with student self-perception.

Deficit View of Students

The faculty all talked about students from a deficit perspective in which students were lacking—be it in information, intelligence, goals, maturity, self-awareness, or knowing their own minds. Much of the time, this took the tone of paternalism, but the deficit view was also present in the syllabi and in interview comments, and visible in student-teacher interactions during class observations.

On the course syllabi, faculty talked about the goals for their classes and the values that they privilege, as well as judgements on student values and deficits. Faculty believe that “students care about their major, making loads of money, and becoming famous” and live in “the bubble of privilege,” and it then becomes the job of the faculty to educate students as to the correct way of being, essentially. The correct way of being, however, is the way that the faculty think is correct, independent of the desires or reality

of their students. It comes from a place of privilege and whiteness, and is not culturally aware, and thus not relevant for many students. Technology is seen as antagonistic to learning, at best, and students are repeatedly admonished for any visible interactions with all technological devices, a view that was reinforced in class observations where students had phones and laptops confiscated during class. The directives that students “must learn to think for [them]selves and to develop empathy” as well as “develop our humanity” both imply that faculty believe students are lacking in those areas, thus are generated from a deficit view of students. In addition, the admonition that the “ability to read critically and write effectively are essential if you are to understand yourself” serves to imply that faculty do not believe that students understand themselves. This view that was reinforced during several class observations in which faculty interrogated student statements with comments such as “I don’t think you quite know what you want to say,” and interactions with students that question students’ ability to articulate themselves:

Trina: Is that what you’re saying?

Matt: Yeah

Trina: It is?

Matt: Yeah.

Trina: Why are you using ‘while’? You’re implying that there’s tension, that it’s hard to do those things. Is it?

Matt: Yes.

Trina: It might be, but is that what you’re meaning to say?”

The deficit view of students often took the tone of faculty having the solution to student problems that they encounter. Though framed by faculty as helpful advice, these interactions can cause clear divides between students and faculty. In one of the classes I sat in, I observed Trina engage in the following interaction:

Trina: Dom, I want you to watch me to make sure you’re paying attention, you looking at me makes me think that, even if you aren’t, remember this is part of the game of being in college.

Dom: (puzzled tone) Oh, I am...

Trina framed her statement as helpful when she said “remember, this is part of the game of being in college,” but the student found it to be condescending and was confused as to why she brought the issue up to him at all. The need to address student deficits frames students as incapable. Trina framed the problem in this way: “I know it's irritating when kids ask something that you've already said three times in class, but I think they're asking that because they don't know how to ask for what they really need,” (Interview: 11/19/17). The sentiment that students “don’t know” was expressed over

and over again, and serves to further the banking model beliefs that students are not proficient at anything. Even when it comes to identifying their own goals Ken cast doubt as to students' ability to know what they want: "I struggle every semester with thinking, are students' goals really realistic? There are the ones that want to be an astronomer but they haven't passed math yet, or those who say they want to be a CEO or NASCAR driver" (Interview: 11/7/17). Faculty then took on the responsibility of providing advice based on their belief of having expertise in what the correct values and behaviors should be for a student. An example of this came up when Tom talked about what he wished he could do with students to show them the correct way of acting and thinking:

So my wife says I'm like a social worker a lot of the time, so there's like, you know you wish you could go do a home visit and tell them no, this can't be, can't you turn that off, don't work here, stay away from that kid, don't listen to your mom you don't have to take out the garbage right now, you need to do your homework, you want to be able to tell them all those things, but to get them to talk about them and to think about them and write about that I think that's really it's really important. (Interview: 11/13/17)

Tom's comments highlight the faculty view that students do not know or are not capable or managing time or prioritizing. In addition to lacking cultural responsiveness,

this view does not consider that the reality of students' lives are significantly different than what faculty seem to think, and that students have values that differ from those of faculty – *but that those values are still worthy*. Though communicated in implicit ways, the idea that the faculty need to correct student behaviors and beliefs stems from a fundamental belief that students are doing it wrong or believe the wrong thing, but faculty know what is correct—forcing students to adhere to faculty values, experience, and expectations.

Lack of Purpose and Skills

An additional area that faculty identified as an issue for students was in motivation and goal setting. From their perspective, a fundamental issue with student success lay in students not having defined goals. In Ken's words: "motivation's huge issue – it's hard to want to do anything if you don't know what you're doing or why you're doing it" (Interview: 11/7/17). Faculty expressed that they felt negative student performance was tied directly to having a clear purpose, though they were also clear that they did not always agree with what constituted acceptable student goals, which is discussed in more detail in the communication of faculty values section. Tom expressed this when he stated:

Maybe there are other reasons, as much as they want to be here things are so terrible outside that they end up not doing what they want, they're not able to do

what they think they can or what they could. I'm not as concerned for those students academically as the ones who just don't know what they're doing here. The failing student is the one that doesn't know why she's here, why he's here, and may never find out, so that's the student who's gonna fail and who is failing because it just hasn't clicked. [They] just doesn't know why they're here and or are here for the wrong reasons altogether, and that's kind of basically it...I think it mostly stems from that lack of purpose here. (Interview: 11/13/17)

Tom's comments are very explicit in identifying lack of purpose and not knowing as the primary reasons for student failure. Issues that students identified, such as outside responsibilities, financial issues, systemic barriers, and lack of faculty care and understanding, were not mentioned by faculty. Interestingly, this view of student failure problematizes intrinsic student motivation as the primary reason for failure, placing the onus of responsibility of student outcomes on students for not having a good enough reason for being in school and allows faculty to repudiate their responsibility.

Skill level was another area that faculty identified as being an issue for student success. This area also took on a very clear student deficit narrative when the faculty discussed student skills and abilities. Tom brought this up when asked about ineffective teaching:

Something that is really ineffective is when I take it for granted that that they're reading. If I assume that they're understanding what they're reading then we can have a discussion in class, and everybody fakes it and bullshits it; but if I ask individuals amongst them to read a single sentence and try to paraphrase it they struggle mightily. Assuming that they're reading at the level I think they should be is a huge mistake, so I try to remind myself of that. (Interview: 11/13/17)

Tom's evaluation of student abilities is that students generally do not have the skillset that the faculty believe they should—students are underperforming because they do not have the ability to do better. This is echoed in Trina's comments about one of her students in the first level English course that is two levels below transfer:

I had someone in my English 800, this is gonna be scary, who was in Cliff's psychology class, somehow, I don't know how. But this kid was like '[Cliff] talks, I don't understand what he's saying' because there was there was just a mismatch in the thinking, in the ability, it was just way over the kid's head.

(Interview: 11/19/17)

In this case, the lack of understanding on the part of the student is due to low levels of intelligence and abilities, according to the teacher. The default assumption was made that the issue is with the student, and lack of success is implicitly correlated to lack of intelligence. This embedded deficit view of students ties into things such as placement

tests, course content, and lecture styles to fundamental beliefs about who a student is and what they are capable of accomplishing. In discussing differences in student performance in two equivalent levels of English—the 100 level is the traditional first-transfer level, and the 105 is an accelerated first-transfer level for students who may have previously placed one level below transfer—Tom exemplified beliefs on student abilities when he stated:

The 100 class is, with few exceptions, significantly better than the 105. It just makes all the difference. It's like these people they sit up straight, they're ready to be students, and then the maturity level of the 105 is way lower. Then you'll have you'll have like four really strong students and then twenty pretty marginal students—well no, 15 pretty marginal students and seven just like really borderline ‘you shouldn't be in this class at all, not at a college level, how did you get here?’ (Interview: 11/13/17).

Tom's statement shows how arbitrary institutional processes, like placement tests, are, and how they determine students' worth and perceived ability to succeed. The difference of a few points on a placement exam where faculty have dictated and changed the cut scores becomes the difference in whether or not faculty believe students are capable and intelligent. Once faculty believe that students are not capable and lack intelligence, this belief gets communicated to students at fundamental levels and defines

student-teacher interactions—to the detriment of the students. Faculty ignorance of how their internalized deficit views about students, which are often rooted in racial and ethnic bias and prejudice, impact how they treat and interact with students, or even the explicit existence of these beliefs, is detrimental to the students themselves.

