

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jesus Jaime-Diaz for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Education,

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Abstract approved:

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The purpose of this study is to determine factors that encourage second generation Latina/os to obtain a community college education. A critical qualitative ethnography focused on “*Testimonio*” was used in conducting this study. The key findings were formulated around three critical research questions. In relation to each research question, three themes were incorporated into the research questions to determine identified influences. The research questions were as follows: (a) What experiences (personal, educational, familial, etc.) influenced students’ decision to pursue a higher education? (b) How does the Latina/o culture influence college attendance? (c) How has the community college environment served as a tool for

empowerment and furthering enrollment in higher education in the Latina/o community?

The nine themes that corresponded to each research question, were as follows: (a) migration experience; (b) early living conditions, (c) social isolation, (d) acquiring the English language, (e) cultural identity, (f) peer and family influence in pursuing a collegiate education, (g) influential memories of K-12, (h) the impact of community college, (i) personal experiences and major influences to attend community college.

The student participants in this study were second generation, born in the United States, Mexico, and Peru. The students were either bilingual in Spanish and English or they had lost the ability to speak their native Spanish language and solely spoke English. The student participants received the majority of their K-12 education in the United States, Mexico, or Peru.

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Identified Influences on Second Generation Latina/os on Their Pathway

Through Community College

by
Jesus Jaime-Diaz

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Director of Interdisciplinary Studies Program

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Jesus Jaime-Diaz, Author

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I would like to thank my youngest brother Samuel “May” Jaime-Diaz, rest in peace. I would never have gone as far as I have without the strength you give me from up above. I know wherever you are, you give your family power to continue. I want to thank my family; I have missed so much of your lives since I embarked on this crusade of higher education. I want you all to know you are in my heart every day what we suffered together I never forget – it’s what gave me strength. I love and miss you all very much. I also thank my wife Norma Madrigal and her beautiful family. Thank you for at one time giving me asylum in your home from all the negative social elements that surrounded me.

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my little brother Samuel "May" Jaime-Diaz, and all of those who have been denied a sovereign diverse education. We are here to fight for the equality that has been denied. I thank you creator above, and I ask you to continue to give me strength.

“Write in such a way as you can be readily understood by both the young and the old, by men as well as women, even by children.”

- Ho Chi Minh

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Chapter One Introduction

The scorn of our formidable neighbor, who does not know us, is Our Americas greatest danger. And since that day of the visit is near, it is imperative that our neighbor knows us, and soon, so that it will not scorn us. Through ignorance it might even come to lay hands on us. Once it does know us, it will remove its hands out of respect. One must have faith in the best in men and distrust the worst. One must allow the best to be shown so that it reveals and prevails over the worst. Nations should have a pillory for whoever stirs up useless hatred, and another for whoever fails to tell them the truth in time. (Marti, 1999, p. 119)

My life experience was one of discrimination, cultural conflict, and poverty. I grew up in a small, rural, secluded town in Northeastern Oregon. I saw firsthand what it was to be dehumanized by prejudiced teachers who never had the patience or understanding to genuinely assist someone to get an education. I remember constantly getting in trouble; I did not feel a part of school. When I try to recall my memories of K-12, they are a blur. I have a very difficult time remembering what I learned. What I have never forgotten is the feeling of exclusion, and constantly feeling humiliated. I also remember the anger that I felt for the way I was made fun of in regards to how I talked and dressed. I remember channeling the anger I felt into the counter culture of being a gang member. I became very violent and hateful towards life; I began to become lost in a world of violence and drugs. I remember the police putting guns to our faces, and I remember watching my loved ones disappear into the criminal justice system.

The most painful feeling a person can feel in life is one of worthlessness. I remember when I was a day laborer for a Wal-Mart Distribution Center. It was brutal physical work. I thought it was all I was good enough to do, which was work with my hands. I resented having to work so hard, and seeing my loved ones struggle in life. I did not like to see people suffer and struggle; I always wished that I could do something about it. Something that always hurt

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me was that I had never finished high school. I did not like the stigma of being a drop out. At about the time I decided to return to school and pursue my General Equivalency Diploma (GED), I lost my youngest brother in a house fire on February 23, 2002: he was fourteen years old. When you go through so much pain and hurt in life, it is difficult to continue and hold on to hope. But my brother liked Oregon State University, so I promised him I would be a Beaver in his memory. My days in community college were a blessing. It is where I give credit to my early educational roots. It is where I was valued and treated like a human being. It is where I was included and strengthened to lead. That experience was a catalyst for me to go on to a university and complete my undergraduate and master's graduate work, and eventually I will go on to pursue a Ph.D. as an activist scholar.

The factors that I am going to present in this study are issues that I have critiqued from my own life experience. It is my hope that this study assists in the development of community college as a strategic catalyst for social change and empowerment. It is my intention that through the "*testimonio*" of these student participants from a second generation Latina/o background, we identify influences to further open the doors to community college. It is my intent that we enable community colleges to critically assist and work for the communities that they are a part of. It is my belief that community colleges must firmly establish recruitment pipelines within the communities that they serve. However, they must know the communities they are serving from a critical standpoint. This understanding will enable the community college to assist marginalized and impoverished communities. I will argue that this must be done through an in depth lens at post-colonial education and ethnocentric practices that continue to negatively impact our educational institutions. The factors that this ethnography will focus on will be the "voice" of the student participants. This study will make

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a correlation to historical events that the people of Latina/o America have endured as a collective. It is my intention above all that educators in higher learning understand the people of Latina/o background and critically understand the experience they have endured and continue to live out in contemporary times. This study will answer three critical research questions:

- **How does the Latino culture influence college attendance?**
- **What experiences (personal, educational, familial, etc.) influenced students' decisions to pursue higher education?**
- **How has the community college environment served as a tool for social empowerment in furthering enrollment in higher education in the Latino community?**

I am a firm believer in the positive impact that community college can have on socially oppressed communities. However, as stated previously, the community college must critically understand the marginalized communities that they will be assisting. The intent of this study is to understand these factors and to draw from them and implement social strategic change.

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

Racism of any sort is heinous, most terribly for its victims but also for its perpetrators. One of the worst racisms, though, for any generation or group is the one that we do not see, that is invisible to our lens – the one we participate in without consciously knowing or intending it. Are we not seeing the biases of our time, just like 100 years ago did not see the biases of their time? Will those who look back at us in time wonder why we resisted seeing our racism. (Scheurich, 2002, p. 68)

If educators are to commit themselves to social justice within higher education and use the spectrum of community college as a tool for social empowerment, critical thought must be focused on the historical plight of the Latina/o experience. By giving a critical insight into these issues, we will then begin to further understand the social barriers that this particular ethnic group faces in achieving social mobility through higher education. With Latina/os having some of the highest dropout rates in education, Valencia (2004) mentions that some recent census figures demonstrate that Mexican-Americans in the Southwestern United States rank highest in high school or push out rates. In addition they continue to be less likely than whites or other ethnic groups to obtain a college degree (p. 37). This “swim or sink ideology” causes the educational system to indirectly feed the criminal justice system, with high percentages of Latina/os ending up in correctional institutions:

Latinos are disproportionately arrested, charged, and jailed in comparison to their numbers in the overall population. For example, while Latinos constituted approximately 11 percent of the total U.S. population in 2000, they constituted 16 percent of the total prison population. (Valencia, 2004, p. 157)

It is of vital importance to determine what influential factors assist Latina/os to pursue and achieve a college education, focusing on the community college as the gateway to social mobility, in marginalized communities. The students who are enrolled in community college are usually from a working class background. The institution serves to give them access to

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employment or to continue onto four year institutions. Cohen & Brawer (2008) state that community college students are less likely to be from higher socioeconomic classes than were students from four year institutions. They tend to come from families whose bread winner was a skilled or semi-skilled worker who has not completed grammar school or high school and was not a college graduate. Thus community college serves as optimism for socially disadvantaged communities. It can give communities with the least resources optimism if the community college can serve the community as a catalyst for social change and empowerment.

This study has been conducted through scholarly research on the following:

- **How does the Latino culture influence college attendance?**
- **What experiences (personal, educational, familial, etc.) influenced students' decision to pursue higher education?**
- **How has the community college environment served as a tool for social empowerment in furthering enrollment in higher education in the Latino community?**

Literature Review: Search and Selection Process

This section will give insight as to how secondary research was used and determined, in order for it to correlate to second generation Latina/os enrolled in community college. It will also give insight as to how the literature was selected, and what the strengths and weaknesses were of the selected studies. A particular issue that should be highlighted is how students culturally identified. The term Chicana/o, Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina/o and Hispanic will be used interchangeably. Alaniz & Cornish (2008) define the different terms. The term Chicano is one of heightened political consciousness and love and respect for one's culture. Mexican-American connotes middle class respectability. Mexican is used to solidify from where a person is born. As

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for Hispanic or Latino, they are euphemistic and fail to differentiate Chicanos from other Spanish-speaking people. Even though students may be from the same community, their political and cultural upbringings will differ in how they identify. This differentiation will be determined in their political consciousness and understanding of what these labels mean.

The Critical Theory of Education will be extensively implemented in this research study. This theory gives focus to the social inequalities that feed into the capitalist system and permeate social disempowerment and inequality through education:

The 'system' in a critical theory analysis is an institution (such as government or education) that functions to reproduce the status quo, in particular the existing social class structure. Awareness of this oppression can lead to resistance and possibly change. (Merriam, 2007, p. 253)

As stated previously, community colleges tend to serve socially-disadvantaged, working class communities; a mission for community colleges could be to address social inequity and serve as a buffer against oppression. Merriam (2007) argues that in an adult learning setting, it is imperative to challenge ideology, that it is the basic tool for helping adult learners to learn how to penetrate the everyday reality to reveal the oppression and inequity that lurk beneath. In helping adult learners understand the factors that permeate their social living conditions, in the society that they are part of will assist them on the academic path they will take, and in giving them tools better assist their communities once they are finished with their college education.

Compilation of Secondary Research

A strong component of secondary research was from multiple scholars within the interdisciplinary academic realm of Adult Education, Ethnic Studies and Speech Communication.

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The **integration of knowledge**, then, means identifying and blending knowledge from relevant disciplines to produce an interdisciplinary understanding of a particular problem or intellectual question that is limited in time and to a particular context that would not be possible by relying solely on a single disciplinary approach. (Repko, 2008, p. 19)

This compilation of data has been saved over the years by, or was researched via, a library research. The focus on the material will highlight the historical socio, economic, and educational experiences that Latina/os have faced in the United States. Also from an intercultural perspective, data will be used to support how communication plays a crucial factor in understanding diverse communities. When one understands a diverse cultural group's norms, there is less risk for a breakdown in communication. Thus, it was found as a necessity to incorporate data that addresses communication from diverse perspectives of cultural understanding. If one is to assist the Latina/o community, it is important that they have the intercultural tools to do so in an effective manner. In gathering data that will assist in determining the identified influential factors of Latina/os on their pathway through community college, a critical focus will be given to adult education. When educators work with students in community college, they must understand how the students' lived experience has impacted their choice to attend a community college and further, what their needs will be as adult learners within the community college culture. Some students bring with them distinctive life experiences, in which they did not benefit from pedagogical curriculum. It is thus of vital importance to implement a dual pedagogical and androgogical approach, when working with non-traditional students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Merriam (2007) mentions that "[m]any of the live events and transitions that adults face are peculiar to adulthood and require adjustments – adjustments often made through systematic learning activity" (p. 425). It would be imperative to assist non-traditional students into transitioning into a community college environment, using dual educational learning strategies.

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Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

In articulating the social, economical, and educational factors of second generation Latina/o studies, it was imperative to employ a critical theoretical perspective in education. The research by nature takes a political meaning, by assisting the Latina/o community to pursue social mobility through a collegiate education. With there being very little research on the 0.2 generation of Latina/os, I focused on secondary research that could be applied from a historical position, of earlier second generation Latina/os. Also integrated was the experience of earlier European immigrants and ethnic minorities that arrived in the United States of America, and the social barriers that they faced in integrating into society. In applying secondary research methods in intercultural communication, a strong emphasis was given to cultural norms, practices, and beliefs. The secondary research implemented into this critical factor gave insight as to how intercultural communication is a necessity in education and society in general. When one does not have a fundamental understanding of a particular cultural group's way of life, it is easy to misinterpret who they are. The final component integrated into this research was to condense the experience of Latina/os and the intercultural model of communication by tying it into adult education in community college. By implementing the Critical Theory of Education, theory was put into academic and social practice.