Faculty Don't Understand Reality

One of the areas that students identified in the focus groups was that they felt faculty did not understand the reality of their lives outside of school. In discussing the financial stress of cost of living in the Bay Area, Cindy made the following comment:

I love when professors complain about the cost of living, but then when I tell them ‘hey I have to work tonight because I have to try to make a living,’ they’ll go, ‘well, why couldn’t you just schedule to work another day?’ I’m like ‘every other day I’m already there, I can’t add any other days.’ I can’t afford to live here and not work full-time...Each paycheck just go straight to bills. (Interview: 11/17/17)

Cindy felt that faculty were hypocritical in their assessment of students. Several students commented on the struggle of cost of living and needing to work, and that faculty were punitive and unwilling to work with them if that impacted their schoolwork. Cindy also spoke to this when she recounted: “I had one professor tell me, I was like ‘I’m sorry I’ve been sick a lot,’ and they said, ‘well, if you just eat

healthier’—what, are you gonna pay for my salad?” The students felt many times that they lived in a disconnected reality from what their teachers thought, and that teachers had a difficult time understanding the responsibilities and challenges that they faced constantly. In Hector’s words, “I have to go home to some fucked up ass shit, every day. I gotta go home to some bullshit and teachers don’t understand the challenges we got to go through.” This lack of understanding then gets reflected in student-teacher interactions. Cindy expressed this when she stated:

I wish I could just being able to tell a professor what's actually happening in my life and them not seeing it as excuses. I feel like a lot of the time, it's like ‘oh that's an excuse for not doing this assignment.’ There's a lot of ‘oh I don't want your excuses,’ but it's not excuses, it's what is really happening. (Interview: 11/17/17)

Cindy’s statement that she felt teachers tended to minimize the reality of her life and responsibilities served to create distance between students and teachers in which the students felt looked down on and invalidated.

Student Challenges

Students were vocal in describing challenges that they faced that often impacted their academics. For students, academic life and their personal lives were inseparable, while faculty comments often discussed those two things as separate and unrelated.

Several students talked specifically about family responsibilities that they had that took up a significant amount of their time. Bo described his situation:

My freshman year over here, my brother was gone at Southern Oregon. I was the oldest and I'd come home late every day, but I still had to look after my little siblings, because my parents both worked graveyard. I'd come home every day, my parents would be gone already, they'd text me everything to do—make sure the kids eat, make sure they do their homework and then go to sleep, and make sure you wake them up on time before you leave. (11/22/17)

Bo became the caretaker to his younger siblings for a time, while he was still trying to juggle school responsibilities. Many of the students expressed frustration at trying to meet all of their obligations with a limited amount of time, and that their teachers did not understand why they were not able to complete an assignment. For some students, however, the challenges they faced were more basic. Hector described his challenge in having enough resources to even find himself food every day:

For me, not being able to work all the time, and I literally get \$80 a week, and I have to get gas, I gotta eat—literally finding a meal every day for me, it is like I ask Mike every day, 'Oh what are you eating?' Mike gives me his food.

(Interview: 11/9/17)

When students are facing challenges in such basic needs as having steady housing or daily meals, the expectation that they must prioritize their academics over other areas of their lives seems absurd—yet students felt that this is what their teachers expected of them. Collectively, students expressed the desire for more empathy on the part of faculty. In Cindy's words:

- I just wish there was more understanding, for them to see that we're trying to be there—I'm trying to be there, I'm trying to be a good student, but sometimes things happen, a lot of the time things happen. (11/17/17).

Desire to Succeed

Students also expressed optimism in their future, and felt that college was important for them to reach the goals they had for themselves. Every single student articulated a vision of their future, and for all of them, education was integral to achieving that future. Cindy expressed her desire when she said:

Once I do finish college it's all gonna be worth it, hopefully. I'm gonna get a job in my industry and hopefully I'll be able to make decent money so I can live well, and that's the thing that's motivating me today. (Interview: 11/17/17).

Cindy's comments are representative of many of the student participants, how they were considering what they wanted their life to look like in the future. Freddy articulated his goals this way:

I want to go to college and get a degree. I just seen my parents, how they struggled because of their education and I don't want that to happen for me. I want to be able to get an education so I could provide for my family, and so if we need something or we want something, we can we could make it happen.

(Interview: 11/9/17)

Students expressed that they are living in a reality in which a college degree holds value and becomes the key to accessing the kind of job opportunities they are interested in to support the larger goals they have for themselves. This was another area in which the student and faculty comments did not align. While faculty expressed on multiple occasions that they felt students were more interested in a high salary, students discussed wanting to “live well” and “provide for my family.”

The desire to learn was another sentiment that the students expressed—though they were clear in expressing that learning did not always happen the way that teachers were teaching. Hector discussed this very eloquently when he stated:

I love learning. You learn things every day, whether it be in a classroom or whether it be from another person. Academically I want to be able to learn, and not just sit in a classroom have a teacher lecture and that be it. Learn what is it that they actually teaching. Some teachers really don't explain that, they just

write it down and expect you to take notes and take a test on it, and you turn the next page and that's it. But learning—real learning. (Interview: 11/9/17)

As Hector expressed, learning is not a rote process of memorizing information and regurgitating it. It is much more complex and meaningful, and the student desire for experiences in which they felt their education was meaningful and personal was very clear. As Bo stated: “we're not just learning about it, we're actually doing it, we're trying to take action and help out for real... it helps connect because I've seen that before [in my own life]” (Interview: 11/22/17). Connecting to the content of their classes in a genuine way was an experience that students valued greatly when they had it, but none of them felt that they had that kind of learning experience in a consistent way.

Faculty Perception of Students

How faculty perceived students was also an area of discussion among the students. Overwhelmingly, student comments on how they felt their teachers saw them were negative. Eli framed this sentiment in his comments:

I won't share out as much, so maybe they don't think I'm as engaged with a lesson—I am paying attention, it's just I don't participate as much as others, so it may not seem that I'm into the subject. In each class, there's that group of people that always raise their hands, so if you're that person, everyone else who doesn't

... speak out, like me, doesn't seem like they're that into it. I don't if the teachers see it as that, but I'm thinking maybe they see me as that. (Interview: 11/17/17)

Eli's comments point to feeling that he may not conform to the ideal student characteristics that teachers look for, such as participation in class and speaking out. He compared himself to those students who he felt the teachers notice and reward. While he does not explicitly talk about where those perceptions come from, his teachers seem to be providing more positive feedback to the students who are most engaged. An expressed a similar view when she stated:

I don't think my professors see me as a good student, because even when I miss only one class, they'd be looking at me differently or view me in a different way, but I think it's just how I express myself in the class. I be trying to do my best, as hard as I can be. I just try to be a good student who comes from a background that needs help, or just needs a good future. I don't know about the teacher's perspective about me when I come to class. (Interview: 11/22/17).

An expressed that she felt her teachers judged her negatively, but that she is doing her best to succeed. The discomfort that An experienced in her classes created an unwelcoming learning environment and communicated to her that her teachers do not believe that she is a capable student. Freddy discussed a similar sentiment when he said:

When I walk into the classroom, I don't look like a regular student. When people look at me, they assume either he's a regular black dude or he plays sports. I feel like as an athlete, going to school you feel like an outsider, because that comes with the negative stereotype – athletes, they don't want to learn, they don't want to try, they're dumb. Especially if you're a football player, you're black or you're Mexican, automatically I feel like teachers just look at you and be like, he's gonna fail everything. (Interview: 11/9/17)

Freddy spoke to feeling othered and marginalized from the moment that he entered a classroom. He is put on the defensive because his teachers have communicated to him that they do not believe that as a Black man, as a Mexican man, or as an athlete, he is capable of succeeding in an academic setting. The messages that faculty communicate to students are often implicit, but students understand them very clearly—in this case, that they are not smart enough or good enough to do well.

Authority and Privilege

Faculty participants displayed and expressed authority and privilege throughout the interviews and class observations. Upon further analysis, these expressions took on three primary themes: paternalism, displays of a white savior mentality, and interactional assertion of power. Students also discussed experiences with faculty that

centered around displays of authority and privilege in the classroom, as well as the impact of power dynamics on student perception of faculty.

Paternalism

In discussions around students, faculty participants' paternalism towards the students they teach became evident. The othering of students, which was done unconsciously but created clear divides between students and faculty, also supports the de facto deficit view of students in which they are lacking especially in knowledge, that faculty know best, and because of the combination of those things, students are obligated to do what faculty say without question. These paternalistic displays ranged from how students should do coursework to what values students should have. During one of the class observations, Tom was having students share progress on an assignment and became agitated when the student did not follow his exact instructions:

Joey, Joey, Joey, Joey – this exercise is to follow the template. (Cuts off Joey's explanation) – I am inspired by this but save the inspiration for your letter – the point of this is to follow the template. It has to follow the template. (Interview: 10/17).

Tom refused to acknowledge the work or ideas of the student at all because the student did not use Tom's exact template in formulating the idea he tried to share. The lack of recognition of student ideas and contributions when they deviate at all from the

inflexible directives of faculty processes results in faculty devaluation of student knowledge. The template that Tom was so adamant that the student follow was one that he developed to show students what he considered to be a worthwhile and valuable writing process:

The curriculum I've been working on for years called the manifestation project, which moves them from thinking about things as to exercises toward action and making a difference in the world. At the heart of that is a process giving them really clear steps on the way to a goal and activities for each of those steps. That process oriented teaching, with the specific example of the manifestation project to the 12-step program for a better writing process, I think that's really effective. (Interview: 11/13/17).

Tom's personal values are also communicated to students in this "12-step program," and as we saw in the previous example, he leaves no room for students to deviate from it. Faculty beliefs about students as inferior are displayed in even passing comments as this one during a class observation: "there's a tendency of all students to want to take shortcuts and jump over certain things and get it done, but you know it's never gonna work." This belief that faculty know what is best for students reinforces the view that students are helpless and need faculty to show them not only what they should be doing, but also what they should believe.

In discussing student challenges, Tom communicated very clearly how he felt about students who expressed values that opposed his: “yeah [Laughter] your Pappy's wrong, sorry, if you're going to be an educated person, you have to accept that and everything that comes with that” (Interview: 11/13/17). This statement highlights the belief in himself as an authority of appropriate values, and expressed his disdain for people who he considers to be uneducated and thus possessing values that are blatantly erroneous and should be changed. However, faculty also had a narrative of approval for those students who successfully displayed the values that aligned with those of the faculty. Tom told the story of one of his minority students who was the epitome of the narrative of meritocracy, which is a fundamental part of Tom's espoused values:

He was Latino guy, kind of very stiff, handsome, kind of long black hair, and you know, very different from everybody else, kind of almost noble looking in his posture. He was a you know had a strong voice, and was a really powerful writer in that kind of uncultivated way, and he liked to read. He's a reader you know what is strange guy is one who is this guy and then he shared with me that he'd been in juvenile detention for three years. He writes these incredibly powerful essays about the dynamics of gang life, you know why he got involved in it and he started one by saying 'if any of my Norteño gang friends saw this they would kill me.' He was in my office one day and I said 'so one you know

so you're obviously a pretty strong student, what do you want to do? Where do you see yourself in five years?' He said, 'I don't know, nice car – Mercedes, suit' and I said 'wow that's great how are you gonna get that?' and he said 'I don't know, business,' and I said 'well hmm, what do you really want to do in life?' and he said, 'I really want to help people. I want to help people like you're helping me, like the people in juvenile detention helped me, people who do things for other people.' I said, 'that's awesome, who does that?' he say 'I don't know...doctors?' I said, 'okay why don't you be a doctor?' he says 'okay' so he decides to become a doctor. He's doing well in his science classes, he becomes the vice president of the premed club, he starts doing bereavement counseling at Stanford with the hospital, somebody notices him over there he gets into a lab, he gets his name on a scientific paper, he has a three point seven three GPA graduating from here, and he goes to UC Berkeley. (Interview: 11/13/17).

Tom's incredibly romanticized story about one of his former students used the trope of the 'noble savage' to describe the student: "Latino guy, kind of very stiff, handsome, kind of long black hair, and you know, very different from everybody else, kind of almost noble looking in his posture...powerful writer in that kind of uncultivated way." The condescending description communicates Tom's view of the student from a deficit mindset, where the student displays characteristics that Tom values but are atypical for

most students with those demographics, thus elevating the worth of the student. The positive characteristics that Tom emphasized are aligned with white and meritocratic traits of students: academically high performing, involved in extracurricular activities, ‘naturally’ highly skilled in writing, is able to access very exclusive educational institutions, and has a career goal that is valued in western society.

Tom recounted the story of this student because the student was an outlier, but also to show his own responsibility for the student’s success. In Tom’s view, there is a critical moment where he played the role of the most absolute white savior: “I said ‘okay why don’t you be a doctor?’ he says ‘okay’ so he decides to become a doctor.” The oversimplification of this decision, as well as Tom crediting himself for the student’s journey from gang member to UC Berkeley graduate and aspiring doctor, speak to the internalization of white supremacy that normalized the ingrained sense of superiority that he expressed.

White Savior

Faculty also expressed strong self-perceptions as benevolent experts. The seemingly benign altruism that is embodied in white savior mentality is perhaps even more problematic than paternalism. White saviors often espouse narratives that they are motivated by care and compassion, but explicitly ignore the underlying beliefs that

those ‘others’ who deserve their aid are lacking—that they need help, that they cannot help themselves because they do not know how to, and that they are grateful for help.

In discussing the reasons they teach at community college, the faculty talked about validation in their role as a teacher. Tom recounted: people would say ‘what do you do?’ I say ‘I teach’ and they go ‘that’s so noble, that’s really great, that’s awesome, good job’ (Interview: 11/13/17). In this case, the external validation reinforces the view of teachers as heroically sacrificing themselves to help those who are less than, implying that community college students have deficits that white folks with knowledge can rectify. Tom again expresses this view of himself when he stated that “I recognize their potential and their voices but I see myself as someone who helps them reach those ideas” – having potential already frames students as lacking in ability, but Tom as the all-knowing instructor can help the students express their own ideas. Similarly, Trina expressed her validation as a teacher as literally being needed by students. In her words:

I really love working with the kids who really need us. A lot of our students are students who will do fine with us or without us, but a lot of them are not going to do fine without us, and so that’s really rewarding. (Interview: 11/19/17).

The sense that many students will not succeed without the help of these particular teachers goes to reinforce the white savior narrative. Trina, as the sole female faculty

participant, espoused this narrative to a degree that was rather extreme. In discussing student challenges, she commented that:

Me and my one class can't make all the difference for everybody, but it can, I think there's research on this, that one adult who takes an interest and cares can make all the difference for a child, like literally it just takes one person. So if I can be that one person for a student, it's like 'thank God,' I'm so happy to be that, and that's why I love working with our at risk populations. (Interview: 11/19/17).

This view of herself as “that one person” who can make a difference in a student’s life because she shows care in them displays both an inflated sense of self-importance and a view of students as poor children of color with no one to care for them. This view is incredibly problematic, as it also serves to denigrate the families and cultures of non-white students, and frame the imposition of whiteness as a means of care.

The belief that students are lacking and faculty can provide for them and work to fix them is the epitome of the white savior narrative, but it does not acknowledge the power dynamic that this narrative creates. Trina embodies this with her statement:

The thing that makes the most difference and is the most important thing I can do as a teacher and as an educator is to have an authentic relationship with each student. I just have to love them and they will learn. (Interview: 11/19/17)

Undeniably, authentic relationships with students are important. However, Trina's view that she "just [has] to love them and they will learn" is incredibly problematic. This statement centers white savior mentality as the core of learning. This not only creates a huge power differential between faculty and students, but it also reinforces a disempowering view of students as inferior, not knowing what they need, and needing to be saved by white folks (who know what is best for them).

Interactional Assertion of Power

Another expression of authority and privilege that faculty engaged in centered around assertion of power. Faculty-student interactions were often loaded with power differentials in which faculty sought to maintain or affirm themselves as authority figures. This, of course, also resulted in interactions that served solely to disempower students.

In the classroom, Trina often wavered between white savior and authority figure. In both types of interactions with students, power differentials existed, though the former manifested more as physical interactions where Trina would literally touch, kiss, and take pictures with students who were not able to say 'no,' and the latter was a much more literal reminder of authority. In the class observations, I observed Trina and students in the following interactions:

Trina goes over to check in with a student, puts her hand on his shoulder as he is reading. She asks him a question, he answers, and Trina then gives him a couple pats and a kiss on the head before moving on to another student.

Trina stands right behind a student, leans over his back and head to read his paper with her hand on desk beside his arm.

Trina takes a selfie with students in one small group – she leans down and puts her arm around one of the students' neck.

Trina walks over to a student, says 'breathe,' as she comes behind the student and squeezes his shoulders.