This interdisciplinary approach that was used to identify influential factors of second generation Latina/os on their pathway through community college, was one based on *Testimonio* (*Testimony*), from the experiences that the students have faced in society, but also in their own educational experience. The methodology for this study is qualitative in nature. If one is to assist the community, it must begin to take on radical forms of collecting data. The past traditional methods for collecting data in a quantitative approach, which largely consist of quantifying a

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group of people, greatly ignore the personal experiences that people have had to face. These studies ignore the pain and hardships of communities with disproportionate levels of poverty and criminalization. Gall (2003) makes this argument:

The concept of voice is used by critical theorists to study particular expressions of domination and oppression. **Voice** refers to the phenomenon by which people occupying particular social categories or identities are either silenced, empowered, or privileged through operation of various discourses that maintain or contest dominant and subordinate cultures in society. (p. 497)

When a study randomizes these experiences, a crucial ethnographic correlation is ignored. The patterns that a common cultural community endures must be critically analyzed. Once this vicious cycle is understood, it must be interrupted by making education work for the particular community.

The secondary research included in this literature review was based on strict criteria. The primary criteria were that all secondary research was scholarly and peer reviewed. This factor is vital because it gives authenticity and validation to data integrated into this particular study. The secondary research were selected on the basis that there had been relevant studies done, in order to reveal a strict correlation on the identified influential factors of second generation Latina/os enrolled in community college. Secondly, participation in the study was focused upon the relevance of the scholars' methods for the collection of ethnographic data. The secondary research applied to the study was proper in studying students of color, in particular second generation Latina/o students. Thirdly, the literature that was used to support the findings was relevant to the experiences second generation Latina/os face in the United States. These criteria assisted in establishing previous research practices and revealing gaps in the literature. Lastly, literature that focused on student empowerment in higher education was given a strong emphasis due to its relevance with social justice in the community college setting. Secondary research that

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was integrated into this research was chosen also to reveal gaps in the study, and how limited research has been done on the second generation Latina/os experience in the United States.

Secondary research that did not meet these criteria was not included in the study.

Literature Review: Synthesis and Critique

The subsequent literature was a compilation of secondary research interrelated to the identified influences of second generation Latina/os on their pathway through community college. The literature will also reveal their experiences in the United States, and also the importance of intercultural communication in an educational setting. Each section is conducted with an assessment of the secondary research applied in the study. Within the past two to fifteen years there have been few studies on ethnic minorities in higher education, with an emphasis on the second generation Latina/o experience in education. Therefore the secondary research presented here will support studies on ethnic communities to present the experience of Latina/os in the United States. The literature review will be centered on these critical factors that have been determined:

- **How does the Latino culture influence college attendance?**
- **What experiences (personal, educational, familial, etc.) influenced students' decision to pursue higher education?**
- **How has the community college environment served as a tool for social empowerment in furthering enrollment in higher education in the Latino community?**

The research is organized in this way to disclose and make a strong and vivid correlation to the identified influential factors of second generation Latina/os, on their pathway through community college from a social justice approach.

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A correlation should be made from past events to contemporary social issues. This focus must have an imperative critique of internal and external factors that second generation Latina/os have faced, and continue to do so in contemporary times in the United States of America. The history of the Latina/o people stems from pre-colonial indigenous times, when these communal societies had cultural bases and self-determination in their own sovereign way. From the onset of colonialism, oppression was used as a structure to either socially control or destroy the people of Latina/o America. Acuna (2006) highlights the pre-emptive effects that conquest had in the Americas:

The conquerors destroyed the Americas' indigenous villages and trade centers which constituted a cohesive "world system," reducing them to a small fraction of their original size. Further, the invasion introduced African slavery and justified the enslavement of the natives. The result was the complete destruction of the Americas' original civilization. (p. 1)

It is of vast importance to critique this notion of colonialism, because it is something that continues to plague our society in post-colonial times. This legacy continues to affect politics and ideologies in contemporary society, but above all it continues to affect the social consciousness within the hearts and souls of the Latina/o community. Torres gives testament:

Our ancestors suffered the events and devastating displacements of that history, and we continue to experience its legacy, though our experiences to it are much different. Through hundreds of years of upheaval, they fought-we fight-to survive. This constant state of struggle and endurance leaves little time to indulge in a ritualistic or communal grieving process for all that we have lost through imperialist processes. Our political rhetoric does not always reveal the scars we carry in our hearts heavy with this history, but our literature tells the story. (Torres, 2003, p. 12)

The stigma of a colonized people has been one that depicts a human being as defeated and subservient to its imperialist conqueror. The history of the United States and Latina/o America relations has remained embedded in the minds of the people generation after generation. Alaniz & Cornish (2008) mention that Mexicana/o resistance in the Southwest created a rich

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folklore and inspired a tradition of defiance. In 1848, the end of the aggressive invasion of Mexico ended with the invasion and occupation of that country's territory. The incursion into the Mexican homeland was an act of terror and tyranny by an occupying imperialist force. Alaniz & Cornish (2008) depict the cruelty:

The U.S. Army was predominantly made up of Texas volunteers who raped, pillaged, scalped, and massacred the Mestizo and Indio civilian population. U.S. Lieutenant George Meade described U.S. forces as "a set of Goths and vandals without discipline, making us a terror to innocent people. (p. 86)

This war left, as Dr. Rudy Acuna states, a legacy of hate which was influenced by manifest destiny; according to the theory,

[T]he United States was the embodiment of the City of God on earth and the European race were chosen people predestined for salvation. Most Euroamericans believed that god had made them custodians of democracy and that Euroamericans had a mission – that is, that god had predestined Western Europeans to spread his principles to the new world. (Acuna, 2007, p. 44)

These Eurocentric ideologies continue to influence politics and education in the contemporary United States.

Soon after the occupation of the U.S. Southwest, Mexican citizens within recently U.S.-occupied territories were stripped of their land. Navarro (2005) affirms:

As a conquered and occupied people, Mexicanos were subjected to physical attacks, and violence, were segregated and impoverished, became victims of shootings and lynching, and were degenerated by white cultural imperialism that considered them 'greasers' and an inferior people. (p. 97)

The status of the Mexican people would be one of an internal colonial status. The Mexican people would be constantly scapegoated by vicious nativist attacks, from the offset of the occupation:

Euroamerican nativists saw Mexicans, whether born in the U.S. or Mexico, as aliens. Through the courts, nativists attempted to exclude them from citizenship. In 1896,

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Ricardo Rodriguez was denied his naturalization papers. The authorities argued in court that Rodriguez was not white or African and “therefore not capable of becoming an American citizen.” Nativists wanted to keep “Aztecs or aboriginal Mexicans” from naturalization. (Acuna, 2007, p. 69)

The early contact experiences of Euroamerican and Mexicans are not the most optimistic ones in the history of the United States, but it did have a strong influential effect on how the people of Euroamerican and Latina/o American background would view each other. The beginning of the twentieth century would bring additional nativist attacks against the people of Mexican descent. The Repatriation Act of 1929 aimed at undocumented Mexicans during the Great Depression separated families by force:

Until recently, the best estimate was that 500, 000 to 600, 000 Mexicans and their U.S.-born children were deported between 1929 and 1939. Today scholars have revised these figures upward to as many as 2 million, of which U.S.-born comprised 60 to 75 percent. (Acuna, 2006, p. 173)

The status of the Mexican people became one of a cheap work force. When there was need in the United States for back-breaking labor, they were used and then discarded:

For the last century, Mexico has served as a reserve pool of cheap labor for the benefit of U.S. business, agricultural interests, and other groups, and the volume of immigration reflects changing economic conditions in the United States. By and large, the policies of the federal government have responded to these conditions and have encouraged immigration during good times and clamped down during hard times. (Healey, 2006, p. 310)

The politics of fluctuation have continued to plague the Eurocentric ideology of the majority society. During the height of World War II, manpower was short in the United States. Thus, Mexico was called upon to send workers into the United States to support the war, in what would become known as the Bracero Program. Many of their young men went overseas to fight against intertwined imperialism that oppressed people of color. Acuna (2007) mentions that “[r]acism was nothing new; what was amazing is that most Americans of whatever color did not recognize the hypocrisy of calling Adolph Hitler a racist when Americans practiced it at home”

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(p. 201). The decision to import labor from the United States' neighbor to the south was decided upon. Navarro (1995) argues to the effects of fluctuation: "The Bracero Program served as an exogenous antagonism to the growing exodus from Mexico into the United States. Millions of Mexicans were induced to immigrate directly or indirectly by the Bracero Program" (p. 20). After the expiration of the Bracero Program, many Mexicans returned with their families, documented and undocumented as well. In essence when they returned with a few dollars in their pockets, they caused many other Mexicans to believe that economic conditions were far better in the United States. This caused an influx of a mass migration into the United States. However, there would be an attempt by the U.S. government to thwart the migration of Mexicans into the United States. "In 1949 immigration agencies started massive roundups of what they described as 'wetbacks,' or undocumented workers, culminating in 1953 with operation Wetback. This quasi military operation deported some 875, 000 Mexicans in 1953 alone" (Navarro, 1995, p. 21). When a correlation is made of the different factors that influenced pull and push factors in immigration policy, it is evident that the economic status of Mexicans has been one of a cheap reserve labor force. When these ideologies are imbedded into future generations, these stigmas are what are assumed of a particular cultural group. Thus, there is room for bigotry and perpetuated social inequality.

Acuna (2006) makes a critical position by stating, "Racism, racial stereotypes, and fear of the other are important instruments of social control" (p. 59). From the beginning of this nation, education has been used to exclude, and confine, non-favorable ethnic minorities in a state of oppression and powerlessness. An ethnocentric belief that was used with racist Eurocentric ideology was the process of Americanization or assimilation, coined as the melting pot theory. Healey (2006) defines it as a process by which different groups come together and discard their

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ancestral cultures and create a common new one. This theory would prove true to the white Anglo-Europeans that would arrive in the United States. This ideology would eventually invoke white supremacy and Anglo-Conformity, with people of color being excluded:

Some groups – especially the racial minority groups – have been largely excluded from the “melting” process. Furthermore, the melting pot brew has had a distinctively Anglocentric flavor: “For better or worse, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition was for two centuries – and in crucial respect still is – the dominant influence on American culture and society.” (Healey, 2006, p. 36)

But people of color would never be given this option, because this theory would be attributed to skin color. It would be a social norm for an immigrant group to discard their ancestral ways and create a common culture amongst people who physically resonated:

People today – social scientists, politicians, and ordinary citizens – often fail to recognize the time and effort it takes for a group to become completely Americanized. For most European immigrant groups, the process took generations, and it was the grand children or the great-grandchildren (or even the great, great-grandchildren) who finally completed acculturation and integration. (Healey, 2006, p. 40)

This ideology would be detrimental to ethnic minorities because they would not be accepted, and in trying to do so would only suffer from internalized hatred. Acuna (2003) argues that Latinos do not deserve to be told “America love it or leave it.” Latinos love this country but reject the idea of having to abandon their past. The essence of good citizenship should give a person the option of operating in either culture at any given time.

Some painful examples of Americanization can be drawn upon from the native-indigenous experience, with the cultural genocide against the native tribes. Weeks (2001) describes one of the early educational experiences: “Situated in old military barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Carlisle opened in the fall of 1879 and soon boasted a student body of 158 pupils of both sexes, three fourths of whom were males. “This institution’s motto, ‘Kill the Indian and save the man,” succinctly summed up its mission” (p. 231). The objective of these centers was

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cultural genocide, to rip the cultural roots from native indigenous people, and to demonstrate to the U.S. mainstream that natives were educable. In many instances native children were made to change their tribal names, cut their hair, change their traditional dress attire, were not allowed to visit family, and were forbidden to speak their native tongue. The United States Government believed that the native indigenous people's culture had to be in a sense "ripped" from them. Weeks (2001) states,

They argued that the best hope for educating Indian children lay in physically removing them from the influence of their elders and their cultural heritage – effectively breaking the bonds of family, neighborhood, and ethnic identity that white Americans valued so highly in their cases. (p. 231)

This post-colonial Eurocentric ideology would be implemented against other conquered people as the United States expanded as a nation. Navarro (2005) mentions how cultural violence was imposed on the Mexican people after colonization:

Hence, white authorities made a deliberate effort to destroy the Mexicano's culture. Under segregation the U.S. educational system sought to inculcate the white liberal capitalist ethos in the minds of Mexicano children, while denying them the retention of their language, culture, and heritage. (p. 98)

This in a sense would control a colonized people that could be used as a source of cheap labor. This ideology would eventually influence the treatment of other ethnic minorities within the educational spectrum. What is essential is that we critically identify and dismantle the detrimental cultural violence directed against ethnic minorities in U.S. society. This post-colonial education continues to set off a raw stench that permeates educational curriculum throughout the United States. Beykont & Madedo (2000) argue against ignoring class and poverty; they mention that we don't need another doctoral dissertation about what is obvious with people living in human misery. "In other words, by locking children in material conditions that are oppressive and dehumanizing we are invariably guaranteeing that they will be academic underachievers" (p.