While objectively inappropriate, Trina leans on the white savior narrative to justify the physical interactions as showing care to students. Alarming, she takes student lack of objection as consent and does not recognize that it is laden with power dynamics – not only as part of the student-teacher interaction, but also as a white woman-man of color interaction.

However, she just as easily falls into explicit calls for power. She admonished her students every class at least once to call her ma'am: "the answer is 'yes ma'am'; say yes ma'am when you talk to me." In response to a student who protested at being reprimanded for something he felt he was not at fault for, Trina snapped: "Junior, pro-tip: when your teacher says you're driving her crazy stop and say 'sorry ma'am'." Tom

also displayed this kind of explicit reinforcement of power over students. At the end of a class, students began to put away their things, and Tom raised his voice to tell the class: “I have you for two more minutes people, especially for those who walked in late.” His need to display power came down to controlling student time. In another instance, he approached a student individually who had missed a class:

Tom: Uce, Did you get my email? I was a little disappointed that you didn’t come to class but then I saw you in the student lounge.

Uce: I was sick.

Tom: Sick means you are bleeding, rash over 90% of body. That didn’t look like the case.

These interactional assertions of power served to reinforce power differentials between students and teachers and effectively disempower students in their own learning. The dichotomy of faculty as superior and students as inferior was so embedded into the narratives and fundamental beliefs of faculty that they did not recognize that it existed, let alone that they communicated those beliefs so ubiquitously.

Student Perception of Faculty Authority

Students expressed their perceptions of faculty authority through various stories and comments. Generally, these stories were negative and implied that faculty exerted power over students, in ways that the students did not find helpful at best, or actively

detrimental at worst. Cindy gave an example of a teacher who not only did not appear to care about the fact that most of his students were failing, but also did not seem to care about his attempts at teaching:

This semester I have a statistics professor who doesn't teach—he stares at the PowerPoint, he writes formulas on the board, and then he just skips everything, and all of us are sitting there lost. Our average grade on the test was a 41%.

(Interview: 11/17/17)

Several students echoed the experience of having a teacher who was unconcerned with them having failed most of their classes. Additionally, the students do not feel as if they have any kind of recourse, which creates a sense of frustration and effectively renders the student powerless in the system they are trying to navigate, and that is supposed to be serving them. Freddy described this sentiment in a math class that he was enrolled in:

I guess the situation worked out the way it did, but I'm the one that pays for that. I'm on the wrong side of the fence for something that I have no control over. I'm not saying that 100% of the blame is on the teacher, but teachers have a lot to do with it. (Interview: 11/9/17)

Freddy's comments on the lack of control that he felt are representative of some of the ways that students implicitly learn to understand power dynamics in classrooms that leaves them on the losing end. Students feel that they have no active means of

protesting the structures that are imposed on them, so many of them react in ways that limit interactions with those structures, and the faculty that impose them most inflexibly. Hector discussed an experience he was having in a communications class where the teacher's explicit messages were at odds with the students' implicit understanding of the teacher imposing her authority:

A lot of people try to ask the teacher if she could explain it more, and some part is because people don't come to class, but people don't feel like they could get that help. She tells us she can help, but she doesn't really express it in a way that's welcoming at all; she's just like 'oh if you need help, I can help you,' but don't give us a place or time or anything like that. I feel like a lot of people in that class just feel uncomfortable, they just don't want to do for her, so it's like whatever—she's like whatever, so I just be like fuck it, whatever. Hella people don't show up to class, and then she's been getting mad about it. (Interview: 11/9/17).

Hector's experience illustrates the importance of interpersonal interactions in communication to students. In this case, though the faculty member literally said she would help if students needed it, the students did not believe her. The power dynamic in the classroom was already so unbalanced that students felt they would just receive additional blame from the teacher, not help. This led them to disengage with the

classroom and not want to “do for her”, both through apathy and literal absences, which were the ways that they found to empower themselves when in a situation that disempowered them.

Manifestations of Authority in the Classroom

Students recounted multiple experiences with faculty displays of authority and perceptions of faculty privilege. Stories of manifestations of authority in the classroom came up repeatedly during the student focus groups. Echoing previous discussions of physical assertions of power by faculty, Hector recounted an interaction he had with his English teacher, Trina:

She is overzealous. She was just hella extra, even to the point where this week, I jammed my finger and I was like, ‘Ms T, look, I jammed my finger’ and she kissed it! She kissed it and said ‘it might make it better, but if it doesn't it helps.’

(Interview: 11/9/17)

Hector was uncomfortable with the exchange, and felt that Trina was crossed boundaries in her student interactions, calling her “overzealous” and “hella extra.”

While some manifestation of authority took the form of faculty going too far, students also gave examples where faculty did not go nearly far enough to work with students.

David shared a story of an incident during one of his biology classes:

I remember my biology professor, we were taking a test that day, this girl came in a little late, and she sat next to me. Then she asked me, 'do you have a scantron?' No, I don't have a scantron, I only bought one. Then she started asking other people and no, and she starts crying next to me. She tried to talk to the professor, who was like, 'you don't have a scantron? Well you can't leave the classroom, so, too bad. She failed because she couldn't take the test.' (Interview: 11/17/17).

David's story generates a powerful reaction of injustice, but unfortunately echoes similar experiences student's had with various faculty at CSM. Authority often is explained by faculty as wanting to be fair to everyone and not show any student special treatment, or under the guise of following policies and procedures. However, these incidents and rationales only serve to reinforce the message to students that they are inferior and not worthy of faculty time and effort, as well as reinforcing, literally, inequitable institutional structures.

Summary

In this qualitative study, the voices of the student and faculty participants resulted in five primary research findings. These findings are: the importance of care, which was identified by students as a critical element in student success; faculty communication of values, which is framed through whiteness and meritocracy; faculty

perception of students compared to student self-perception; authority and privilege as salient elements of student-teacher interactions; and the experiences and challenges of first-generation college students. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

In this final chapter, I provide an overview of my research questions and methodology, a review of the five major findings, a discussion of the implications of the findings, and recommendations for practice and further research.

Overview

The intent of this study was to answer the following questions: How is social reproduction enacted in the community college classroom? How do first-generation students perceive social reproduction in the community college classroom? My interest and motivation in investigating these specific questions was to gain insight on a process that is pervasive in educational settings, but generally not acknowledged—social reproduction, wherein dominant, white middle-class values are privileged and perpetuated in educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1977). Especially in the community college setting, which is open access and, as a result, much more diverse than many other institutions of higher education, there is a dearth of information on how social reproduction happens. The other missing piece in looking at social reproduction centers around the lack of access to the various kinds of capital students have or have not internalized as well as their limited familiarity with dominant white values in education, and how these students interpret their classroom experiences.

As referenced earlier, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) were the primary lenses used throughout this study. These frameworks were particularly useful because of how they posit the existence of racism and its pervasiveness in society and institutions, and the positioning of whiteness and privilege to serve, maintain and perpetuate the status quo. Given that social reproduction inherently privileges whiteness and is pervasive at institutions of higher education, the use CRT and CWS as complimentary frames through which to interpret social reproduction was particularly useful in providing analytical lenses that make visible the pervasiveness of whiteness, power, and privilege.

Interpretation of Findings

In the course of my research, the salience and power of whiteness in education was visible over and over. Whiteness pervaded the faculty language and ideas around education and perceptions of students. Whiteness and privilege was the backbone of discourse that diminishes and dehumanizes many students. Whiteness empowered faculty to engage in practices of social reproduction, which have been codified and normalized through institutional structures. Even so, Whiteness was unrecognized by the faculty as existing, let alone that it was something that definitively impacted students negatively. Which then means that whiteness is a privilege whose inequitable

influence is invisible to those in positions of power (Leonardo, 2004; Pennington, Brock, & Ndura, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The epitome of whiteness in educational systems lies in reproducing the banking system of education (Freire, 1972), which serves to reinforce meritocratic ideals. This was seen in the classroom and in talking with both students and faculty, especially in terms of power dynamics, communication of values, and conceptualizations of students. However, these interactions serve to alienate students from their teachers (Shor, 1993). Teachers have a self-concept of holding power and knowledge, and expect students to passively accept knowledge from them as experts without questioning it. In addition to explicit content knowledge deposits, teachers are also engaging in other practices in class that impart cultural devaluation and marginalization, which implicitly communicates to students that they are deficient if they do not subscribe to dominant, white values (Woodall, 2013; Yosso, 2005). Teacher observations and interviews bore out that much of what happens in the classroom supports the banking model of education, in which faculty are the authority and students are seen from a deficit lens, as well as the cultural devaluation of non-white students.

Whiteness is maintained through these processes by privileging the values of the dominant culture and forcing students to conform to dominant values or fail (Brown, 2004; Patton, 2016; Picower, 2009; Sarcedo, Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2015;

Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). That devaluation of non-dominant cultures and forcing students to discard at least part of their identity is an act of violence, domination, and marginalization (Rolon-Dow, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Though this process occurs throughout their engagement in educational systems, the voluntary nature of college enables institutions to engage in more explicit assimilatory practices. Teacher beliefs are rigid and informed by whiteness, but do not allow for alternative beliefs or behaviors in the classroom that serve to recognize the connectedness for students of the various roles and responsibilities they have, nor of behaviors that still result in learning even if they are culturally non-traditional. Social reproduction occurs through institutional structures, classroom interactions, and student opportunities, which all privilege dominant culture and force students to either conform or get pushed out and marginalized if they fail to assimilate (Allen, 2004; Harbour, Middleton, Lewis, & Anderson, 2003; Tierney, 1999). The importance and salience of whiteness in the principal findings of this study necessitate that aspects of whiteness and social reproduction are made explicit during the discussion of first-generation college student experiences, care, faculty communication of values, faculty perception of students, and authority and power.

First-generation College Student Experiences

The experiences of the student participants as first-generation college students aligned with existing research on that student population (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Hottinger & Rose, 2006; Karp & Bork, 2014; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012; Sarcedo et al., 2015; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The student participants identified issues of transition from high school, not knowing how to navigate the system, disconnect from family, pressure of serving as a role model, the lack of connection of the material in their classes to their lived experiences, not understanding faculty expectations, and the disconnect in identity that they experience.

Interestingly, for the student participants, the subject of family and both the frustration they experience as they pursue higher education and the pressure of serving as a role model were primary issues of concern. Many expressed exasperations with their family, primarily their parents, in not understanding or being able to help them as they go through the college process, as well as pressure to succeed, because they understood that they are serving as examples to other members of their family and communities. Students are challenged in navigating the expectations and challenges of family and college, two different communities that often directly oppose one another (Somers, Woodhouse, & Cofer, 2004; Ward, 2013).

Students also talked about the disconnect in college that they experience as first-generation students. This disconnect manifested in many ways: not knowing norms,

structures, or resources of the institution; not feeling that their coursework was relevant to their lives and thus not fully understanding it or engaging with it; having difficulty fully understanding faculty expectations of them as students, as often those expectations were not clearly communicated; and that their teachers have expectations of them that do not align with other roles that they possess, creating fractured identities within the students themselves that they had to navigate (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Karp & Bork, 2014; Tierney, 1999). Students also felt that their identity as students of color was ignored in order to protect white fragility and privilege whiteness, thus inherently dehumanizing them (Yosso, 2005).

Faculty felt that first-generation students do not have a “culture of education,” which is necessary to be successful in college. In Tom’s words, first-generation students “hold onto cultures that hold onto them, and that hold them back.” This statement illustrates the belief that, in order for first-generation students to be successful academically, they must leave behind their family and home culture, as the family and home culture of those who have not attended college are incompatible with academic attainment (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Sarcedo at el., 2015; Tierney, 1999). The implication of this belief is that students are already seen as likely to fail before they even try, and are forced to overcome barriers in their interactions with faculty in addition to institutional barriers (Sarcedo at el.; Ward, 2013).

Care

All of the student participants discussed the desire for their teachers to show genuine care and understanding. For the students, care was by far the most important aspect of their interactions with teachers, many of which were marked specifically by what they felt was a lack of care by teachers. The yearning for care and understanding from faculty, the high praise and appreciation for those few teachers who showed genuine care, and the common experience of nonexistent care by teachers were common themes.

Students spoke about wanting to move beyond an impersonal and transactional relationship with their teachers to ones of feeling seen and valued (Noddings, 1984). What they want is to feel what Angela Valenzuela (1999) calls authentic care, which is a reciprocal, trusting relationship between students and teachers. Authentic care consists of reciprocal interactions—care begets care, lack of care begets lack of care, and for care to be truly authentic, it must consider cultural and racial dimensions of the reality in which students and faculty live and interact (Pennington, Brock, & Ndura, 2012; Rolón-Dow, 2005).

Students discussed at length the multiple roles and responsibilities they have outside the confines of the classroom, but most of them felt that their teachers were not concerned with anything that happened outside the classroom (Karp & Bork, 2014;

Tierney & Hallett, 2010). In the words of one of the students, Cindy, faculty “cared to a point...where it starts to impact the work in their class” (Interview: 11/17/17). The superficial care that Cindy references, in which teachers are unwilling to engage and work with students who encounter challenges in their personal lives that have an impact on their academics, is a norm grounded in whiteness and privilege and led to most student-teacher interactions existing only on a cursory level that does not extend beyond the boundaries of the course content (Noddings, 2012; Pennington, Brock, & Ndura, 2012; Rolón-Dow, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999).

Students discussed experiencing a marked absence of care from their teachers, deficit-oriented views and interactions, and largely impersonal and transactional relationships in which faculty gave information but little else. Students all had examples of interactions with teachers in which they did not feel seen or understood, and often were disregarded. However, students repeatedly expressed a desire for humanizing interactions with teachers in which they felt genuinely seen and understood (Gutierrez, 2018; Valenzuela, 1999). There were a few examples in which students had experienced this type of authentic care that made them feel valued.

In reflecting on lack of care in teacher practice, both faculty and students posed the question: “why are you even teaching?” This question interrogates the motivation for faculty who are unwilling to interact with students in a way that promotes their

success, or even transmits to students that teachers are willing to engage with them.

Some faculty are not able to go beyond the most basic content delivery through minimal interactions with students and still believe that they are effective at “teaching,” which creates grievous problems with student outcomes.

Faculty Communication of Values

Faculty communicated values that show their beliefs about the purpose of college as well as expectations of student and teacher roles. These beliefs are grounded in whiteness, and express ideals embedded in the narrative of meritocracy that privilege dominant values (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Leonardo, 2002). In the classroom, positive student characteristics such as timeliness in attendance and in assignments, frequent and vocal class participation, content mastery on concepts exactly how they are presented, and other behaviors of an exemplary student, which are the embodiment of white values, are privileged, and expect students to conform or fail (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015). The behaviors of exemplary students that faculty reward embody white values in that they represent the narrative of individual success, in which the student is solely responsible for their success or failure, as well as the belief that life circumstances outside of the classroom should not impact the classroom. In addition, for faculty, success is defined as learning and internalizing a curriculum that has been organized through white points of view. These beliefs are maintained by the perspective

that equality is more important than equity, which is a conviction that is soundly centered in dominant white narrative, as well as the denial of alternative norms of classroom behavior as viable and effective. The reinforcement of the narrative of meritocracy was also rampant—that students needed to work hard to succeed, and that success or failure was a product of how much (or little) work a student did (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Ullucci & Battey, 2011). Meritocracy, however, fails to consider that the circumstances and opportunities that students have are different, thus creating additional barriers to some students—groups that are labeled as “underperforming” who are getting pushed out of educational systems (Brunsma, Brown, & Placier, 2012; Gillborn, 2006; Yosso & Solórzano, 2002).

An important aspect of the meritocracy narrative was the displacement of faculty responsibility when it came to student outcomes, meaning that faculty felt students were solely responsible for their academic outcomes (Gusa, 2010; Fasset & Warren, 2004). This view serves to abdicate faculty of all responsibility of negative student outcomes—faculty felt that students only had themselves to blame if they did not do well (Karp & Bork, 2014). Paradoxically, faculty still took credit for positive student outcomes. For example, when Tom discussed the Latino student who, at Tom’s suggestion, decided to become a doctor. Additionally, this view of students serves to

perpetuate the bias and positionality associated with whiteness (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015).

Faculty discussions around the purpose of college were completely focused on college as a place to explore and find a greater purpose in life (Fasset & Warren, 2004). The ideas that students were concerned with financial success or focused on career pathways were met with derision. This view was so pronounced in faculty that they even attributed lack of student success to lack of purpose in college—in Tom’s words, “you’ve got to be here for an education, and you’ve got to really think about what that is” (Interview: 11/13/17). Failing students, therefore, were the ones who did not have conceptualizations of education as a vehicle for self-discovery, but instead valued college for the potential social mobility it offers.