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28). When one implements the traditional rhetoric, that time will take care of everything, how much longer will it take to see the social empowerment of socially marginalized communities?

Beykont & Macedo (2000) militantly make the dispute:

We conveniently fall into historical amnesia, forgetting the English reeducation camps designed primarily to yank out the tongues of Native American children, who were taken from their parents and sent to boarding schools with the primary purpose of cutting them off from their “primitive” languages and “savage” cultures (p. 32)

This rhetoric is strong, but its purpose is to cause a reaction and cause one to critically look at the roots of Americanization, and make a correlation from the past to contemporary social issues that Latina/os continue to face in U.S. society.

The experience of Latina/os in the United States of America, from an educational point of view, has been one of second-class citizenry. Their academic progress as an ethnic collective is evident, as opposed to the majority society within education:

The 2000 census revealed that only 57 percent of Latinas/os in the United States age twenty-five and over had graduated from high school – Mexicans had only a 51 percent graduation rate, while rates for those of Puerto Rican (64 percent), and Cuban (73 percent) origin were higher. By contrast, the graduation rate for non-Hispanic Whites was over 88 percent. Further, 27.3 percent of Latinas/os had lower than a ninth-grade education, compared with only 4.2 percent of non-Hispanic. (Binder, 2003, p. 108)

They, like other oppressed ethnic minorities, have been socially disempowered through the educational system. Valencia (2004) mentions,

until 1966, many Mexican-Americans, like African-Americans, were segregated in elementary and secondary educational systems in the southwest. In Texas and California, for instance, many school districts maintained Mexican schools where Mexican American children were taught, often by unqualified, inexperienced teachers. (p. 8)

This issue was not addressed until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, which inspired the militancy of the Chicana/o Movement as a catalyst for social change within the parameters of

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education. With the implementation of El Plan de Aztlán and El Plan de Santa Barbara in 1969, the Chicana/o community would demand through a heightened level of political consciousness, self-determination and cultural sovereignty within their respected community. In order for cultural sovereignty to exist, the respect for diversity and an institutionalization of cultural pluralism must be integrated into education:

Advocates of community control advance the belief that if people are adequately involved, local institutions and community problem solving will be effective. The idea of community control is predicated on the notion that citizens in a democratic society can and ought to seek redress from bureaucratic tyranny, institutional obsolescence, and the insensitivity of indifferent self-serving politicians. (Navarro, 1998, p. 13)

By, involving the community into the educational process and seeing people as equals regardless of class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. . . . will we be able to get a clear understanding of what affects the well being of the people, all people.

Purpose of This Study

This study will examine the ways in which these historical barriers continue to impact second generation Latina/os in their pursuit of a community college education. This study will also generate ideas for leaders in higher education in taking a proactive and politically conscious stance, in assisting the Latina/o community in obtaining social mobility through higher education, by way of a community college education. Upon having a fundamental understanding of the historical experience of Latina/os, it is clear that educators should also be interculturally competent, in order to be able to understand and engage a community effectively. Lustig & Koester (2006) mention that a person's quality of life will depend on being able to communicate competently with people from other cultures: "The challenge of the twenty- first century is to understand and to appreciate cultural differences and to translate that understanding into competent interpersonal communication" (p. 19). With the demographics of the United States

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continuously changing along ethnic lines, it is imperative to understand the international community and embrace difference. Lustig & Koester go on to elaborate further on the meaning of intercultural understanding:

The effective use of verbal and nonverbal codes in persuasion varies greatly from culture to culture. For instance, there are differences in what cultures consider to be acceptable evidence, who is regarded as an authority, how evidence is used to create persuasive arguments, and what ideas are reasonable. (p. 239)

When a person is not equipped with an intercultural understanding of an individual's historical and cultural experience, the detrimental factor of ethnocentrism permeates an individual's belief about a particular cultural group. According to Healey (2006), "**Ethnocentrism**, is the tendency to judge other groups, societies or lifestyles by the standards of one's own culture" (p. 150). The first thing in having intercultural proficiency is that it is of vital importance to understand a culture's traits and norms. Adler (2007) states,

Some cultures value the individual, while others place greater emphasis on the group. Members of an **individualistic culture** view their primary responsibility as helping themselves, whereas communicators in a **collectivistic culture** feel loyalties and obligations to an in-group: one's extended family, community. (p. 36)

Another critical factor that the author presents in his research is the respect for the freedom of the language a cultural group may speak. "For almost 150 years, theorists have put forth the notion of **linguistic relativism**: that the worldview of a culture is shaped and reflected by the language its members speak" (Adler, 2007, p. 117). When ethnocentric beliefs are indoctrinated into an ethnic community, this can create resistance and conflict in communication. One must never assume that one's beliefs are the absolute universal norm that should be forced upon people of distinctive cultural backgrounds. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) state,

In situations in which people enjoy approximately equal power and understand the rules of interaction easily and well, the ideal clarity and expressiveness works well. But when there is not a common base of assumptions, one's assertiveness can backfire. (p. 57)

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According to the first section of this literature review we have seen throughout history how ethnocentrism has influenced the treatment of ethnic minorities within the United States. This cycle must be neutralized through a fundamental understanding of our differences. “When communities are severely divided, the perceived fairness of their institutions often rests on whether the various groups within the community are represented in running them” (Pruitt and Kim, 2004, p. 139). If we are to end divisive conflictive factors within our marginalized communities, we must have an intercultural communicative understanding of who our neighbors are. Once we know who they are, it becomes very difficult to alienate another human being.

When one looks at the education we receive at an early age, it is not a surprise that the history we are taught is biased and greatly ignores the struggles of ethnic minorities in the United States of America. A revolutionary sister by the name of Assata Shakur once stated,

The usual way that people are taught to think in Amerika is that each subject is in a little compartment and has no relation to any other subject. For the most part, we receive fragments of unrelated knowledge, and our education follows no logical format or pattern. It is exactly this kind of education that produces people who don't have the ability to think for themselves and who are easily manipulated. (Shakur, 1987, p. 35)

The manner in which this education is indoctrinated into our communities is counterproductive because it reduces ethnic minorities to an inferior status. Brother Malcolm X was quoted as stating in vocal rhetoric the atrocities committed during the slave trade:

Human history's greatest crime was the traffic in black flesh when the devil white man went into Africa and murdered and kidnapped to bring to the west in chains, in slave ships, millions of black men, women, and children, who were worked, beaten and tortured as slaves. The devil white man cut these black people off from all knowledge of their own language, religion, and past culture, until the black man in America was the earth's only race of people who had absolutely no knowledge of his true identity. (Haley, 1999, p. 165)

The intense rhetoric of this cultural warrior continues to echo in contemporary times. Malcolm X understood how colonialism had decimated the African people from their cultural

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roots. He understood if one did not know their history, they walked this world empty and numb, that they would have nothing that would ground them to mother earth. When we continue to ignore the ugliness that history has carried throughout time, we will never learn from our mistakes. We will continue to perpetuate inequality to accommodate present times. If we are to dismantle injustice and social inequity, we must heal together. It's not about blaming a particular ethnic group; it's about critically understanding the components that continue to keep these racist ideologies alive and neutralizing them for the sake of humanity. Every culture has committed its share of mistakes; not one culture in this world can claim divinity. However, if in education we continue to distort the reality of what people have had to suffer and erase their existence out of guilt, we will continue to culturally annihilate these same people who have been continuously marginalized and exploited throughout history. Martinez argues how Eurocentric education upholds the status in the myth of:

The myth's omissions are grotesque. It ignores three major pillars of our nationhood: genocide, enslavement, and imperialist expansion (such nasty words, who wants to hear them? – but that's the problem) The massive extermination of indigenous people provided our land base; the enslavement of African labor made our economic growth possible; and the seizure of half of Mexico by war (or threat of renewed war) extended the nation's boundaries north to the Pacific and south to the Rio Grande. Such are the foundation stones of the United States, within an economic system that made this country the first in world history to be born capitalist. (Martinez, 1998, p. 43)

When a person is taught the struggles that distinctive cultures have had to suffer and endure, for the most part empathy begins to evolve. A formal understanding begins to grow within diverse communities of the struggles that their neighbors have faced. This greatly reduces racial animosity and hostility.

Once you understand something about the history of people, their heroes, their hardships and their sacrifices, it's easier to struggle with them, to support their struggle. For a lot of people in this country, people who live in other places have no faces. And this is the way the U.S. government wants it to be. They figure that

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as long as the people have no faces and the country has no form, amerikans will not protest when they send the marines to wipe them out. (Shakur, 1987, p. 191)

When the stigma of a dehumanized “other” or foreigner is dismantled, the people may begin to see the common history and hardships that their neighbors have endured. Asante (1991) states,

A person educated in a truly centric fashion comes to view all groups’ contributions as significant and useful. Even a white person educated in such a system does not assume superiority based upon racist notions. Thus, a truly centric education is different from a Eurocentric, racist (that is a white supremacist) education. (p. 579)

If we are to truly have socially change, the truth must be exposed to our communities, and the psychological, emotional healing process must start. But we all must be included; nobody must be left excluded. This country is an inter-communal nation, with people who have sweated, toiled, and suffered from many parts of the world to build this nation into what it has become.

One of the founders of the Critical Theory in Education, Paulo Freire (1998) once made the statement that,

The educated individual is the adapted person, because she or he is better “fit” for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it. (p. 57)

When a person is indoctrinated with an education that is not based on self-fulfillment, then what exactly is it that they are taught to thrive for in the life that they will live? According to the Critical Theory of Education, it is of decisive importance to begin to move away from the traditional notions of ethnocentric education. One of the educators who has challenged elitist inequalities is Ron Clark (2003) who describes how he teaches his students that everyone contributes to the educational process:

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I try to get students to practice doing this with various adults in the school who aren't teachers. Often custodians, cafeteria workers, secretaries, and teachers' aides aren't considered worthy of the respect teachers get, and I work hard to change that image in the minds of my students. (p. 5)

This communal teaching promotes equality; it gives importance to the contributions all make in the well being of an educational setting. This teaching can be applied to youth and adolescents as well. It's common sense to treat the people with equal respect.

According to Merriam (2007), "Adult education is defined as any course of educational activity taken part time by respondents seventeen years old and over (U.S. Department of Education, 1986)" (p. 56). However, her definition of an adult education as being related to age negates the experience that some people younger than seventeen face many harsh realities at younger ages:

Today nearly 40% of employed Mexican-American males – nearly double the percentage for non-Hispanic whites – remain in the "unskilled labor" and "farm" sectors of the labor force. For the less educated and for recent immigrants, cultural and racial differences combine to increase their social visibility, mark them for exploitation, and rationalize their continuing exclusion from the larger society. (Healey, 2006, p. 316)

With parents having to work low-paying, labor-intensive jobs to provide for their families, the social disparities that their children will face are imminent. This could be critiqued from a critical social lens by looking at the struggles that ethnic minorities from socially disadvantaged and oppressed communities face. The hardships that they are forced to endure casts them into early adulthood at very young ages. This in fact should be something that educators should give critical focus as we consider the experiences of the Latina/o student looking toward her/his transition from General Equivalent Diploma (GED) programs in community college or from a high school setting:

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Knowles suggested that the classroom climate should be one of “adulthood,” both physically and psychologically. The climate should cause “adults to feel accepted, respected, and supported;” further, there should exist “a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers.” (Merriam, 2007, p. 85)

The overall objective of this college setting could be aimed at engaging Latina/o students in accomplishing a community college education and pursuing an education on into a four year institution, or thus completing their formal education. The importance in developing a society that is critically socially conscious of its environment must be taught to deal with real life issues that affect the well being of their community. One way to develop these intrinsic kinds of thinkers is to select teaching methods and techniques that can be adapted into real life scenarios.

Galbraith (2004) suggests one such problem solving tactic:

Problem solvers are story tellers who elaborate extensively on stories about their experiences because they provide concrete examples for learning. Because they are constantly seeking alternatives, most of their learning activities relate to generating alternatives. (p. 186)

To teach people to continuously distance themselves from their comfort zone instills in them a diverse sense of learning from the experiences others have faced in their lives. This broadens their knowledge base and allows for them to understand oppression and discrimination in a less resistant manner. Expanding the definition of what an adult is, is crucial in the development of those who have been less fortunate in society. A way this can be done is to teach Latina/o students to take control of their education, by being volatile and expressing their ideas.

Valenzuela (1999) argues,

[w]hile cultural values like respect (*respeto*) encourage deference and docility, a sense of powerlessness or a belief that they are not ‘entitled’ to openly defy school authority just as powerfully explains their comportment, especially for the most recently arrived. (p. 14)

I will argue that this is an ideology that can be used for social transformation of the Latina/o community.

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The experience of second generation Latina/os in the United States has been one of difficulty in acculturating into U.S. society. The hardships that second generation immigrants have is a common pattern. According to Healey (2006), the second generation, or the children of the immigrants, found themselves in a position of psychological or social marginality: They were partly ethnic and partly American but full members of neither group. They were born in America but in households and neighborhoods that were ethnic, not American. They learned the old language first and were socialized in the old ways. As they entered childhood, however, they entered public schools, where they were socialized into the Anglo-American culture.

The experiences that they faced through racism and bigotry were a barrier that would grant them little if any social mobility. Healey (2006) goes on to elaborate further and mentions that the first and second generation usually had limited social mobility, due to discriminatory practices in housing, education, and employment. It was the third generation that would eventually complete the acculturation process and enjoy higher levels of integration (p. 41). The hardships that this generation faced were greatly ignored as an essential need to survive.

Gonzalez (2000) gives testimony:

Our parents' generation rarely protested the way we were treated in school, which is understandable. After the terrible poverty they'd faced in Puerto Rico, they believed an education – any education – was their children's only hope for progress. And if that meant putting up with a few psychological scars from Americanization, then so be it. (p. 91)

This story, which I hope to integrate with my research, echoes in the negative experiences of many second generation Latina/os. However, I will apply all secondary research in this literature review, to find solutions to the progressive social mobility of this generation by strategically applying the Critical Theory of Education.

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Chapter Three: Materials and Methods

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.” (Frankl, 2006, p.104)

The purpose of this study is to determine factors that encourage second generation Latina/os to obtain a community college education. A critical qualitative ethnography focused on “*Testimonio*” was used in conducting this study. The method of collecting the data was qualitative in nature. It focused on listening to the “voice” of the student participants. The manner in which my data was collected was by conducting 15 face-to-face interviews. The survey questions correlated with the research questions previously stated in Chapter One.

Materials

The manner in which data was collected was by tape recording the 15 face-to-face interviews. Field notes were also taken and all data was transcribed. All names, as Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol requires, were changed to protect the identity of the students. All informed consent forms were signed as required by IRB, prior to conducting interviews. All data was secured and locked as stated in the IRB protocol.

Individual interviews – Chemeketa Community College.

1. Could you please describe your experiences at Chemeketa Community College?
2. How do you feel a community college education will impact your life?
3. Could you please describe the major influences on your decision to attend Chemeketa Community College?

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4. What is your parents' country of origin and what was the reason they migrated to the United States?
5. What were your family's socio-economic conditions in your early years in the United States?
6. What kind of work did your parents do?
7. How would you describe your living conditions growing up?
8. What was your experience in learning the English language?
9. How do you culturally identify? Why?
10. How do your peers and family feel about you attending college?
11. What are some memories that you have in primary, secondary, and preparatory school, both negative and positive, that influenced you pursuing your education at Chemeketa Community College?
12. Is there anything else that I may have missed that you would like to share with us?

Methods

The manner in which data were collected for this study was by working in a coordinated effort with the director of Student Retention and College Life at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, Oregon. In my study, I specifically targeted second generation Latina/o students. The staff and coordinators identified and notified second generation students through enrollment records. I was also provided a space to conduct my research.

The recruitment for this research was initiated by conducting a "brown bag" lunch on February 23, 2011, at Chemeketa Community College. I introduced myself to the students and read them a recruitment letter. After the brief presentation, the informed consent form was signed according to the IRB protocol. That same day the face-to-face interviews began.

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Over the period of three visits there were 15 face-to-face interviews conducted. The age range of the student participants was from 18 to 33 years of age. The study consisted of six female students and nine male students. There were nine traditional students, who had just begun college right out of high school and four non-traditional students who had started college later in life due to personal reasons. In addition, the students were further categorized by their country of birth. Seven of the student participants were born in the United States, six males and one female. In further detail, six students were born in Mexico and one in Peru, five females and three males. However, of these eight students, all of them were raised in the United States from the age of approximately six. I will demonstrate through the data collection that they constitute second generation on the basis that they were socialized in the United State of America. They have little if any cultural understanding of their culture in their native homeland. So in a sense, I will coin these students as Second Generation by Socialization (SGBS).

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Chapter Four: Results

I am a Chicano by ancestry and a Brown Buffalo by choice. Is that hard for you to understand? Or is it that you choose not to understand for fear that I'll get even with you? Do you fear the herds who were slaughtered, butchered and cut up to make life a little more pleasant for you? Even though you would have survived without eating our flesh, using our skin to keep you warm and racking our heads on your living room walls as trophies, still we mean you no harm. We are not a vengeful people. Like my old man used to say, an Indian forgives, but never forgets . . . that, ladies and gentlemen, is all I meant to say. That unless we band together, we brown buffalos will become extinct. And I do not want to live in a world without brown buffalos. (Zeta-Acosta, 1972, p. 199)

The migration experience of the students' parents, and in some instances subsequently, some of the students' themselves, played a fundamental role in their pursuit of higher education. In the majority of cases presented in this study, the exodus of migration from Latina/o America was for survival. In most instances there was no hopefulness for a better future in Latina/o in America. The disheartening factors in the inability to obtain social and economic mobility played a role in the continuing pattern of migration for most of the students' families into the United States of America. They left their ancestral homeland in response to social depression, in hope of sanctuary, and thus hoping to provide a better living for their families. However, this social-economic Diaspora has come with a painful price for these migrants from Latina/o America; once they have arrived in their host country, the United States, the working conditions they endure were wretched, as the student **Tiburcio** recalls, on his mothers' early working conditions:

She worked from four in the morning until three in the evening, seriously not human conditions!! I remember my mom came home really tired, like she couldn't even take a seat because she was real tired from her body. Seeing that as a little kid impacts you a little bit. The U.S. is supposed to be great chances great opportunities.

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The experiences of the majority of the recently arrived were to work as intensive laborers. “Most of the Mexican immigrants, legal as well as undocumented, who have arrived since 1965 continue the pattern of seeking work in the low-wage, unskilled sectors of the labor market in the cities and fields of the southwest” (Healey, 2006, p. 311). This concrete factor alone tended to have a life-long impact on how the students would view their resilience in pursuing a better life.

In relation to the work experience of their parents and in some cases the students’ themselves, their living conditions contributed to their hardships upon arrival in the United States. In some cases the families lived in cramped conditions and struggled to be able to pay rent and sustain a home. Their kinship ties would benefit other arriving migrants, who would be assisted by family members who had already established a foothold in the United States. The student **Soldadera** recalls her early living conditions: “My living conditions, we lived in California in a two-bedroom house with one bathroom, a kitchen and living room, 13 to 14 people, and they were all family.” These early experiences of struggle and sacrifice have been largely misinterpreted historically by the majority society.

In 1920, The *Survey* wrote, “Having few standards to begin with, it is not surprising that the poor Mexican immigrant is content in the tenements with one toilet and one hydrant for fifteen families, four or five of those families living in one or two rooms.” Thus, Mexican Americans apparently are comfortable with overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Reflecting the association of Mexicans with filth, the *San Antonio Express* newspaper editorialized in 1871 that “the hogs lived as much in the [Mexicans’] houses [as the Mexicans did] . . . and from the similarity it was hard to tell where the hogs left off and inhabitants began. (Binder, 2003, p. 115)

The reality did not reflect these stereotypes that this study revealed. Rather than preference, it was imperative for families to bond together as a mechanism for social survival.

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These difficulties were common amongst the experiences of the students in this study. The majority of them recalled these early times of struggle growing up in the U.S.

Another factor that the students continued to reveal was “social isolation,” or the negative stigma of poverty. This was mostly reflected as they socialized into the majority Eurocentric society, specifically the majority community and the K-12 public educational system. To specify, social isolation was the stigma of feeling inferior to the majority society. The students stated how they lacked clothing and material goods, and how in instances they were looked down upon. The student **Fidel** recalled some of those indiscriminate memories: “We didn’t have the best of clothes; sometimes we went to Goodwill because we didn’t have any money. Got teased in school, sometimes we would get mad and want to do something about it. After you get used to it, it doesn’t matter.” The early experiences caused the students to feel incompatible and alienated as they went through the process of socialization.

That is, although people of Mexican descent are no longer involuntarily segregated in a different part of the city, social segregation has been transformed into a system of interethnic “social apartness.” My conceptions of “social apartness,” a construct developed for this analysis, refers to a system of social control in which Mexican-origin people are expected to interact with Anglo-Americans only on Anglo American terms. Anglo Americans determine the proper times and places in which both groups can come into contact. Social apartness, therefore, is manifested in a number of ways similar to segregation. (Menchaca, 1995, p.xvi)

The inability to feel equal in a school setting would give a negative perception from others and would cause these students to have a negative perception of their self worth as they were educated. Many would struggle and make points of reference to the outcome of their families and peers as they moved through school in their early years, prior to going on and pursuing a college education. These early factors will be presented throughout this study in the testimony of the participants’ voices. They will highlight how these memories would

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serve as strength and determination for them to pursue a higher education at Chemeketa Community College.

The Migration Experience

In this study the migration experience of the students' families will highlight how disparity and poverty is attributed to their migration into the United States. However, the politics of fluctuation have also influenced the exodus from Latina/o America into the United States. The majority of these families would come to do migrant work in the fields or canneries, or wherever they could find a job that would pay them some income. Their trials and tribulation are fundamentally common in what the students endured upon early arrival into their host country, the United States. However, what is valid to take notice of is how these experiences became ingrained in the m families children, and how these memories will later resurface in this study as influential factors for the students to pursue a college education.

The flow of population from Mexico was and is stimulated and sustained by powerful political and economic interests in the United States. Systems of recruitment and networks of communication and transportation have been established to routinize the flow of people and make a predictable source of labor for the benefit of U.S. agriculture and other employers. The movement of people back and forth across the border was well established long before current efforts to regulate and control it. Depending on U.S. policy, this immigration is sometimes legal and encouraged and sometimes illegal and discouraged. (Healey, 2006, p. 311)

In order to further understand the migration experience of the students' families, the following question was posed to determine their event: **What was your parents' country of origin and what was the reason they migrated to the United States?** The following responses are from the participants:

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Angela Stated:

My parents were born in Colima Mexico, and uum my mom was, started to move to the United States because she was being abused by my father, so she wanted a better life for her kids, and for herself as well. My mom got a job in the canneries, field wherever they took her. She didn't really spend time with us, because she was always tired, we would always try to help her by cooking, cleaning, whatever we could.

Lolita Stated:

We migrated from Mexico, Tijuana, it's not much. Well they came here for a better life. Obviously the American Dream that everyone wants. *Pues si era dificil porque trabajaban en fabricas, en una panaderia. Si era dificil. Y luego tanta violencia y eso que hay. Pero de todos modos extrañan a la familia de alla, porque nada mas somos nosotros aqui. (Well yeah it was difficult, they worked in factories, and a bakery. It was difficult. And then so much violence and what there is. But they still miss their family over there. Because it's only us here).* Here, well my parents always worked in the fields, my dad did. He has always been working in the fields, my mom has seasonal jobs, temporary. She works in restaurants, in the fields, too, in the business of selling stuff like Mary Kay. But at times it was difficult when my dad worked in the fields with months off, but now he is working in a dairy. How do you say it? It's a secure job year around.

Dolores Stated:

Mexico. Cuernavaca, Morelos. Left Mexico because brother was really, really sick. Mom worked for a bank; Dad owned his own business. Dad left first, then my family followed soon afterwards. Dad worked at a dairy, still works at one. We had a house at the dairy. It was really old. That was the reason my dad quit his first job – house was not very stable; it would move when it was windy. During those times, we didn't have any money. All of it was used for hospital bills, medicine, or for gas to Portland. We were back and forth. We were really poor. Sometimes we didn't have anything to eat.

Tiburcio Stated:

Parents are full Mexican, Mexico City. Migrated to the U.S. due to economic issues. Living in a big city we didn't have any money at times, nothing to eat. Really hard decisions for parents to migrate; here we suffered a lot. The U.S. supposed to be great chances, great opportunities, and the next thing you know, you see your parents working in the fields, struggling to get money for the family. My living conditions as growing up were kind of harsh like; I was not living in poverty, but I would kind of get

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into poverty situations. But my parents worked at it. We live in a medium social condition.

Gregorio Stated:

My parents were born in Mexico, Toluca. They came here looking for the American Dream, looking for a better life, something they couldn't give me in Mexico. Struggled to pay rent, pay bills, my education, it always has been a continued struggle. Always stressful to think about next month's rent and the bills that are coming up. Or we would have to look where we could find a job. Sometimes passed by fields and asked the managers for work, told them we needed money to pay the rent and bills. Sometimes they would say, you can work today, some people didn't show up, so you can replace them. Always back and forth, trying to find a job.