Faculty comments illustrate the lack of fundamental recognition that the faculty view of the student role and of the role of college were created through the lens of whiteness, and part of whiteness is to reinforce white supremacy through the devaluation and denial of cultural values that are different (Haviland, 2008; Patton, 2016). While faculty may discount the importance of culture, race, and ethnicity in the classroom, to students who are not part of the dominant culture, cultural competency is important and helps to foster connection (Valenzuela, 1999). The faculty view of the student role also represents a class issue, in that one needs financial resources to view

college the way faculty are viewing it. Students with limited financial resources and a view of college as leading to a better paying job see college differently from how faculty perceive it.

Students discussed the faculty focus on teaching content in the classroom, as opposed to teaching people. In the student view, faculty were concerned with giving information, staying on a schedule, and getting through planned lessons, but did not engage in building relationships with students or working with them on an individual level (Carr, 2015; Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009). Due to this, students did not feel particularly valued or seen, and were much less motivated to engage. The lack of meaningful student-teacher interactions has a detrimental role on student motivation and valuation of school (Valenzuela, 1999). In Hector's words, "if your teacher doesn't even make you feel comfortable enough to be able to go to class, what makes you think you're gonna feel comfortable enough to want to learn?" For students, feeling comfortable and valued in the classroom is a prerequisite to learning, but they did not feel that most faculty shared that belief (Valenzuela, 1999).

Faculty Perception of Students

In faculty interviews and class observations, faculty communicated a clear deficit view of most students. They identify student 'lacks' and how they can 'fix' them, which focused primarily on student lack of purpose and skills, which is a

common narrative among teachers (James, 2012; Marx, 2004). Faculty expressed these beliefs about students in different ways and places: language in the syllabi that spoke to faculty giving students skills, knowledge, and purpose; interactions during class observations in which faculty discounted student ideas or communicated lack of trust in student statements; and during faculty interviews in which faculty spoke of students as not having purpose or goals, and disparaging student values and behaviors. Faculty also identified the need for critical thinking skills, which, though a worthy goal of education, is used as a euphemism for both intelligence and displays of white values and traits. Students are not given latitude to disagree with normalized conceptualizations of critical thinking when it does not align with dominant views. In the same vein, student absences are strongly penalized, without the recognition that they are set somewhat arbitrarily. An absolute number of absences—five versus six, for example—may have no impact on student ability to succeed in the course and understand the material, and there are alternatives to attendance that may be implemented that ensure that a student still receives the necessary content. The faculty view of students of color as lacking, of teachers engaging in microaggressions with non-white students, and of fundamental deficit beliefs about the lower abilities and intelligence of underrepresented student populations are well documented (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009; Marx; Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014; McIntyre, 1997; Picower, 2009;

Sleeter, 2001). These deficit beliefs are deep-rooted, and were expressed more explicitly by certain faculty with specific student groups—Tom’s comments on Pacific Islander culture as being detrimental for education and the reason that Pacific Islander students fail, for example.

In collecting and analyzing the data, there was a serious disconnect in positionality between faculty and students. Faculty tended to think in constructs of whiteness, privilege, and power, while students expressed feeling demeaned, othered and marginalized in their interactions with faculty. The faculty narratives and student experiences are aligned with research on faculty beliefs in which students of color, especially, are viewed negatively (Gillborn, 2005; Sarcedo, Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2015; Harbour, Middleton, Lewis, & Anderson, 2003). These feelings of marginalization and being othered were very impactful for students—they expressed increased disconnect and lack of motivation in classes where they had those experiences (Collier & Morgan, 2008). Faculty, on the other hand, communicated their power and authority in the classroom and as content experts, and focused on purpose and motivation as primary issues to student success. Another area in which this disconnect came through was when students articulated that they are living in a reality in which a college degree holds value and becomes the key to accessing the kind of job opportunities they are interested in to support the larger goals they have for themselves

(Gofen, 2009). Faculty, on the other hand, expressed that they felt students should be focused on finding purpose, but were more interested in a high salary or being famous, goals that faculty did not believe were worthy to pursue.

Students also expressed repeatedly that they felt that faculty do not understand the reality of student lives and the various challenges they experience, including family responsibilities, housing, food, and work (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009; Karp & Bork, 2014). Looking at Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), physiological needs such as food and shelter, followed by safety needs, must be addressed before an individual is able to focus on such things as learning. At CBA, students were faced with having to provide for their most basic needs while still engaging in systems where they experienced disdain and exclusion. Students expressed the belief that faculty have a negative perception of them, especially because they do not conform to 'ideal student role' that has been communicated to them by faculty (Davies, Safarik, & Banning, 2003). However, given the student accounts of what they are facing, they are struggling to meet some of their most basic needs, but feel faculty rebuke them for not always being mentally or physically present without acknowledging the complex challenges that form part of their daily reality.

The discrepancy between faculty perception of students and student perceptions and experience was stark. Students clearly expressed their desire to succeed in school,

and all had larger goals that they are pursuing (Mesa, 2012). While these larger goals may not be those that faculty believe are worthwhile, it is critical for faculty to recognize that they are still worthy of respect.

Authority and Privilege

Another key finding is expressions of authority and privilege. Authority and privilege were primarily conveyed in practice through beliefs and behaviors of dominance and paternalism, displays of a white savior mentality, and interactional assertion of power.

Through the course of data collection, faculty comments and student interactions took the attitude of paternalism. This was expressed through faculty comments of “proper” values, which aligned with the values of the faculty themselves and are informed by meritocracy and whiteness. Students who did not seem to align with those values, or were part of cultural groups that faculty felt expressed different values, were talked down to and continually questioned. Faculty microaggressions towards students expressed deficit oriented beliefs about students, and studies have shown negative student outcomes associated with experiences of microaggressions (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, et al., 2009). Throughout, faculty were certain that the beliefs they held were the only correct ones, and thus marginalized and othered students, often unconsciously.

Displays of white savior mentality were frequent, though the sole female faculty member was by far the faculty participant who expressed this most. White savior mentality resulted in the faculty having one-sided relationships with their students—they have nothing to offer or teach the faculty, but through their classroom interactions, the faculty saves and loves their students (Garrett & Segall, 2013). This view also reinforces the power differentials between students and teachers, as students are seen as inferior, ignorant, and needing to be saved because they cannot save themselves (Henze, Lucas, & Scott, 1998). Interestingly, the teacher is validated by these interactions, and the external validation reinforces the view of teachers as heroically sacrificing themselves to help those who are less than, implying that community college students have deficits that white folks with knowledge and in positions of power can rectify (Matias, 2013). This belief serves to denigrate the families and cultures of non-white students, and frame the imposition of whiteness as a means of care, when in reality the imposition of whiteness is dehumanizing (Allen, 2004; Bartolome, 2004; Leonardo, 2004).

The belief that students are lacking and faculty can provide for them and work to fix them is the epitome of the white savior narrative, but it does not acknowledge the power dynamic that this narrative creates (Henze, Lucas, & Scott, 1998). The assertion of power, through the guises of white savior, knowledgeable paternalism, or just in

blatant displays of authority serve to reinforce the narrative that faculty know best and effectively works to disempower students (Allen, 2004; Shor, 1993). Faculty exerted power over students in various ways, including physically, but the students felt that they had no recourse and thus expressed challenges to power in passive ways, such as being absent or not completing work.

Implications and Recommendations

Ultimately, the goal of this research and the recommendations that come out of it lie in making changes to institutional culture necessary to meet our students' needs—especially those student populations that have been marginalized and pushed out of college year after year. There are a number of ways in which this can take place, and all are part of what is needed to make real change. One of these is in creating and implementing professional development programs to address cultural competency, privilege, systemic and instructional barriers and racism. Another venue for cultural change is to engage faculty in pedagogical development, looking at specific practices, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes that get communicated to students that instructors may not be aware of, and developing interventions to begin to change those. Additionally, changes in hiring practices should be implemented so that the administration, faculty, and staff better reflect the diverse composition of the student population. Dismantling oppressive systems and structures through the recognition of white supremacy as a

means of perpetuating inequity is needed for true, sustainable change with the hopes of improving student outcomes.