The struggles that these families endured and in a sense overcame are something that has existed on in historical times in the U.S. As Alaniz and Cornish (2008) recall, "Growers grew rich off Mexicana/o labor. In 1928, with wages at their peak, Mexicana/o farmhands were paid 35 cents an hour. During the Great Depression, the rate sank to 14 cents. Yet even these figures did not reflect the misery suffered by the farm workers" (p. 128). As the depression further demoralized the U.S. public, the people of Mexican origin were singled out and targeted by nativist scapegoating:

To be sure, Anglos sometimes described Mexicans in other terms as well. For instance, in the debates in the 1920's over immigration, agricultural interests insisted that Mexicans were especially suited for stoop labor, could easily withstand high temperatures in the field unbearable to white workers, and were easily managed owing to their childlike demeanor. In the praise offered by one grower, the Mexican is "just like a dog; slap him and he'll lick your hand." Continuing to analogize Mexicans to dogs, another proponent of Mexican labor testified before congress that "the Mexican is a quite inoffensive necessity in that he performs the big majority of our rough work, agriculture, building, and street labor. They have no effect on the American standard of living because they are not much more than a group of fairly intelligent collie dogs." (Lopez, 2003, p. 64)

Even though Mexican-Americans were used and drained for their manual labor, they were singled out as the cause of the economic hardships. Navarro (1995) recalls,

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The trumpet of racism was heard loud and clear with the U.S. government's repatriation of thousands of Mexicans through both voluntary and involuntary methods. Between the years 1931 and 1934, thousands of Chicanos, many of them American citizens, were returned to Mexico on trains. (p. 19)

When looking at the migrant experience of the students' families in this study, it is imperative to make a correlation to the past in order to understand common patterns of discrimination and oppression against the recently arrived from Latina/o America. In addition, Valenica (2004) argues that the most controversial "push-pull" factors in U.S. – Mexican immigration is U.S. employers' need for cheap labor. This is fueled by Americans' insatiable desire to have abundant and affordable goods and services. Ranging from cheap food, clothing, to low wage workers, such as maids, custodians and agricultural workers (p. 90). The reasons for Latina/os arriving early on in the U.S. have continued today.

The 1990s saw a demographic increase in the Latina/o population in the United States. As in the past, they would work in low-paying jobs to try and survive within the confinements of the U.S. Navarro (2005) elaborates:

During the 1990's, Latinos in general were the most employed in low-paying jobs. According the National Council of La Raza's Demographic Overview report in 1991, just 11.4 percent of Latino males, compared to 27.6 percent of non-Latino males, were employed in managerial or professional jobs. In addition, 26.2 percent of Latino women, compared to 17 percent of non-Latino women held service jobs; and 14 percent of Latinas compared to 7.6 percent of non-Latina women, had jobs as operators, fabricators, and laborers. (p.432)

However, as in historical times, the method of scapegoating the Latina/o has continued:

The severe recession of the early 1990's fueled an anti-immigrant hysteria and encouraged opportunistic politicians and racist nativists to play on fears of Americans. Supporters contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to these hate groups, which subsidized the research of right wing scholars. (Acuna, 2007, p. 316)

A variety of nativist myths began to emerge, attacking migrant families as illegal aliens and a drain on the economy.

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It ought to be critiqued that based on the students' testimony and making a comparison to past historical events, the ultimate reason for migrants coming to the United States was the well being and survival of their families. Gonzalez (2000) debunks some of these nativist myths that argue that Latina/o immigrants drain public resources such as education and government services. In reality, numerous studies have demonstrated that immigrants in this country make enormous contributions to U.S. society in taxes and social security. The major problem is that those contributions are unevenly distributed between federal and local governments (p197). As the students gave examples of how their parents struggled in the fields, it is evident how the Latina/o people continue to be given entrance into the United States as a mechanism of cheap labor.

To conclude how the migration experience of Latina/os from their homeland has, in historic, and, as stated in this study, in contemporary times, been a treacherous one: "Today, as before, Latina/o migrant workers crowd into substandard housing out of necessity rather than some sense of enjoyment" (Bender, 2003. p. 116). The economic and political factors vary, but the struggle of many follows a common pattern of struggle to find a better way of life. In all cases however, I determined that most students did not critically understand the forces of fluctuation that cause their migration into the United States and the consequences of these "pull-push factors." The student participants felt their migratory plight was one solely based on survival. There was no critique of how external political factors influenced their migration, as a historically colonized people that are used for cheap labor. This factor has a direct correlation to their quality of life and education in the United States.

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Early Living Conditions

In historical times, Latina/os struggled to succeed in a society that alienated them by belittling their struggles. Lopez (2003) mentions that in the nineteenth century Anglos attached negative stereotypes to Mexicans:

Give them but tortillas, frijoles, and chile colorado to supply their animal wants for the day, and seven-tenths of the Mexicans are satisfied; and so they will continue to be until the race becomes extinct or amalgamated with Anglo-Saxon stocks, for no political change, no revolution, can uproot that inherent indolence and antipathy to change (p. 63)

These early ethnocentric depictions were aimed at labeling Mexicans as the other with a backward culture. Further rhetorical bigotry would continue to attack Mexicans as lazy and impossible to adapt to the American industry:

All day long they sit by the doors of their filthy little adobe huts, smoking cigarritos and playing cards. I fancy that they like it better than working. At least they live by idleness. Industry would kill them. When these mixed races are compelled to work, they will sicken and die. (Lopez, 2003, p. 63)

In this study I gave focus and insight to the living conditions that early migrant families faced upon arrival in the United States. For some, the memories were of constant stress, frustration, and hardship. In many instances, families struggled to make a living and provide a home to live in. But in reality, some of the students – three of them to be exact – did not want to identify with the poor working class; however, the reality is that this was what their families experienced upon their early arrival. Acuna (2007) states,

In 2000, 27 percent of Latino children under age 18 lived in poverty, compared with 30 percent of African-American children and 9 percent of non-Latino white children. The poverty rate had fallen during the Clinton years by 10 percent among Latinos and blacks. However, the number of poor grew in the George W. Bush years, and 37 million people lived in poverty in 2004, up to 12.7 percent from the previous year. (p.334)

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The experience of what these students' families endured was determined by asking the participants the following question: **How would you describe your living conditions**

growing up? The following responses ensued from the student participants.

Soldadera Stated:

But it was hard. I remember like I was five or six, and I remember her waking us like at 4 in the morning. It sucked. She would leave us with our aunt sometimes. She treated us so bad. My aunt, ooh my aunt! And that *was que ere familia (she was family)*, and she was like many; that's what they did. And then later on we moved, too; when we got settled my mom got her own apartment in middle school. She got her apartment; she was with my dad already. It was the same thing: 13 people to a 3-bedroom apartment and my mom and my dad. My mom was pregnant at the time with my youngest sister, so they had the room. My aunt and her baby's dad and her, and her baby were living in mine and my sister's room. My other cousins, three or four of them were sharing one room, and my sister and I would sleep in the living room.

Assata Stated: Uum, well, my mom worked in the cannery and also my stepdad, cause he lived with us. And we lived in an apartment; it was, oh, two bedrooms and one bathroom. I remember this other person, who had lived with, I don't know who.

Fidel Stated: Well they were pretty good in a way. We would always have food; my dad would work.

Cheno Stated: It was hard coming home from school and mom would not be home. My brothers got into a lot of trouble due to lack of parental supervision. But she had to provide food on the table; she was a general laborer. I recall poverty as lacking resources.

Joaquin Stated:

Since I was little, like I was still little, I didn't understand anything. Pretty much my parents would say don't worry about it; god will provide for us. Once in a while we would worry; everything would go good. But sometimes things would get hard and we would wonder, how are we going to pay this and that? Somehow it would work out.

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Villa Stated:

Grew up in a small farm town. White people and just Mexicans. Lots of people coming up from Fresno, coming up from Southern California to work. Potatoes, onions. Grew up working in the fields; that was what my dad did – drive a truck for the potatoes. I grew up on welfare. Dad was a carpenter. Not much respect for him – abusive and alcoholic. That’s part of our biggest trouble, growing up where we were at: living conditions.

The living conditions for early arrivals with little capital into the United States are usually very difficult to adapt to financially and economically. Gonzalez (2000) highlights:

Among many Latin American families, emigration is no longer simply a question of better opportunity, it is a matter of survival. In some villages and urban neighborhoods of the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America almost every family has someone working up North and sending money back home to feed those left behind. (p. 200)

In a sense, the same poverty that they face in Latina/o America, they tend to relive it again in the United States. The struggle to find a better life becomes nothing but a mirage of what they left behind in their homelands:

Unlike immigrants from Europe, who settled in the urban centers of the industrializing East Coast, Mexican Americans tended to work and live in rural areas distant from and marginal to urban centers of industrialization and opportunities for education, skill development, and upward mobility. They were a vitally important source of labor in agriculture and other segments of the economy but only to the extent that they were exploitable and powerless. As Chicanos moved to the cities, they continued to serve as a colonized, exploited labor force concentrated at the lower end of the stratification system. Thus the handicaps created by discrimination in the past were reinforced by continuing discrimination and exploitation in the present, perpetuating the cycles of poverty and powerlessness. (Healey, 2006, pp. 315-316)

The difficult socio-economic living conditions of Latina/os have carried a negative stigma against their oppressive colonial status in contemporary times. Bender (2003) states: “The construction of Latinas/os as subhuman fuels the perception that they are docile and sedate workers – content to work at treacherous, punishing jobs for substandard wages and comfortable when living in deplorable housing” (p. 137). This reality is far from the truth, as

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the students gave testimony to their experiences in this study. Latina/os have often been labeled as dirty and disease ridden. However, there has been little critique on why Latina/os struggle in such manner. For the most part, as some of the students in this study stated, it was to help out their relatives. In a sense it becomes a collective struggle to survive under treacherous conditions. Gallagher (2007) argues, “New immigrants, like their fellow Americans, are spatially distributed not only by social class and race but also by social networks and family kinship ties. The settlement patterns of contemporary immigrants are characteristic of dispersion and concentration” (p. 481). To conclude, the families of the students struggled to survive; this factor would cause the students during their socialization process in K-12 education to consider themselves less than, in comparison to their peers. They would recall what they endured while growing up, and question their social conditions.

However, this impoverished upbringing would give them a sense of making change when they finished their college education. Even though not all of their optimism was targeted at a macro-level of social change, they did think of their families and helping them financially. Thus, these early living conditions stayed ingrained in their minds to assist the less fortunate.

Social Isolation

School segregation in the United State of America was deemed unconstitutional in regards to the existence of different facilities for African-American and white children. This decision would be implemented during the *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. “In *Brown*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that segregating children in public schools on the basis of race placed ‘a badge of inferiority’ on the black children in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution” (Valencia, 2004, p. 20). However,

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school segregation had not only been aimed at the African-American community, but the Mexican community as well. As Valencia (2004) goes on to further elaborate, in the 1920s and 1930s, with a mass migration from Mexico during the era of the revolution, it was determined that Mexican children needed to be segregated in separate schools. The main argument school boards gave was that Mexican-American children would better integrate into American society if they were taught how to assimilate into the majority culture. However, pre-existing prejudices and stereotypical assumptions motivated school boards to treat Mexicans differently and provide them with inferior education (pp. 20-21). Though segregation would end soon after the *Brown v. Board of Education* case of 1954, segregation would continue in a more covert manner. Healey (2006) defined it as “**de facto segregation**: segregation resulting from the apparently voluntary choices of dominant culture and minority groups alike. Theoretically, no person, law, or specific group is responsible for de facto segregation; it ‘just happens’ as people and groups make decisions about where to live and work” (p. 228).

In this study, the living conditions that early migrant families suffered have been analyzed; however, now students will give testimony to how their early socio-economic conditions would lead to de facto segregation and how that impacted their self-esteem and acceptance into the majority culture. The question posed to the students was, **What were your family’s socio economic conditions in your early years in the United States?** There responses were as follows:

Angeles stated:

Lived off welfare our whole lives; six kids, brothers worked at a potato shed to help pay for stuff. Lived off of welfare our whole lives, way it was. Christmas time was the worst: three presents underneath the tree; me and my brothers had to share one

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basically. I remember when we used to cheat and open our present and wrap it back up. We used to have to share clothes. It was pretty hard.

Villa stated:

We had few clothes, got one present a year. Twin sister complained how the guys got more clothes, got one present a year. Compared to other people we went to school with, we were lucky to have one to two pairs of jeans when school started. Compared to most people we were not that rich.

Zapata stated:

I would say we were lower than middle class, so I grew up in a low-class neighborhood. It was segregated. We had mainly the Anglo-Americans on the east side and the Tejanos, Mejicanos on the west side of town. It seems like growing up, our streets were really dark. The streets had a lot of pot holes in them. The conditions were bad; the houses were falling apart; it's kind of depressing. My mom always worked two to three jobs to provide because my dad had a car accident; he didn't work for many, many years. It was on my mom's shoulders, and even though my mom showed unconditional love, I wish she was around more when I grew up.

Cheno stated: There was a difference in the food we ate, and also the clothes we wore on our back. We would get constantly made fun of. I would wonder at times why we got born into this lifestyle.

The experiences of the students lacking material wealth put them in a state of social isolation. They did not have the financial means to feel at an equal status with the majority community. What they observed in their peers through their early socialization process in the United States exemplified a stigma of inferiority. Gallagher (2007) further elaborates on these factors: “[M]any newcomers, especially the low-skilled poor, lack contact with and exposure to the segment of American society into which they aspire to assimilate” (p. 489). In many instances the students that participated in this study would constantly feel embarrassed to socialize in school. In a sense, how a person or a group of people are physically perceived has a strong influence on how they will be treated. Beykont and Stefankis (2000) affirm: “Overall,

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my socio-cultural assessment framework suggests that educators not only look at what is ‘wrong’ with the child, but also what is ‘wrong’ with the learning environment (the school, the classroom, or the curriculum)” (p. 156). As some of the students stated, they had very little clothing or, at times food; they would not feel as equals in a predominately Euro-American school and community, or in a sense receive equal treatment based on social class and ethnic inequality:

[S]ubstandard schools in urban barrio neighborhoods and poor rural agricultural communities deprive Latinas/os of opportunities in higher education and contribute to Latinas/os having the highest drop out rate of any group. The resultant lack of inferiority of Latina/o education contributes to the perception of Latinas/os as unintelligent. As well, the absence of educational opportunity leads some to gangs, drugs, or crime adds to the societal perception of Latinas/os as biologically criminal minded. (Bender, 2003, p. 9)

As stated previously, the notions of de facto segregation argue that people just work and live in a segregated way by choice. However, it’s the writers’ belief that this in fact is a smoke screen to discriminate on ethnocentric and prejudicial beliefs. When migrants such as Latina/os arrive in the United States, they are already labeled with the stigma of colonization and inferiority. These factors are detrimental to their employment, housing, and education.

Healey (2006) elaborates:

Social distance is related to ethnocentrism and prejudice and has often been used as a measure of the latter. It is not quite the same thing, however. Social distance is defined as the degree of intimacy to which an individual is willing to admit persons of other groups. (p. 91)

In a sense they are socially isolated from being able to achieve social mobility within a highly competitive capitalist society that has historically excluded them. The next chapter will exemplify this theory of social isolation, and a critical focus will be given to how Latina/o culture and language play critical factors through the socialization process in education.

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Chapter Five: Discussion

What we know of power makes manifest our ability to empathize with the sorrows of others dominated by it. We recognized historical mutilation in one another. This means that if we can learn to heal – to make good use of our pain, memory, and rage – the potential for strong and lasting alliances in various political struggles may well become a reality. (Torres, 2003, p. 46)

This section will highlight the struggle of second generation Latina/os in learning the English language. Their experiences in developing the English language varied, as they struggled through predominately Euro-American schools to become fluent; their testimonies will highlight their struggle to adapt to a society while learning a foreign language.

The United States, from its inception, has been a land of multiple languages and cultures. From its inception it has been a land that was very diverse, with distinctive ways of life. This diversity would change with warfare and subsequent colonization. Weeks (2001) elaborates:

Following the voyages of Christopher Columbus, the first Europeans to settle in North America after A.D. 1500 found two continents where some 2,000 native languages (not dialects) existed. The Indians residing north of the Rio Grande, north of present Mexico, spoke as many as 350 separate languages. The Indian societies of what is now the United States also varied greatly in culture and way of life. (p. 14)

However, even as colonization expanded westward, Euro-Americans understood the importance of bilingual education early on in the inception of the United States.

The continental congress, for instance, issued official publications during the Revolutionary War in German, French, and English. Furthermore, after the Louisiana territory was purchased from France in 1803, the laws of Louisiana were published in French and English. Louisiana also authorized bilingual French-English public schools in the 1879 Louisiana Constitution. (Valencia, 2004, p. 67)

The importance of being able to communicate in multiple dimensions by the Euro-American society was seen as crucial in the development of the United States. In the early

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1800s there was a mass migration of Euro-Americans from predominately the Southern United States into the state of Tejas:

The Mexican government opened Texas to Euro American colonization. Spain had given Moses Austin permission to settle in Texas; after he died Mexico gave his son Stephen permission to settle in Texas, and in December 1821, Stephen founded the colony of San Felipe de Austin. Large numbers of colonists from the United States entered Texas in the 1820's as refugees from the depression of 1819. By 1830 about 20,000 colonists had settled in Texas, along with some 2,000 slaves. (Acuna, 2007, p. 37)

With this mass migratory exodus from the southern United States, the colonists did not understand the Spanish language of their hosting country and new home. Thus, the Mexican government assisted the new arrivals, by implementing dual language immersion services:

Elections were conducted, local **ordinances** were enacted, and official notices were published in English. The government also authorized bilingual schools. These widespread bilingual services did not however satisfy Anglo immigrants who declared their independence from Mexico. These immigrants claimed a right to do so in part on the basis that the Mexican government was sacrificing their welfare in an unknown tongue. (Valencia, 2004, p. 68)

In a twist of destiny, these issues continue to resurface in contemporary times. As Latina/os continue to migrate to the United States, the issue of developing the English language continues to be a hardship for Latina/os to acquire as they are educated. Beykont and Kwong (2000) state, "In mainstream classrooms, however, learning shuts down until a student is proficient in English" (p. 47). This study will demonstrate the continued struggle for Latina/o students to study and learn the English language.

Acquiring the English Language

In determining the hardships that Latina/os face in struggling to learn the English language, the following question was posed: **What was your experience in learning the English Language?** The following responses ensued from the students:

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Soldadera stated:

It was, it was hard, I started school here, I went back and forth to Mexico. And when I started here, I was born in California, and um “*empecé aquí*” (“*started here*”). I didn’t know English so I wouldn’t talk in class, and they sat with my mom, I remember, and they told her they thought I had learning disabilities, or that I was autistic or something, that I wouldn’t talk. And now that I think back, how did you want me to talk? I didn’t know the language, you know and uh it was hard.

And um yeah eventually I would talk English, but I would never really say the right stuff. And then I got to middle school and everything was in English. I struggled a lot; to this day I struggle with my writing, and I um just like, I feel like I got screwed over with that. But at the same time, I don’t think I would have known how much Spanish I know now, grammar-wise and stuff. So I mean, some good and bad things.

Lolita stated:

I don’t really remember because I was little, so, but I don’t really think it was that hard. Because I was just watching TV, you get the hang of the words. I probably still have difficulty saying some stuff, but yeah I don’t think it was that difficult. I was little. I think if I would have been older it would have been harder.

Dolores stated:

Remembered saying some words in English, being taught. My first year I learned English, mainly because my parents didn’t know any, so I translated for everything. I was the only one that translated for everything, picked it up really quickly. By the third grade I was out of ESL and in normal classes, never went back to ESL. First year here I had already learned it.

Cheno stated:

My first language was Spanish. In kindergarten and first grade, picked up English really fast. Watched a lot of cartoons, picked it up quickly. The English language was cool, wanted to be like it, talk like it. I remember my cousins from California spoke English.

Tiburcio stated:

For me it was kind of hard, I got here when I was three. Learning Spanish and English was kind of tricky. I would talk to my mom in English, and she would say Spanish please. Oh yeah because my mom did not speak English, when I went to school I mixed my words with Spanish. I would say “*hola maestra*” (“*hello teacher*,” instead of saying hello teacher.

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Gregorio stated:

A really new experience – it was hard. I was in classes where a lot of students spoke English. They were well prepared; I myself was not one of those students. I was always trying to hide from the teachers because I was afraid they would make fun of me because I didn't speak English, or because of my accent.

The experiences of Latina/o students struggling to acculturate under conditions of linguistic conflict permeated their experience. In a sense the ideology of swim or sink was prevalent in the experiences of the students. They felt pressured by various social factors to adopt the English language as a mechanism to survive. As it often, happens, however, the pressures to acquire the language are for the most part grounded on ethnocentrism and prejudiced beliefs. Bender (2003) argues,

Latina/os are dogged by the stereotype that paints them as foreigners who are unable to assimilate into mainstream American life and culture. Although assimilation is an indeterminate concept, for Latina/os, the perception focuses most prominently on their use of the Spanish language instead of English. (p. 82)

When Latina/o students feel that they have to learn English by force due to social-systematic factors to find acceptance, it becomes detrimental in their development as learners. Beykont and Macedo (2000) argue,

[T]he latter usually provides the minority speaker with the experience of subordination in speaking both his or her language, which is devalued by the dominant values and the dominant language that he or she has learned, often under coercive conditions. (p. 33)

When forced under the stigma of inferiority to learn, a student will struggle to acquire dual language skills. Beykont and Kwong (2000) state, "Instruction in the native language allows immigrant students to continue learning without interruption. In bilingual classrooms, learning continues because students can comprehend the instruction" (p.47). When students are guided into the English language, as opposed to having to discard their native language, they have an intuitive ability to learn. Beykont and Kwong go on to further elaborate: "Are

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students supposed to wait until they acquire enough English to allow academic learning to continue? If instructed in their native language, students can continue to be challenged intellectually and learn new content while also acquiring English” (p. 47). Above all, one of the most detrimental effects of language subordination is how the ability to communicate with their families and ethnic cultural group is ripped from them.

This in a sense constitutes an act of linguistic aggression aimed at destroying the linguistic sovereignty of an individual. If Latina/o students are to be academically prepared to be pro-active and productive citizens in the United States of American, the swim or sink ideology embedded in ethnocentrism and prejudice must cease:

The immersion method, which is the sink or swim method, makes no sense. Society is beyond the times when people would throw their kids into the river and tell them to swim or drown. If society wants to help Latinos, then it needs to get the parents better jobs, improve housing, bring schools up to the level of the best schools in the state, and provide certified teachers. (Acuna, 2003, p. 64)

There is a responsibility for public education to be responsive to the needs of diverse communities. But as we will further observe in this study, these linguistic barriers were difficult, and were overcome by a few, however it did not come without a significant amount of trauma and sacrifice.

Culture Identity

In this section, the importance of cultural identity was affirmed by the student participants. They stated what it meant to identify with their culture and also with their families. The student participants stated why they were a part of a particular cultural group, and what their definition of cultural identity was. Adler (2007) states,

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Culture is, to a great extent, a matter of *perception* and *definition*. When you identify yourself as a member of a culture, you must not only share certain characteristics, but you must also recognize yourself and others like you possessing these features. (p. 31)

These particular cultural attributes signify cultural differences and traits about cultural identity. The Latina/o students in this study primarily identified their culture along national lines; they focused on their families' countries of origin. According to Lustig and Koester (2006), cultural identity takes upon various meanings:

Cultural identity refers to one's sense of belonging to a particular culture or ethnic group. It is formed in a process that results from membership in a particular culture, and it involves learning about and accepting the traditions, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, aesthetics, thinking patterns, and social structure of culture. (p. 137)

The negative effects of assimilation were evident in how the students responded with resistance to their notion of cultural identity. Acuna (2003) argues,

The reality is that unlike immigrants who came to the United States at the turn of the century, U.S. Latinos have kept their original culture intact. Latino immigrants did not have to swim an ocean, and the nearness of their motherland makes it easy to keep contact. Latinos are in constant contact with relatives in the old country. (p. 49)

The students' resistance to Americanization was also ingrained in how they identified with their culture. The process of Americanization for the most part has been one indoctrinated under the guise of the "melting pot" theory of assimilation:

Assimilation is a general term for a process that can follow a number of different pathways. One form of assimilation is expressed in the metaphor the "**melting pot**," a process in which different groups come together and contribute in roughly equal amounts to create a common culture and a new unique society (p. 36).

This idea has served mainly people of European ancestry, for it has been solely based on the notion of whiteness. This exclusion has had systematic traumatic consequences for ethnic minorities who don't have Euro-American physical features, which has justified racism and discriminatory exclusion. Torres (2003) elaborates,

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Much in the same way that we have reclaimed labels once derogatory and injected them with pride, many Chicanas/os have ceased to see our difference and separation from the mainstream in negative or shameful terms. Unlike earlier generations who sought to escape the stigma of being Mexican by totally assimilating, we not only accept our exclusion from the mainstream, we embrace it. (p. 155).

When ethnic groups, such as Latina/os are exposed to this notion of cultural violence, it perpetuates racist thinking and animosity within their cultural group and against the majority culture as well. This negative experience can affect future generation if it's not critically addressed. Pruitt and Kim (2004) state:

Chosen traumas are core components of people's group identity. They are deposited deep into the collective memory bank of a group's grievances and periodically withdrawn to justify aggression against the adversary. Chosen traumas can keep hostility alive across many generations to come. (p. 13)

This study will highlight, how exclusion creates resistance, and is a key ingredient in the survival of Latina/os in U.S. society. The following question was posed to understand how second generation Latina/os culturally identified: **How do you culturally identify? Why?**

Adelita stated:

For me because, I guess Chicana; at home I speak Spanish; at home it's Mexican culture. At the same time, some of my aunts have come to high school, have and speak English with them at home "*Mezclado*," ("Mixed"). I like English music and Spanish music, English food; kind of mixed.