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) serves as a means to engage faculty in training. It also is the most accessible means of connecting with faculty, as California community college faculty have a contractual obligation to participate in annual PD, and all college campuses plan and offer PD opportunities. However, oftentimes the professional development offered is superficial—CBA, for example, has offered nature walks as a PD activity for years, and generally PD does not require faculty to interrogate their own practice or beliefs. The opportunity is there to take advantage of mandated participation in PD to engage faculty in changing pedagogy, beliefs, and practices (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009).

Given the student emphasis on the importance of care, faculty training on authentic care and engaging with students in ways that are empathic and free of power dynamics is critical. Training faculty on an ethics of care that acknowledges the frame of whiteness is important because then faculty can engage with students with authentic caring, not paternalistic or white savior caring. However, this needs to take place in a way that is widespread and intentional, which means creating tools for faculty to use, then modifying standards of assessment to implement the tools they have learned. If

changes can be made in faculty assessment to also include cultural competency measures, then developing cultural competency becomes a normalized part of the faculty role.

Pedagogy and Cultural competency

Much of the training needed for changes in pedagogy and in implementing cultural competency must take place at the graduate level. This implies the necessity to advocate for policy changes that require master's programs to have a course in culturally sustaining pedagogy, as well as cultural competency—which must include an interrogation of privilege for it to be successful (Picower, 2009; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). California community colleges especially are incredibly diverse schools, and the need will only increase for culturally competent faculty who are engaging effectively with a diverse student body. It is important for faculty to engage directly with students to be informed on what students are experiencing; this open dialogue offers continual opportunities for feedback and engagement that must take place in ways that are safe for the students and can lead to productive change for faculty.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy consists primarily of three dimensions: academic success, cultural competence, sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014). Academic success focuses on the learning and intellectual growth that takes

place within the classroom; cultural competence refers to the ability to acknowledge and recognize the value of cultures of origin in the educational setting while developing fluency in other cultures; and sociopolitical consciousness emphasizes the ability to take learning beyond the classroom and apply it to engage with real world problems. While enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy in the classroom benefits all students, students from traditionally marginalized groups, including first-generation students and students of color, will especially benefit from pedagogical changes.

Disparities in student and faculty perceptions and expectations is an issue that has been raised in other studies and is reinforced here (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Karp & Bork, 2014). Faculty have perceptions and expectations of students that are informed by meritocratic and white values, but those clearly are not aligned with student perceptions and expectations. In addition, as long as faculty profess a color-blind view of students, the lack of acknowledgement of racial and ethnic disparities, as well as cultural competency, effectively marginalizes and dehumanizes students and will continue to result in what we currently experience—negative, disparate outcomes for many students of color and other marginalized groups (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008).

Identifying Disparities in Student Outcomes

Using quantitative student data to inform change is also very important. However, not all institutions, and certainly not CBA, gather data that is intersectional,

nor is data readily available. Intersectional data needs to be presented to faculty about how their institution is serving, or failing, various student groups, and how they, in particular, fare with those groups. While data does not tell the entire story, it can be powerful in showing aspects of the problem institutions of higher education collectively are facing, as well as individually how a faculty member interacts with different student populations. Combined with qualitative data—talking directly with different students, quantitative outcomes can be helpful in identifying outcomes disparities.

Hiring Practices

One of the areas in which changes are able to be implemented more easily, but that has far reaching implications for campus culture and student outcomes, lies in changing the hiring process, specifically who and what get privileged in that process. A focus on cultural competency, equity, social justice, acknowledgement of privilege, and intentional diversification all aid in changing both the applicant pool and the culture of an institution. Ideally, changing hiring practices would eventually result in the administration, faculty, and staff better reflecting the diverse composition of the student population.

Hiring practices need to be addressed, from how the job descriptions are being written, to the questions being asked during the interviews, to the composition of the hiring committees for faculty positions. A focus on diversity as a primary value of the

institution would influence all three of the aforementioned areas, which is guided by the top leadership of an institution. Once the leadership of an institution value equity and racial justice as necessary to student success and a driving factor for all policies and initiatives, not only will the hiring process change, but the hiring pool will change as well. Potential candidates will see that they are valued for their contributions and not just serving as tokens of a minority group, which is what often happens in attempts to diversify faculty pools.

Creation of a faculty diversity internship will also aid in increasing the diversity of the adjunct pool and full-time applicant pool, and, hopefully, will increase the faculty of color hired for full-time positions. A faculty diversity internship is an intentional and programmatic recognition that diversity of faculty is not commensurate with the diversity of students, and creates a mechanism to begin to address both the problem of recruitment and to create intentional supports for potential faculty. Funding for a faculty diversity internship will need to be identified, as the interns, faculty mentors, and any potential support staff will need to be compensated.

Dismantling Oppressive Systems and Structures and Rehumanizing Education

Ultimately, dismantling oppressive systems and structures is necessary to make fundamental change—implementing programs and support services are not sufficient to change student outcomes (Burdman, 2009). For many students, especially students of

color, education is a dehumanizing experience, and there is a need to rehumanize education (Gutierrez, 2018). Rehumanizing education happens through countering the marginalization and othering that students of color experience in the course of their education by privileging distinct, non-dominant narratives, valuing cultural practices and norms that are different from those of dominant, white culture, empowering students to be part of their own education, and engaging in authentic, caring relationships.

Whiteness and meritocracy in the classroom must be interrogated, especially as they have created a default discourse that blames students for structural inequities (Tierney, 1999). Given the way instruction and learning takes place within these existing inequitable structures, certain students groups are disproportionately negatively impacted. Through this process, social reproduction continues to take place that ensures whiteness is seamlessly reinforced, thus negating threats to the power of dominant groups.

Oppressive systems cannot change if the people working in those systems perpetuate them (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015; Yosso, 2005). In education, widespread change needs to happen in the classroom to begin to create systemic change. Faculty are in a position of power to make change, but it will require them to let go of the defensiveness of their own whiteness and privilege. Social reproduction has

maintained this inequitable system in which privilege is inherent in the institution itself; however, it is possible that breaking the cycle can begin by faculty engaging in authentic care and enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy with their students (Bourdieu, 1973; Brennan & Nadoo, 2008).

Implications for Leadership

Recommendations for action cannot be fully implemented without necessary leadership for change. Truly transformational change, in which structures and cultures of the institution fundamentally change so as not to keep perpetuating the same injustices, requires administrative and faculty leadership to promote a vision of equity and social justice at every level of the campus (Shields, 2010). Though this process may take time, intentional hiring practices, targeted professional development on culturally sustaining pedagogy for faculty, critical interrogation of current practices and structures, as well as outcomes on disaggregated student groups, and shared understanding of equity are necessary to promote impactful and sustaining change. Leadership will inevitably be met with resistance to cultural changes, and must be prepared to address that resistance on multiple fronts through a shared vision and strong networks of like-minded folks in strategic positions.

Limitations of the Study and Areas of Future Research

Limitations of the study include the small number of participants in both the student and faculty groups, not having a participant sample that is proportionate to first-generation student population or the faculty population at institutional, state, or national levels, collecting data from a single site, and using a faculty sample that is all in one discipline.

Cultural and racial issues appeared to be a subtext that needs to be further researched, especially as they relate to race and culture salience, faculty bias, and the implications of positionality. The genuine and culturally responsive ethic of care in the community college setting is also an area of interest, and while it was not explored deeply in this study, it should be explored in further research.

There is a lack of success and retention especially for FGCS at community colleges. Though many interventions have been implemented, those rates have not changed significantly over time. Focusing on pedagogy and cultural competency as impactful areas of intervention has the potential to change educational outcomes for the FGCS population, but further research is needed, as there is a dearth of data and research conducted on the subject at the community college setting.

Next steps include researching how social reproduction is enacted, or interrupted, depending on the pedagogical orientation of instructor, as well as the impact of social reproduction in the community college classroom on various student

populations. Research into interventions to disrupt social reproduction in the classroom would also be valuable. More research needs to be conducted at the community college level. More research needs to be conducted on faculty pedagogy and beliefs as related to student outcomes. More research is necessary to determine the generalizability of this study and to determine the most relevant and effective supports and cultural responsive practices needed to disrupt the predictive power of demographics and meet the needs of students of color, first-generation students, and other marginalized students throughout the community college system.