Assatta stated:

As Mexican, because I am from Mexico. Yea I like everything, like my sister, she was born here, and she likes American music. And uum, uum, I don't like really "*los corridos*" ("*Mexican Ballads*"). Well I like "*Corridos*" ("*Mexican Ballads*"), but I don't really like to dance them, that's why. Yea I try, but I just can't. Yea, but the food I like eating, I like Mexican food. I am not a racist, but I just like my culture, yea basically.

Angela stated: "Okay I identify as Mejjicana, because of my skin tone you know. Yea well we have our culture that we do, Mexican food, music.

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Evo stated:

“Soy Peruano; soy Hispano tambien.” (“I am Peruvian;”I am also Hispanic”). Not to say, “pero viví en Argentina” (“I lived in Argentina”). Well uuh, I know Peruvian culture; I get Peruvian culture from my family that is here because they are all from Peru, “Soy Peruano” (“I am Peruvian”).

Fidel stated:

I consider myself Mexican; it really does not matter if you are from Mexico or not. If both of your parents are from Mexico, that makes you one. I don't know why they put labels on us. I feel good about it. I don't have nothing bad; it's who I am.

Angeles stated: “As a Latino, growing up I guess that is what I was told I was. And I guess that is what my mom told me I was. Yea, on forms that's the first thing I check is Latino, no second guess.”

Joaquin stated: “I just consider myself Mexican. My parents are Mexican, self explanatory, why put a label on this or that? We are the same thing. just because I was born somewhere else, doesn't mean I am something else.”

The expression of cultural identity and connection to their collective group identity reflected in the manner in which the students responded. Their primary emphasis in culturally identifying along national boundaries was the connection to their family. As this study will further demonstrate, the student participants strongly identified with their cultural upbringing and resisted having to discard their family teachings. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) argue, “To solve the most difficult problems, we cannot rely solely on the teachings of one culture. One major problem encountered in individualistic cultures is that we receive little training in the search for the commonly acceptable solution” (p. 59). As mentioned looking at common problems that people endure in a community, this would further enable a cultural understanding of our differences and also of our common experiences as a people. Many

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previous immigrants have been forced to assimilate and discard their ancestral ways; this has not been the experience of the Latina/o people and other oppressed and marginalized ethnic communities. This has not been the reality for many, and to force collective people into cultural subordination is detrimental in their development.

Shedding one's ethnicity is taken as a sign of leaving behind that which is old and replacing it with something new. This act suggests that individuals and communities can somehow discard their past and incorporate into a new culture. But this predictive model does not take into consideration the facts that in many host countries, immigrants are neither welcomed nor allowed to assimilate socially or, at times even legally. (Torres & Vazquez, 2003, p. 373)

As long as a model of cultural "détente" is promoted in education against traditionally oppressed ethnic minorities, the results will be detrimental in a society that has historically invoked alienation and post-cultural segregation. The participants in this study demonstrated their connections to their cultural identity. Their comments also confirmed their resistance to rejecting their cultural heritage and upbringing.

Peer and Family Influence in Pursuing a Collegiate Education

In this study a critical component that continuously surfaced was the importance of family and peer support, as a source for motivation for second generation Latina/os pursuing a collegiate education. Lustig and Koester (2006) state, "*Motivations* include the overall set of emotional associations that people have as they anticipate and actually communicate interculturally" (p. 70). The student participants mentioned how the feminine influence of their mothers was a source of strength and determination. Torres (2003) reaffirms, the spiritual importance of the feminist figure in Latina/o families

Indian women who had once reigned as goddesses now wore the facial brands of slavery and were subjected to the imposition of a single, male, Christian god and only his son. This process took many *mestizas* in New Spain beyond hope of

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recovery, which might have been possible in native Mexico, since they still worshiped and had faith in the feminine earth spirits. (p. 21)

The importance of family norms and upbringing in Latina/o families is critical in familial boundaries. Ting Toomey (2005) notes, “Parents teach their children about right and wrong, and acceptable and unacceptable ways of behaving through words they use and through their role modeling actions (p.211). The students in a sense never forgot the struggles of their families’ early experiences as recently arrived migrants in the United States. These memories stayed ingrained in their minds, and through this study were fleshed out to reveal and validate the importance of familial connections in the search of a better life, by obtaining a collegiate education. In order to identify family and peer influences in their quest for the student participants to pursue a collegiate education, the following question was posed: **How do your peers and family feel about you attending college?**

Assatta stated:

They just want me to be someone. They don’t want me to be like them. They are not bad; they’re not bad like, you know, they just want me to be more. Just to choose the right career, you like. I tell her I want to be a nurse, and my mom she tells me, are you sure? Because you can be a lawyer or something like that. No I want to be a nurse.

Soldadera stated:

My mom is really proud. She told me the story that my grandpa was going to find a way to pay for her to go to middle school in Mejico, but they couldn’t find a way. They are really proud – especially my mom. She is always like, I saw you in high school, and I wasn’t sure if you were gonna go or not. I wasn’t sure if you just kept your grades up to play sports and stuff. I didn’t see you as involved, I now see you more involved. I seen you grow as a person. She’s excited.

Villa stated:

Mom is really excited! I will tell you a story. She finally figured out how to text message, those generations? What got me a lot was I got a text message from my mom saying, Villa you doing really great things, I just want you to know I am very proud of

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you. You are doing really good things in school. I am very proud of you. It was something I had never heard from my mom. It took her time to do it, through a text message. She must have really wanted to learn, to be able to send a text message.

Cheno stated:

My mom is really proud, proud but she does not know. They never went to school and don't know about it. They don't really appreciate, or know what it's like to get an 'A' in a class. They don't know the depth of working and going to school. I feel she is proud. I feel a good sense of pride from parents.

Gregorio stated:

They feel very proud of me. I am actually the first to go to college in my family. None of my brothers or sisters went to college; most of them are working in the fields, canneries, restaurants. I am the only one going to college and seeking a higher education. They support me in everything I do. They are always there financially, mentally. They are always there, no matter what, they will support my decisions. It is one of the crucial factors that makes me feel good about myself and keeps me going. Their support keeps me going to accomplish my dreams and goals.

Zapata stated:

For the most part everything is positive; it's good. My "*jefita*" ("boss lady-mom"), it makes me feel good to see her when I tell her that I made the honor roll, the dean's list. She calls my "*familia*" ("*family*") in Tejas and tells them "*mijo*" ("*my son*") is doing good in school; he just made the dean's list or whatever, you know. I see her eyes light up bro, all these years of her pushing me. All those mornings where I was like, I don't want to go to school. She was like, she would even wake me up earlier and she had to lie to me and tell me it's already 8 am. I used to get up, jump out of bed and get ready, and then look at the clock and it would be 7 am.

The motherly instinct to protect, and the love and connection to their families, played a crucial role in the students being influenced to pursue a collegiate education. The experiences that they have endured they value, and it's something that they understand in their struggle to

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achieve social mobility through education. Davis (2007) mentions, “Remember that each of us has lived a unique life. No one can ever know exactly what your experiences have felt like for you, and you can never know exactly what another person has experienced” (p. 64). The experiences and the pain of their families was a key motivational factor that educators must not overlook, Torres (2003) further elaborates:

We learn the history of oppression from many sources. Much of it is experiential and personal. It lives in our families and is transmitted orally by relatives or communal storytellers – *abuelitas, tias, madrinas, or las chismosas*. Other forms of public discourse are also available in the barrios and in the fields. Even after we individually leave these sites, many continue to be in both symbol and reality the heart of the ethnic community (p. 161).

The stories that are remembered about their family’s experiences, both negative and positive, served as a way to guide students as they fight along their pathway through community college. The pain that their parents and relatives have endured was an example where they could harness strength in order to continue and pursue an education. However, it would be critically important to include parents into the collegiate education of their children, even at the community college level. The inclusion of family and peers could have positive consequences in building closer ties to the community, as that is the mission of a community college, to serve the community in which it has been formed.

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Chapter Six: Conclusions

Somebody still has to answer for all the smothered lives of all the fighters who have been forced to carry on, chained to a war for Freedom just like the slave is chained to his master. Somebody still has to pay for the fact that I've got to leave friends to stay whole and human, to survive intact, to carry on the species and my own Buffalo run as long as I can. Zeta, goodbye. (Zeta-Acosta, 1989, p. 258)

This section of the research will merge the findings and establish what the identified influences of second generation Latina/os were on their pathway through community college. In some instances the students were driven by both negative and positive memories in their K-12 educational experience. In some cases teachers were helpful, but the students mentioned that in their experiences it was teachers with bicultural-bilingual training who were the most positive influences. (Beykont & Lima (2000) state. "The opportunity to have such cultural interactions within the school enables me to guide my students through the process of integration, not only in their school, but the community and society at large as well" (p. 227). Some of the student participants felt that their K-12 teachers did not care about their academic development. This early educational experience was detrimental to their view of themselves being academically successful. Valenzuela (1999) further elaborates,

For their part, students argue that they should be assessed, valued, and engaged as whole people, not as automatons in baggy pants. They articulate a vision of education that parallels the Mexican concept of *educacion*. That is, they prefer a model of schooling premised on respectful, caring relations. (p. 61)

Some of the student participants in this study not only felt that teachers did not care, but they also felt that teachers upheld stereotypes and prejudiced beliefs about their cultural background. They also felt that teachers did not motivate them to pursue a higher education. Marable and Asante (2003) argue, "Schools are reflective of the societies that develop them (i.e., a White supremacist-dominated society will develop a White-supremacist educational

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system)” (p. 578). If a school has not been dismantled from post-colonial ideology, those same patterns of inequality and discrimination will continue to be perpetuated.

Influential Memories of K-12

The students’ testimony will reveal how they were treated and how a self-fulfilling prophecy was invoked in them by their teachers. Adler (2007) gives a concrete definition of the effects of a self-fulfilling prophecy: “The self concept is such a powerful influence on the personality that it not only determines how you see yourself in the present but also can actually affect your future behavior and that of others” (p. 64). However, these experiences as the study will demonstrate, tended to fuel their determination, to show that they had overcome this negative type of treatment. Freire (1998) states, “It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves” (p. 47). To acquire an understanding of these experiences, the following question was asked: **What are some memories that you have in primary, secondary and preparatory school, both negative and positive, that influenced you pursuing your education at Chemeketa Community College?**

Adelita stated:

I think in middle and high school teachers talking about how Mexicans, especially, would get pregnant and not continue school after high school. I didn’t want to be one of those statistics. Stereotypes that Mexicans would get, especially the Mexican girls. The Mexican teachers, and student helpers would be like, you’re not going to get pregnant, you’re going to go on to college. They really pushed us to do good.

Soldadera stated:

Yea man “*este*” (“*this*”), the one first time I ever went on any campus at all was in the first grade. I remember Cuahtemoc, I don’t know if you know him who was my teacher. Man he took us to OSU and I was just like uuh . . . you know, hey I have my teacher and he talks like

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I do, and he's a teacher, and you know what I mean! It was not like second grade, I remember a teacher and she spoke Spanish, but this is someone from the hood! And he opened my eyes like in the fourth grade and that was one of my favorite years.

A negative one was my senior year; one of my teachers' global studies. And I was in class, and I um can't remember what he said, and I asked him something and he got all mad. He told me, flat out told me, I don't know why you're here; you're not even going to graduate. I was just like first of all, I got so mad, I cursed him out. First of all, I could have had enough credits to graduate my junior year; second of all I am taking this class because I got a D on my transcript. And so when I graduated, I showed him my diploma, I thought I wasn't going to graduate, what's up? He didn't say anything. I think the best way to deal with people like that, that try to put you down and stuff, like showing them, I thought you said I wouldn't do it you know.

Angeles stated:

Well negative; I had to do three years in high school in one year. I didn't have the understanding when I was younger. Teachers didn't really care if I continued or not. It didn't matter if you failed; you got passed on. You had to continue where you started off, tossed over and over. High school teachers would ask white students what colleges they were going to and help them out. Never was I asked what college I was going to. Where I am from, the Mexicans worked the fields, the whites owned them. Basically going to school, the whites were looked up upon; they owned everything. We were just the kids who would be working for them when we got out. The white people were the ones who would take over their family's business. But us Mexicans, I take over my moms' job and will be working where my mom works at. That's what we were taught to believe.

Zapata stated:

Things I know now, before I wouldn't have said it was segregation or racism. But what I have learned now in school, I would say like Martha Menchaka says in her book, *The Mexican Outsiders*, she calls it social apartheid. I kind of feel like I never got enough attention, acknowledgement, motivation. I felt like the teachers did a good job at teaching, but it seemed like they would only do just enough and they would stop. They wouldn't motivate me, it was like you just come here, pass, and move on. There was no connection, not a connection there, hollow words, empty words pretty much.

The experiences of the students correlated in that they felt they were being alienated indirectly and in some cases directly. However, from critiquing the student responses, it is evident the teachers held prejudiced beliefs, or they could not relate to the community they were working with. Valenzuela (1999) mentions, "The view that students do not care about school stems from several sources, including social and cultural distance in student adult

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relationships and the school culture itself” (p. 63). This study has made a correlation to historical issues in regards to the negative treatment of Latina/os in K-12 education. Latina/o students have been constantly blamed with vicious stereotypes such as not being able to get an education or as being lazy. But the reality is if you are lost in a culture, you don't understand or are excluded socially, what motivation will a student have to want to continue?

The shared experiences of the student participants were diverse in various social dynamics. And it was these influences that would encourage students to continue on and pursue a higher education within a community college setting:

It is difficult to disaggregate the effects of community colleges from the characteristics of the students who enter them. In general, students who enter community colleges instead of universities have lower academic ability and aspirations are from a lower socio-economic class. (Cohen, 2008, p. 57)

However, contrary to what is stated about community college, in this study many of the students excelled once in the realm of a community college. The students would begin to gain much needed guidance and become positively influenced to continue on in their collegiate education.

The Impact of Community College

The impact that Community College had for the student participants was one of optimism for the future of their families and community. The students acquired leadership development and were assisted with issues that directly affected their lives. What was critical in this was that students discovered where there were support and allies within the parameters of the community college. The student participants credited organizations within the

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community college such as the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP), Student Life, and their Multi-Cultural Center as a base for support in their academic endeavors. Many of these programs require staff to have diverse training in working with ethnic communities.

These programs embrace a bicultural-bilingual emphasis within education. Beykont and Brisk (2000) mention, “Successful schools create a productive academic environment and promote an accepting community in which bilingual students can learn to embrace their language and culture, while maintaining their respect for their own language” (p.209). In observing how the students interacted at the Multi-Cultural Center, in a way it served as a welcoming environment with the community college. The question posed to the students in order to get an understanding of how community college had impacted them was, **Could you please describe your experiences here at Chemeketa Community College?**

Dolores stated:

I was really scared. It was the school everyone went to. I guess I always heard that Community College, anyone can go there, and it's not a big school. I did not know what to expect, started taking classes, eight classes, did not have very much money, started part time. I got in touch with student life office because I was going to drop out of school. I was in my second term and I had to get eight to twelve credits, and I had no money, no job; my mom didn't either. I was thinking about dropping out. Went to talk to CAMP director, talked to Student Life director, and they hired me to work in the office; they now pay for my school. All I do is work for them; it's where I experience. All I do is work for them. It's where I experience the Chemeketa Community College experience, working in the office of Student Life.

Adelita stated:

First year I came here I didn't really talk to many people. I didn't really know anything, didn't really have very much help. There is a lot of help if you look for it. It was kind of hard at first; nobody else in my family has gone to college, so they don't know anything. So I just went for it; I didn't know where to go, or do most things.

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Evo stated:

My first year I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. There wasn't too much help from the counselors, but once I got into the program this year, I started asking questions, they were really helpful. Mostly because of me – I wasn't too sure what I wanted to do. The counselors were not much help though; yea the nursing they gave me an outline of the prerequisites, I needed take in order to be accepted into nursing school, and the letter I needed in order to get ahead.

Villa stated:

The experience has been great. First couple of terms, had the courage, strength to come back to school and do it, I had messed up. Realized people were here to help me, wrote letters for me not to get kicked out of school. Ever since then I have had a 3.0 GPA. I work here at Chemeketa Community College in the Multi-Cultural Center. I started a mentoring club; I have people coming to me asking me how successful I have been. I have had programs ask me to oversee their students to mentor them and teach them to be leaders. I have really big ideas. Where I went to high school, they pretty much brought you down. When people start believing in you, you can be who you want to be, all I needed to hear. Feeling is great, man; there's a drug involved, a sense of accomplishment. A feeling you can't explain – I call it a drug because it's addicting. Once I got the drug I needed to start giving it to other people to experience the sense of accomplishment. That's what I have been doing; people view me as a good leader.

Zapata stated:

Overall it has been a great experience for me. I am glad to have the opportunity to further my education. But when I first arrived here I was lost. I didn't know what to study, or what classes to take. I signed up for the express advising, met lots of people that guided me through, but for a while I never really came up with what I wanted to study. I thought maybe a business transfer degree. You know, to be honest everything is great; there's a lot of resources here. Unfortunately, I didn't really know about them until recently. I wish I would have known about the programs when I first started, because there is a lot of resources here, a lot of people that want to help.

The importance for the students to have a base of support was critical in their continuance to pursue an education. They wanted a place where they could feel welcomed and appreciated. Beebe and Masterson (2006) mention, "Not only do group members need a mutual concern to unite them, but they also need to feel they belong to the group" (p. 5). In addition the student participants stated that they were assisted and in some instances

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motivated in their pursuit of an education. A factor that is imperative for educators to critically understand is the dynamics of collectivist cultures. Lewicki (2006) explains, “Collectivist societies integrate individuals into cohesive groups that take responsibility for the welfare of each individual” (p. 415). The importance of maintaining Latina/o cultural roots in education is imperative in the success and transition through community college. This focus of the study highlighted this factor, and how it must continue to be implemented in a larger context within community college. Students need to understand as they enter community college, where their allies and resources are. If not, as in some cases, students were unmotivated and confused about their presence in community college.

Personal Experiences and Major Influences to Attend Community College

The community college environment greatly enhanced the probability of students continuing their education; however, there were additional factors that contributed to the student desire to complete their education. Again, the students reflected on their families’ upbringings and struggles in their pursuit of a better life through education. I will continue to argue based on the testimony of the student participants’ testimonies that a strong connection must be made to the influence of family in education. The student participants did not invalidate the struggles of their families; they used them as a mechanism to push them forward to succeed. It was my intent to demonstrate the importance of familial ties as a key identified influence in the students pursuing an education. The two-pronged questions asked to the student participants were as follows: **How do you feel a community college education will impact your life? Could you please describe the major influences to attend community college?**

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Angela stated:

So I feel that by studying, getting more educated, will help me when I get a job that I want. I am not just gonna be working, you know, just to get paid. I am going to be working because I like the job, and I am gonna get paid well, and maybe some benefits. The person who influenced me the most was my mom. Uum, she was always supportive and you know I seen, like, my older sister didn't graduate from high school, like I don't want to be like her. I want to better myself and get a new job. I don't just want to work anywhere.

Gregorio stated:

A community college education will definitely have a positive impact. I grew up as a farm worker; I worked in everything to go to school. I saw Chemeketa Community College as the best place to do so. I see it as a bridge to a higher education. Many students think that college is out of their range. I see Chemeketa as that bridge to connect them to a four-year university and an outreach where they can work and continue with their education.

Cheno stated:

Community college will give me the tools to go to the university. I am the first in my family to go to college. I want to start empowering people. A lack of education keeps us down, in jail and in gangs. With my opportunity to go to school, I will sprout my success to other people. I will have more leadership skills to be able to communicate effectively, as a social worker and counselor. The university will give me more skills, tools. I have ideas I want to put into practice.

Angeles stated:

It will impact my life greatly; it will give me everything I need. My major influence was jobs. When I graduated, I had to get a job to pay for me and my mom's living. I didn't have a chance to continue on to college. Mom didn't have a job, my little sister, so basically I went to work just to pay bills. It was hard on me; a lot of teenagers get jobs after they graduate to go on to college, to continue their lives. I was too busy paying for my mom's life and my sister's life. I didn't really have a chance to continue my life after high school.

The experience of the student participants continued to be one that reflected what their families had endured. Their commitment to a collective improvement in a society where they struggled continued to resonate within their responses. These factors must not be ignored or discarded by educators in higher education. Thus a critical analysis must be understood by the

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majority Anglo society that continues to be of an individualistic culture. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) state, “Therefore, for westerners to assume that individual expression is of higher value than harmony in the larger group is to remain in a Western, ethnocentric mode” (p. 57). The enemy of the people continues to be bigotry and ethnocentrism. This is something that must be understood as a prelude to dismantling post-colonial education. Beykont and Nieto (2000) argue, “All teachers of all backgrounds need to recognize, understand, and accept their own diversity and delve into their own identities before they can learn about and from their students. Specifically, in the case of teachers of European background” (p. 199). Having a respect for each other’s differences and understanding each other’s struggle will assist in the development of marginalized and oppressed communities, with the Latina/o community being one amongst the historically many.

Recommendations for Further Study

As this study comes to completion, I would like to highlight some critical key points that the students took notice of on their pathway through community college. Some of these points were alarming, but they were unquestionably valuable. On a parting note I posed the following question to the student participants. I was hoping to get any input that they could give on improving the community college environment. **Is there anything else that I may have missed that you would like to share with us?**

Angela stated: “To get more people involved in attending college or community college, you should reach out more to the community. Some people might not know like the opportunities that you may have and all the help you can get.”

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Adelita stated:

I think if community college had more involvement with high school students; Latinos. Because ESL students get a lot of help to come to college. People would go talk to them. I wasn't in the ESL program, so I didn't get any help.

Dolores stated:

Education is power; that's the hugest thing. If you ever feel like your life is missing something. There is such a lack of education, we have been so oppressed, I feel education does not feel like an option, when it's out there. We need more educated Latinos to represent the rest of our community and bring change in a positive way.

Zapata stated:

Taking Chicana/o, Latina/o studies, it's been a wake up call for me. None of the history stuff, the stuff that really happened, the Bracero program, I didn't know that our people couldn't go to school in the early 1900s. I didn't know there was a law saying that we couldn't go to school. It makes me feel sad, it makes me feel angry, it makes me feel cheated. That itself motivates me to work harder, to get my bachelor's, to get my master's, to get my Ph.D. Because I feel as Latinos, Chicanos, Mejjicanos, whatever, we need more professionals. We need more scientist, engineers, and teachers. I believe most of us settle for assistant work: physician assistant, dental assistant, medical assistant. Why not doctors? Why not physical therapists? Why not lawyers and not just paralegals? I think it's because we don't understand the importance of it.

If community college is to become a vanguard in social change, it must listen to the voices of the communities it is supposed to serve. The majority community must reflect on its own identity and its struggles and begin to make a correlation to the experiences of the recently arrived. We cannot remain divided as we move forward to dismantling oppressive factors that are detrimental in our diverse communities. Navarro (1998) warns, "Thus without discipline and unity of action, no struggle that seeks decolonization of an oppressed community can afford to become engaged in an internal war. If it does it will self destruct" (p. 362). There must be a fundamental understanding of our common histories of immigration, discrimination and the struggle of our families. The people of European ancestry are not the enemy; it's the prejudice and ethnocentric beliefs that the people of European ancestry were

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forced to adopt in order to find acceptance in the classist mainstream. Navarro (1995) further radically instructs:

An “Anglo” according to Gutierrez, is someone who will stand up with us and fight regardless, because she or he sees the issues. Their posture of fighting is not in front of us in a paternalistic nature and not behind us in a self-adulating kind of posture, but right next to us taking blows and giving the blows as they come. (p. 88)

The alliances with the critical thinking majority culture in education are critical in the empowerment of the socially disenfranchised. Thompson (2009) rearticulates Dr. Martin Luther King’s critical outlook on inter-communal cultural nationalism:

A final challenge that we face as a result of our great dilemma is to be ever mindful of enlarging the whole society, and giving it a new sense of values as we seek to solve particular problems. As we work to get rid of economic strangulation that we face as a result of poverty, we must not overlook the fact that millions of Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Indians and Appalachian whites are also poverty stricken. (p. 357)

On a parting note, the voices of these student participants further exacerbated the rudimentary elements of post-colonial education and its effects on subjugating the Latina/o community. Their experiences constituted a testimony or an ethnographic analysis that gave us a vision into their life and experiences: “Ethnographies map out social discourse. They do this to discover who people think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it” (Griffin, 2006, p. 291). The voices of those who struggle have been silenced historically; however, this has not been a coincidence. They have been silenced to uphold certain values, and certain class interests.

The community college culture can intervene in this, and in a sense create social awareness. But we must not be afraid of conflict, as Wilmot and Hocker (2004) teach us:

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“First, conflict, when it emerges into action, is the seedbed that nourishes social change.

People who regard their situation as unjust or see current policies as foolish usually must do battle with the old guard before they can be successful” (p. 10). The decision is up to us who work within the realm of community college: What political posture will we stand for . . .

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