Conclusion

Though the student body is quite diverse, the faculty and administration are largely white. The campus culture is one of color-blindness and meritocracy, in which the rhetoric of treating everyone equally regardless of race is propagated, along with the idea that as long as a student works hard, they are able to accomplish their goals (with the inverse of the reason a student is not accomplishing their goals is because they are not working hard enough). Equity is a conversation that is just recently beginning to take place on a larger scale with faculty and administration. As a result of the state mandated equity plan, the student population that was identified as being most in need due to inequitable outcomes was the 18-24-year-old population, and resources for interventions have been allocated towards improving those student outcomes— but

there was no recognition of traditionally marginalized student populations or even disaggregated data of student populations to better inform the distribution of resources.

In looking at ideal solutions to the problem of first-generation student retention, it is necessary to address the areas of faculty pedagogy, supporting the inclusion of culturally sustaining pedagogy and addressing social justice issues in instruction and institutions, and reforming institutional structures to create collaborative, supportive, inclusive, and equitable institutions.

Currently, student success, or lack thereof, across clearly delineated demographic characteristics has been well documented over time, and continues to be a prevalent problem. Structures of higher education, including community colleges, were designed and implemented in the lens of white, middle-class privilege, and thus embody and reproduce those cultural, social, and institutional privileges—or discriminate against those who do not possess them (Yosso, 2005). In order to truly change outcomes, educational structures and culture need to be radically changed as well (Gusa, 2010; Sarcedo, et al., 2015). Faculty, administration, institutional structures, and students all have a role in impacting and changing existing systems in order to create more equitable outcomes.

Faculty engage in the highest amount of prolonged interactions with students, thus changing the assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and behaviors of faculty is

particularly important (Tierney, 1999; Collier & Morgan, 2008). This is especially important in terms of addressing implicit assumptions of what the student role means, and the knowledge and behaviors that are associated with mastery of that role, especially when those assumptions are discrepant from those of students. For first-generation students in particular, limited research has shown that there is a difference of understanding of the student role, and it may play a role in the differential negative outcomes this population experiences (Collier & Morgan, 2008). It is reasonable to conclude that such differences may be ameliorated by having faculty participate in professional development that is focused on pedagogical change that is more oriented in a social justice framework. It is the role of faculty and administrative leadership to create those opportunities, as well as ensure participation in pedagogical development opportunities.

Faculty and students stand to benefit from the integration of critical pedagogy, culturally sustaining curriculum, and intentional scaffolding of skills and information. This necessarily implies that faculty have to change how and what they teach, which in current structures is met with resistance, as it shifts the responsibility of student success to faculty and necessitate changing how they teach moving from a banking system model to a problem-posing model (Freire, 1972). In order to accomplish such a change, a clear administrative push to change the pedagogy of instruction is needed.

Advocating for and supporting cultural and pedagogical institutional change is a responsibility of administrative leadership. Within existing structures, this is most effectively done through targeted professional development and curriculum redevelopment, intentional hiring processes and practices that clearly define the values the institution is looking for in new faculty, a rhetoric and action-based valuation of social justice, equity, and innovative practices. Professional development in culturally sustaining and critical pedagogy affords faculty, staff, and administrators' opportunities to contextually understand the diversity of the student population and existing barriers that their teaching and institutions create, while allowing them to analyze, discuss, create, and collaborate to create change (Fullan, 2001). This collaboration and collective pedagogical development then creates an opportunity for institutional cultural shifts that value student diversity and success. It also allows faculty the opportunity to create intentional relationships with colleagues and administration, thus further promoting effective change (Fullan, 2001). Though representative of a long-term commitment to cultural shifts, over time, with leadership that is congruent in words and practice of social justice pedagogy, change can be made effectively (Shields, 2010).

At the institutional level, there is a need to create a culture of inclusion, equity, social justice that permeates every aspect of the institution—from the mission statement, to hiring practices, to faculty support and professional development. This

allows for the creation of a dynamic system that is able to be critical of itself and make changes, as well as implement a long-term commitment to cultural shifts to benefit students who have traditionally experienced low rates of success. A culture of inclusion allows opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups, students, faculty, and staff, to see themselves recognized, respected, and included in opportunities for change—for example, in the content of course offerings, in dedicated student spaces, in the rhetoric used it is recognizing that underrepresented minorities bring diverse perspectives, strengths, and assets to the higher education environment. It is critical to integrate equity and inclusion into all aspects of institutional culture, and is directly related to student outcomes.

The biggest concern of most colleges and universities, especially community colleges, is the low rates of completion and persistence, especially of underrepresented and first-generation populations; even with more routine tasks to focus on, like a budget, equity is critical to changing outcomes and has impacts on where funding is distributed. Outcomes will not change by doing what has been done, which is working from a deficit view of traditionally marginalized populations—obviously, it has not been working. Thus, it is important to shift the pedagogy of those who works in systems of higher education, from teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff, to disseminate an understanding that their job and interactions with students are critical to student

success—those relationships and interactions are crucial for many students in determining if they will persist in school (Tinto, 2005; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). In line with Freire's challenge to the traditional banking system of education, it is necessary to include students as instrumental members of the change process. Student collaboration in generating information and ideas on institutional, pedagogical, and structural changes that would empower them to have a stake in their education, and allows for their needs to be directly addressed.

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Appendices
Appendix A

Class Observation Protocol

	11:10-20	11:20-30	11:30-40	11:40-50	11:50-12	Total
Closed questions						
Open questions						
Gives instructions						
Answers question						
Lecture						
Student question - clarifying						
Student discussion/ open q						
Indv work						
Small group work						
Whole class work/ activity						
Student led work/ activity						
Student-student talking						
Reference to rules/ expectations						
Check for understanding						
Explicitly uses student name						

Appendix B

Faculty Interview Protocol

1. What motivated you to become an educator?
2. What is your philosophy of education?
3. Tell me about your college experience.
4. Describe your experience teaching in community college.
 - a Describe an experience when you felt that your teaching was effective.
What made it effective?
 - b Tell me about a time when you felt that your teaching was not effective.
Why do you feel it was ineffective?
5. Given your experience, what are things that you see help students be successful?
 - a How would you define a struggling student? Have you seen these students in your classroom? Have students expressed their struggles to you? How? How did you respond?
 - b Give me some examples of challenging students you have worked with.
 - c What are your biggest challenges with students?
 - d Which students have you noticed have the hardest time in class?
6. What needs to change in order for students to do better in community college?

Appendix C

Student Focus Group Protocol

1. What have your social interactions been like with teachers?
2. How do you think your teachers perceive you as a student? As a person?
3. Describe some things that you wish your teachers knew about you.
 - a. Do you talk with your teachers about where you come from? Why? Why not?
 - b. If so, what was it like? Did the teacher support your experience?
 - c. How do your teachers treat you? Why do you think that is?
4. Do you think your teachers care about you (as a person? About your experience?)
5. What challenges have you experienced in completing your educational goals?
How have you dealt with those challenges so far?
6. How do you think being the first one in your family to go to college has impacted your college experience? Tell me about some challenges that you and how you have dealt with them so far?
7. Tell me about your responsibilities outside of school. How do they balance with school/how does school fit in? How does it impact you being a student?

8. When you walk into a new class, what do you expect your experience to be like?
Why do you anticipate it to be like that?
9. What would make you feel more accepted and valued in the classroom? What would you change?
10. Do you feel like the stuff you are learning is connected to your life? (in what ways/to what extent do you feel the things you are learning about are connected to your community/personal life?)
11. What are your academic goals?

Appendix D

Student Demographic Survey

1. While you were in school (K-12), who would you consider your **primary caregiver(s)**? (check all that apply)

b. ____ mother	f. ____ friend
c. ____ father	g. ____ state-appointed custodian
d. ____ grandparent(s)	h. ____ other
e. ____ other relative	

2. What was **their highest level of education**? (complete for each caregiver; if more than two, please add information in blank space provided if only one, leave second column blank)

Caregiver 1 (specify relationship below)

Caregiver 2 (specify relationship below)

a. ____ did not complete high school	a. ____ did not complete high school
b. ____ completed h.s. or equivalent	b. ____ completed h.s. or equivalent
c. ____ some college	c. ____ some college
d. ____ completed college	d. ____ completed college
e. ____ completed graduate school	e. ____ completed graduate school

3. In general, how would you describe your **household's income or economic class level** at that time?

- a. ____ low /b. ____ lower-middle /c. ____ middle /d. ____ upper-middle /e. ____ upper

4. Age: _____

5. Gender: _____

6. Ethnicity: _____

If would be interested in participating in a research study focus group that talks about your experiences and that would take up to 1.5 hours of your time, please write down your preferred email address here: