

DISSERTATION

NEGATION AND AFFIRMATION: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF NON-  
MAJORITY STUDENTS IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE DUAL ENROLLMENT  
PROGRAM

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Fort Collins, CO

Summer 2009

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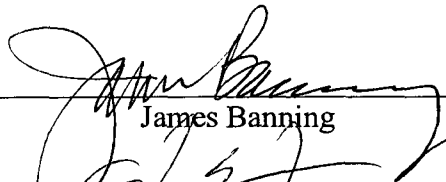
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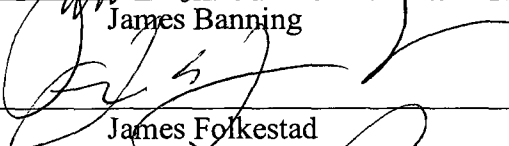
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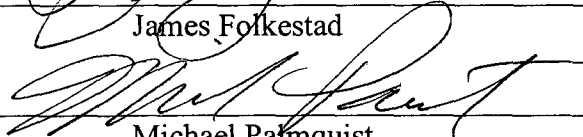
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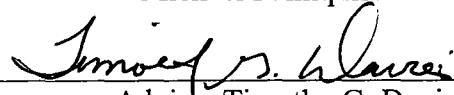
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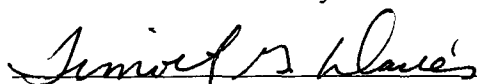
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

NEGATION AND AFFIRMATION: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF NON-  
MAJORITY STUDENTS IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE DUAL ENROLLMENT  
PROGRAM

This qualitative study explored the lived experience of non-majority high school students enrolled in a community college dual enrollment program. Through a systematic analysis of data collected from personal interviews with twelve non-majority students from a community college two groups of themes emerged: *Themes of Negation* and *Themes of Affirmation*. The *Themes of Negation* included *Racism and Bias*, and *Mixed Messages*. *Racism and Bias* describes pre-college experiences in which participants were devalued, discouraged or distracted from their studies because of their race or ethnicity. *Mixed Messages* describes contradictory messages participants received from family members which created an atmosphere of ambiguity about the value of college or which guided them away from college. The *Themes of Affirmation* included *Positive Expectations*, *Respect and Equity*, and *Confirmation*. *Positive Expectations* describes experiences in which influential others predicted successful academic outcomes for participants that encouraged college pursuits. *Respect and Equity* describes experiences of being valued, included, and welcomed in the college environment. *Confirmation* describes experiences which confirmed participants' motivations, acknowledged their academic successes, and sustained their participation in college. Through the contrasting experiences of negation and affirmation, participants

experienced *Identity Clarification* because they were identified in the dual enrollment context as college students rather than as minorities. The findings are interpreted in the context of the literature.

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## DEDICATION

For Kathy, Brittany and Maddie who are patient beyond measure.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks are due to my colleagues, friends and family members: Timothy Davies for ideas, questions, patience and advice; Gordon Snow, Hari Walner and Kristy Pals for encouragement; Brittany and Madeline Snow for letting Papa write; and most of all to my bride, Kathy Snow, who waited too long for her turn. I love you.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *Background*

Ongoing reforms in the American education system have been driven by numerous factors including the need for a highly-skilled work force and the high cost of education in state budgets. Legislatures have sought to reform K-12 systems through “accountability” measures such as standardized testing and to reform higher education through performance-based funding and privatization. But arguably, the greatest growth in voluntary student participation in any reform effort has been in dual credit and dual enrollment programs (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Boswell, 2001). Touted as a means to save taxpayer dollars and move students more quickly toward post secondary degree completion, dual enrollment programs now exist by policy or statute in 38 states (Karp, 2004). Forty-nine states have addressed dual enrollment in statute, policy or inter-institutional agreements (Education Commission of the States, 2001).

Simultaneously, students’ college-going behaviors have changed. Seventy-five percent of all high school students report that they plan to attend college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001) influenced by their parents’ beliefs in the importance of education for future success (Immerwahr, 2004; Immerwahr & Foleno, 2000) and the belief that at least some college is required for a good job (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2004). Quantitative studies support these parental beliefs. The

Institute for Higher Education Policy (2005) found positive correlations between higher education, worker productivity and personal income.

While these correlations exist, race and class are correlated with student failure. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicate that 17-year-old non-majority students demonstrate achievement levels similar to 13-year-old White students (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002, p. 5). Barton (2002) found that those who start college and do not finish are disproportionately Black, Hispanic and American Indian and have lower income across all races.

No parents are more certain of these realities than the parents of Hispanic and African American children. Immerwahr and Foleno (2000) found that 47 % of African American and 65 % of Hispanic parents of high school students selected college education as the most important factor in their children's future success despite (or because of) the correlations between race, socioeconomic status and academic performance or the fact that the nation's colleges and universities are less affordable now than they were in 1994. As Baum (2001) found, college is proportionally four times more expensive for poor families than for wealthy ones. Barton (2002) concluded that these educational and economic circumstances dampen students' drive to pursue and complete a bachelor's degree, but he also reported an expected 24 % increase in occupations requiring a less-costly associate degree or vocational certificate and a 32 % increase for associate degrees alone—higher than any other category of postsecondary education.

### *History of Dual Enrollment Programs*

DiPuma (2002) summarized the rapid development of community college dual-enrollment programs as a response to numerous factors: external pressures for improved access, the need for improved transition to college and improved workforce preparation, declining college enrollment, low test cores, high dropout rates, and the belief among some college leaders that they must collaborate with high schools to prepare students to succeed in college.

The first large-scale attempt at dual enrollment came in 1972 with the founding of Syracuse University's Project Advance (SUPA). High school principals, superintendents, and representatives of the university sought a means to continue the education of high school seniors who had already met graduation requirements (Puyear, 1998). By the late 1970s, dual enrollment partnerships emerged throughout the United States as a means of providing opportunities for academically prepared high school students to begin their college careers. In Florida, dual enrollment was created by statute in 1979 giving high school juniors and seniors with a minimum grade point average access to college-level coursework at no cost (Hebert, 2001).

The popularity of dual enrollment programs grew through the 1980s under the rationale that advanced high school students should have access to challenging coursework (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). But in 1985, Minnesota launched its postsecondary enrollment options dual enrollment plan with the stated intent of promoting opportunities for rigorous academic pursuits for students not necessarily considered advanced and offered the program at no cost to students (Boswell, 2001; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2003). Similarly,

Washington's Running Start program was created in 1990 under the "Learning by Choice" law and grew from less than 1,000 student participants in 1991-1992 to 12,500 in 1998-99 (Boswell, 2001) and 14,313 in 2001-2002 (Washington State Board, 2002).

Dual enrollment programs nationwide have grown rapidly predicated upon numerous assumed benefits: the removal of duplicate courses (Catron, 2001); giving college faculty a fuller understanding of the high school student population (Chapman, 2001); creating a basis for future collaborations between colleges, high schools and their communities (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Chapman, 2001; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Helfgot, 2001); providing access to high school faculty qualified to teach college-level courses (Helfgot, 2001); and bringing more academically capable high school students to community colleges (Hebert, 2001). A far more frequently-cited rationale has been accelerating progress toward degree completion (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Andrews, 2004; Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Catron, 2001; Chapman, 2001; Clark, 2001; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2001; Perrin, 2002). While much has been written about acceleration, the primary motivation is fiscal: students' education is less costly when they move more quickly through the education system (Finken, 2003; Rivard, 2002). Andrews and Barnett (2002) reported that parents in Illinois saved an estimated \$5,000 to \$24,000 in tuition expenses for students who completed up to one year of college credit through a dual enrollment program. Likewise, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges 2001-2002 annual report on dual enrollment concluded that students and parents saved \$17.4 million in tuition and taxpayers saved \$34.7 million (2002).

While these rationales help explain why dual enrollment has been used to respond to political and economic challenges the most important rationales for this study are those which enhance access to and success in postsecondary education. The League for Innovation in the Community College (Inside Track, 2002) reported that high school concurrent enrollment students who later enrolled in college courses performed as well academically as their native college student counterparts, and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2002) reported that dual enrollment students performed as well as native students at the University of Washington. Peterson, Anjewierden, and Corser (2001) and Puyear (1998) reported similar grade point average data for dual enrollment students and also reported survey results suggesting dual enrollment students were positively influenced in their decision to attend college. The strongest argument, in terms of student success, comes from Adelman (1999) who found a statistically significant correlation between challenging high school studies and higher academic performance in college.

Bailey and Karp (2003) reached a related conclusion but unlike Adelman proposed rigorous academic experience even for students who historically performed academically less well: “[T]he relationship between a rigorous high school course load and success in postsecondary education....argues for the inclusion of middle and low-achieving high school students in dual enrollment programs” (p. 1). Barton (2002) expanded this idea to include an even larger group: “Success in improving college completion rates is tied to success in providing more rigorous courses earlier and in raising standards—all the more important for minorities and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds generally” (p. 15).

Other authors have more closely examined the potential benefit of dual enrollment to prepare all students for postsecondary learning and not just the traditionally college bound. Kirst and Venezia (2001) found that dual enrollment served students who were academically ready to progress beyond high school but were not socially or emotionally prepared to begin college. Hugo (2001) reported that dual enrollment courses provide a less-threatening introduction to college for students “just below” the level of AP students (p. 68) and concluded that dual enrollment gave low income non-majority students the opportunity to develop the attitudes toward higher education that were not typical among their peers. O’Brien and Nelson (2004) found that even when controlling for demographic characteristics, dual enrollees in Texas were nearly as likely as AP takers to earn advanced high school diplomas and more likely to transfer from community colleges and earn a degree in a timely fashion. Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio (2003) argued that dual enrollment is a sound public investment for its impact on civic and economic well-being and because it increases college completion rates for economically disadvantaged students and students of color. Hagedorn, Chlebeck, and Moon (2003) found that Hispanic female students were more likely to report that a dual enrollment program was instrumental in their determination to finish high school, concluding that it had “a positive effect on students who would be least likely to continue their education in a post secondary institution” (p. 15). A more recent Florida Department of Education (Windham, 2004) study indicated a dramatic difference in rates of college attendance among non-majority students who participated in dual enrollment programs. It found that Hispanic and African American students who took dual enrollment courses enrolled in higher education at rates exceeding that of whites or any



other ethnic group: 69.7 % for African Americans and 68.5 % for Hispanics compared to 63.3 % for white students. This participation among non-majority students represents a significant shift from an earlier study (Windham, 1997) that indicated dual enrollment in Florida was disproportionately serving White students. These results may be consistent with Carnevale and Rose's (2003) finding that race and socioeconomic status historically have been overstated as barriers to higher education.

Over half of all college students begin their postsecondary studies in community colleges, and non-majority student enrollments in community colleges are growing rapidly (Bailey, Jenkins & Leinbach, 2005). Bailey and Karp (2003) concluded that research on the effects of credit-based transition programs (including dual enrollment) should continue because even though there are indicators that the programs hold promise for assisting students through their secondary to postsecondary transition, there is no convincing documentation that this promise is being realized.

The studies summarized here indicate that dual enrollment positively affects non-majority students' college success, but they do not directly address the nature of their experience in dual enrollment programs. This points to the need for an investigation into dual enrollment programs as a potentially important point of access for non-majority students and a significant step in the evolution of community colleges as they provide access in collaboration with high schools. Callan and Finney (2003) identified community colleges' collaborations with school districts as the most likely effective means of sustaining access to higher education and creating broader economic opportunity.

### *Purpose Statement*

This phenomenological study will seek to understand how non-majority students make meaning of their lived experience as participants in a dual enrollment program.

### *Questions*

My “grand tour” question (Creswell, 1998) asks, from the perspective of a non-majority student, “What is the essential structure of the experience of participating in a dual enrollment program?” More specifically, the study will ask:

1. What are the structural meanings of participating in dual enrollment?
2. What themes or contexts account for this experience?
3. What underlying structures precipitate thoughts or feelings about being in dual enrollment?
4. What are the consistent themes that help describe the experience?

### *Definitions*

Key terms include “dual enrollment” and “college enrollment.” For the purposes of this study, “dual enrollment” will refer to any enrollment of a high school student in a community college course regardless of its location (a high school or college campus) or who teaches it. “College enrollment” will refer to enrollment in a community college subsequent to participation in a high school dual enrollment program. “Non-majority” is used in place of “minority” to describe non-White students whose racial and ethnic groups, taken together, now nearly represent a new majority in community college student populations.

### *Significance of the Study*

Considering the prevalence of dual enrollment programs (primarily in community colleges), the high rates of non-majority students enrolling in community colleges, the limited research on non-majority students and dual enrollment and the evidence that these programs may have a positive effect on non-majority students' postsecondary enrollments, this phenomenological study of students' experience of dual enrollment programs is warranted. While community colleges provide the first postsecondary experience for the majority of first generation students and students of color, existing research has done little more than document the trend and raise issues for further investigation. Works documenting the trend describe the growth in non-majority student participation in dual enrollment and the apparent positive effect on their continued college enrollment (Windham, 2004) while others describe the potential for positive effects on non-majority students (Hagedorn et. al., 2003; Hugo, 2001; O'Brien & Nelson, 2004; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Venezia, Kirst & Antonio, 2003). Though these studies exist, this study will add to existing research because it examines non-majority experience from the students' perspective. No studies I found attempt to uncover the nature of students' personal experience of dual enrollment. This study adds to our understanding of the crucial high school to college transition, a significant event in many students' lives. It also adds information about factors which allow some non-majority students to persist in postsecondary studies while many do not since the study does not focus on college readiness or academic talent but on the unique structure of the students' personal experiences. Finally, this study reveals something of importance for practice in

community colleges where non-majority students enroll in increasing numbers though few complete a degree or certificate.

### *Researcher's Perspective*

As a community college educator for the last fourteen years, I have seen first hand the experience of students at several different open-door community colleges. As is commonly known, community college students are often (though not always) less-well prepared for college than their university peers and hold less-impressive academic credentials such as class standing and grade point average. But my perception of them overall has been that even though they have fewer academic successes they are no less capable. Just as important, they bring to the community college experiences different from their university-bound counterparts, especially differences in age, race, ethnicity, and economic standing. These differences represent unique strengths but also present significant barriers that compound or exceed academic difficulties.

Students of difference are assessed and advised in the same ways as majority students but more often find themselves placed (by policy or statute) in developmental classes. The assumption is that the remediation of their academic deficits will prepare them for “the rigors of college level work.” Not surprisingly, literally half of them fail to complete even their developmental courses, and more fail upon reaching the college level. Considering the sheer numbers of students who fail, it has occurred to me that a lack of academic skill alone does not explain their experience; something more or different is needed to promote their success.

A few years ago, I discovered a poor school district with a high percentage of non-majority students that was collaborating with a nearby community college. Students

considered motivated but at risk of dropping out could enter a program that allowed them to pursue a high school diploma and an associate degree simultaneously. Though the program was new, it appeared to improve students' chances of graduating from high school and at least pursuing college credits. Through further research, I discovered that similar programs had been developed in 49 states and that much had been written about them. But few sources I found examined the effect of dual enrollment on non-majority students, and none of them attempted to account for the lived experience of students of difference. This gap in the literature appeared important to me especially considering community colleges' claim as democracy's colleges and the recent rapid growth in non-majority student enrollments. To understand non-majority students' experience from their perspective and to discover how community colleges may foster their success, I pursued this study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Background*

The history of American education in the twentieth century is a history of reform. Since the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, numerous commissions, think tanks and scholars have examined the weaknesses and strengths of the nation's education systems. Their findings have led to attempted reforms through state and federal accountability, privatization, digital technologies, improved teacher preparation programs and post-tenure review, among others. As O'Banion (1997) noted, education reform is the nation's pastime.

Despite the effort and expense, the results have been disappointing. Though nearly three-quarters of the nation's high school students go on to postsecondary education within two years of graduation, 30% require remediation before pursuing their college studies (Kleiman, 2001). A quarter of the freshmen at baccalaureate-granting institutions and half the freshmen at community colleges never make it to their sophomore year. And the percentage of students who eventually earn a bachelor's degree is the same as it was in 1950 (Education Commission of the States, 2001).

Statistics such as these are especially troublesome considering a fundamental reality of American life: a high school diploma is not enough. At the middle of the last century, 20% of all jobs in the United States required a college or professional degree,

20% required a high school diploma or some college, and 60% required no special skills and were performed by high school graduates or dropouts. Now, the proportion of professional jobs is about the same, the number of unskilled jobs has fallen by a factor of 3, and the proportion of skilled jobs has tripled (National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001).

Driven by the evidence of poor quality in the American education system, the value of a highly-skilled work force for economic growth and international competitiveness and the high cost of education in state budgets, legislatures have enacted numerous education reforms. In K-12 systems, this has most often taken the form of accountability through standardized testing to compare performance among schools. In higher education, reforms have included performance-based funding and privatization. But arguably, the greatest growth in voluntary student participation in any reform effort has been in dual credit and dual enrollment programs (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Boswell, 2001). Touted as a means to save taxpayer dollars and move students more quickly toward degree completion dual enrollment programs now exist by policy or statute in 38 states (Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2004).

Occurring simultaneously with these economic, political and social shifts are changes in students' college-going behaviors. Seventy-five percent of all high school students report that they plan to attend college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001), influenced in part by parental beliefs in the importance of education for future success (Immerwahr, 2004; Immerwahr and Foleno, 2000) and the quantitative finding that at least some college is required for jobs that will provide a living wage (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2004).

No parents are more certain of this reality than the parents of Hispanic and African American children. In their study of attitudes toward higher education, Immerwahr and Foleno (2000) found that 35% of all respondents said a college education is the most important factor in future success. But 47% of African American and 65% of Hispanic parents of high school students selected college education as the most important factor (Immerwahr, 2004; Immerwahr & Foleno, 2000). Yet, the nation's colleges and universities are less affordable than they were in 1994; the percent of family income needed to pay college costs at public four-year institutions rose as high as 34% in the most expensive states (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005). As Baum (2001) found, college is proportionally four times more expensive for poor families than for wealthy ones. Considering that race and socioeconomic status are so closely related (Postsecondary Opportunity, 2003; Day & Newburger, 2002), for most non-majority students a college education is financially out of the question. The children of these families truly face a bleak professional and economic future.

The following review of literature will examine the economic pressures driving the need for postsecondary education for low income and non-majority students: those least likely to attend college but also those who would experience the greatest financial benefit. It will define key terms and describe dual and concurrent enrollment programs. It will present a brief historical perspective on dual enrollment programs in the United States including the reasons for their development and rapid growth and provide examples of dual enrollment efforts regarded as successful. It will present criticisms of dual enrollment and the rationale for their use. Since a key argument in favor of dual enrollment programs is the access they provide to students who may not otherwise attend



college, it will also examine what is known about these students, their participation in dual enrollment programs, and the benefits that may result.

### *Economic Pressures and the Benefits of Higher Education*

If low-income and non-majority student wish to participate fully in the American economy, they will need a means to access and succeed in higher education.

Postsecondary success is clearly related to socioeconomic mobility. The Institute for Higher Education Policy (2005) found positive correlations between higher education, worker productivity, and personal income. Specifically, the institute concluded that 6% of the population nationwide aged 25 and older with a high school diploma was unemployed compared to 3% for those with a bachelor's degree; that more people with a high school diploma reported receiving public assistance in every state than those with a bachelor's degree; that in 28 states no one with a bachelor's degree reported receiving public assistance in the prior year; that the national average total personal income of workers 25 an older with a bachelor's degree was \$48,417, roughly \$23,000 higher than for those with a high school diploma; and that the average total personal income in the United States among citizens age 25 and older was \$25,053 for high school graduates and \$32,470 for those with some college including AA, AS and certificate holders—a difference of 30% (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2005).

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2005) argued that a high school diploma has small value in the labor market. The Center reported that while the greatest earnings go to those with baccalaureate and professional degrees attaining an associate degree garners an average 21% gain in wages over a high school diploma.

Even though Barton (2002) found that the financial returns to those who complete baccalaureate degrees have not risen relative to the cost of living, returns have been growing relative to those who have less education. Merely stable earnings for college graduates combined with the greatly rising costs of higher education may dampen students' drive to pursue and complete a bachelor's degree, but labor market projections for 2000 to 2010 show greater growth in the percentage of occupations requiring postsecondary education than did the projections for 1996-2006. Importantly and in contrast to baccalaureate degrees, a 24% increase is expected in occupations requiring an associate degree or vocational certificate, and a 32% increase is expected for associate degrees alone—higher than any other category of postsecondary education (Barton 2002).

Significantly, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (2005) found that baccalaureate completion did not appear to be required to obtain the benefits detailed above. The authors summarized that “The added value of participating in at least some college (including associate's degrees) also is important, and the data show that for the vast majority of states, some college is good, and more college is even better” (p. 4). Considering Barton's (2002) findings on college graduates' earnings vis-à-vis the cost of a college education, postsecondary education has become less a competitive advantage and more a minimum requirement to join the middle class (Boswell, 2001). A job provides admission to an individualistic yet participatory culture (Carnevale & Rose, 2003). As Callan and Finney (2003) stated, “hard work, once the bedrock of opportunity, is no longer sufficient” (p. 2).

While the benefits of a higher education seem obvious, attaining them can be difficult in the current economic and social context. Low income and non-majority students, faced with an economy in which a growing number of Americans believe middle class opportunity is weakening (Immerwahr, 2004), are further behind than ever before especially considering that dropping out is most common among students described as low income, first generation, second language learners and persons of color (Hoffman, 2005). Barton (2002) reported that in 1999, 27% of Hispanic 16-24 year olds did not have a high school diploma or a GED compared to 13% for Blacks and 7% for Whites. England (2001) reported that between 1995 and 2000, 4.5% of students in grades 10-12 dropped out of high school but that the numbers of dropouts vary greatly by race and family income. For Anglos, the annual dropout rate was about 3.3%; for African Americans, 5%; and for Latinos, nearly 10%. In 1998, 12.5% of high school aged children from low income families dropped out of school compared with 2.7% from families with high incomes. Up and down the education continuum, race and class are easily correlated with student success. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicate that 17-year-old non-majority students demonstrate achievement levels similar to 13-year-old White students; in other words, 12<sup>th</sup> grade African-American and Latino youth achieve at what would be considered 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels for Whites (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002, p. 5).

Additionally, Barton (2002) found that those who started college and did not finish were disproportionately Black, Hispanic, and American Indian and had lower income across all races. Conversely, 36% of White 25-29 year olds who completed high school had attained a bachelor's degree or higher by 2000 compared to 21% of Blacks

and 15% of Hispanics. As Barton concluded, “A lot of room clearly is left for minority groups to catch up with the attainment level of the majority” (p. 13). Callan and Finney (2003) reached the same conclusion and pointed out the irony that students from low-income backgrounds and non-majority groups—students of color, first generation college-goers, and English language learners—are the least-well served by the education system and least likely to finish high school or attain degrees but represent a growing proportion of young people available to enter the work force.

### *Terminology and Definitions*

The terms “concurrent enrollment,” “joint enrollment,” “dual credit” and “dual enrollment” are used widely to describe high school students’ participation in higher education though definitions vary (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Boswell, 2001; Finken, 2003; Hoffman, 2005; Puyear, 1998). The Education Commission of the States (2001) offered a “standard” definition: a high school student enrolled in a postsecondary institution while still in high school (p. 4). Andrews (2004) simply defined dual enrollment as the practice of enrolling students in high school and college classes simultaneously and defined dual credit as the granting of both high school and college credit for college-level classes successfully completed. Karp et. al. (2004) defined dual enrollment courses as actual college courses that result in progress being recorded on a college transcript for students admitted as non-degree seekers. And according to Hoffman (2005), dual enrollment includes postsecondary incentive programs which reward students with free or reduced college tuition for finishing some of their college work while in high school.

While definitions of key terms are similar, authors have highlighted a range of characteristics in their descriptions of dual enrollment programs. Kerr (2001) stated that in dual enrollment programs college and high school faculty collaborate to structure, plan and teach programs of study. Boswell (2001) defined dual enrollment programs as those in which high school students register for college courses taught by college faculty members on a college campus where students receive both high school and college credit and concurrent enrollment programs as those in which content and standards are determined by a college-level department and the courses are taught by high school faculty members who hold the same academic credentials as those required by the college.

According to Perrin (2002), dual enrollment is defined by six main factors: course content (regular college courses or those specifically designed for high school students); location (high school or community college); instructors (community college faculty or high school faculty with college-level credentials); student mix (high school students only or mixed with community college students); credits earned (immediately upon course completion or held in escrow until a later enrollment at the same college and the extent to which the credits transfer to other colleges); finance (whether the state pays both the college and high school and whether students pay some or all of the cost). These factors are also addressed by Bailey and Karp (2003), Clark (2001), and Johnstone and DelGenio (2001). Johnstone and DelGenio present a three part typology for the full range of options available to high school students which the authors describe as college level learning in high school (CLLHS): examination-based, school-based, and college-based.

The best known of the examination-based options is the Advanced Placement program introduced by the College Board in 1955. AP courses are taught in high schools by high school faculty members following course outlines provided by the College Board. Thirty-four AP courses are offered in 18 subject areas with students' level of mastery measured by a single examination of short answer and essay questions. Exams are scored on a range of 1 to 5 with scores of 4 or 5 required for college credit by more selective baccalaureate-granting institutions (College Board, 2005; Johnstone & DelGenio, 2001).

Another examination-based option for gaining college credit is the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), also disseminated by the College Board. There are 35 subject area exams for which 2,900 U.S. colleges grant credit ranging from 3-12 credits per successfully-completed exam. Students do not take specific courses to prepare for CLEP exams; rather, standardized exams attempt to measure students' college level knowledge accumulated through their academic, personal or professional experience including military experience (College Board, 2005).

The second type of CLLHS described by Johnstone and DelGenio is "school-based" which involves high school students taking college courses in their own schools taught by high school teachers. The oldest and perhaps best-known example of the school-based learning option is Syracuse University's Project Advance (SUPA) begun in 1972. High school teachers must hold credentials comparable to their college counterparts and receive training by supervising postsecondary institutions which approve their courses (Johnstone & DelGenio, 2001).

Lastly, college-based CLLHS involves high school students attending college classes taught by college faculty on college campuses where high school students take their courses with regularly matriculated college students. College-based programs are often restricted to high-performing high school students with better grade point averages who are ready for more challenging course work and/or have already completed their high school graduation requirements. An example of a college-based program is Washington's Running Start that allows high school juniors and seniors to take college courses at the state's 34 community and technical colleges and four state universities (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2002).

Similarly, Clark (2001) defines dual enrollment programs in a four-part typology. Type I, exam preparation, includes credit obtained after the completion of a course and passing an exam such as the Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate. Type II, school based, includes credit obtained and transcribed as if taken at a college such as Syracuse University's Project Advance. Type III, college based, includes credits obtained and transcribed in the same way as other courses taken at a college such as Washington's Running Start. Type IV, career preparation, involves credit for vocational courses in which students enroll at either the secondary or postsecondary level. An example is Tech Prep, funded by the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act. College credit for courses taken by high school students in these programs is granted after review by the granting institution.

Bailey and Karp (2003) add a useful dimension to the definition of programs designed to assist high school students in their transition to college, especially students of average and lower academic performance. They define "credit-based transition

programs” according to “their ability to expose students to a wide range of ‘college-like’ experiences.” Their typography compares the “intensity” of the students’ experience (p. 12). The least intense are “singleton programs” such as stand-alone Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment courses that are not part of a larger structured curriculum, and credit by examination. More intense are “comprehensive programs” which subsume most of a student’s academic experience, such as the International Baccalaureate which can substitute for a student’s normal high school curriculum. Students completing the curriculum receive the International Baccalaureate Diploma and credit for their IB courses toward high school graduation requirements (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2002).

Most intense are “enhanced comprehensive programs” which offer college coursework combined with guidance and support such as Middle College High Schools. A MCHS is designed for at-risk students and located on a community college campus. MCHS’s expose students to the rigors of college learning but also provide them enrichment courses and remedial studies for those not qualified for college credit-bearing courses (Bailey & Karp 2003; Kleiman 2001). Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) add that middle college high schools emphasize visible peer models (the students enrolled at the college), small classes, and superior academic and support services.

This study will synthesize the definitions presented here. “Dual enrollment” will refer to any enrollment of a high school student in a college course regardless of its location (whether school- or college-based) or who teaches it. “Dual credit” will refer to any circumstance in which students receive both college and high school credit for the same college course.



### *Historical Perspective*

Karp (2004) found that 38 states have policies and regulations for dual enrollment, and that 18 states mandate that dual enrollment programs be available to students. The Education Commission of the States (2001) found that 49 states have addressed dual enrollment in statute, policy, or inter-institutional agreements.

The first large-scale attempt at dual enrollment came with the 1972 founding of Syracuse University's Project Advance (SUPA) when high school principals, superintendents and representatives of the university sought a means to challenge high school seniors who had already met graduation requirements (Puyear, 1998). By 2000, SUPA enrolled 3,800 students in 120 high schools (Johnstone & DelGenio, 2001). College Now began at Kingsborough Community College in the early 1980s. It allowed high school juniors and seniors to take college level courses for credit in their schools or on a CUNY campus. In 2001, the program involved 17 colleges and 150 high schools with 25,000 students participating during the 2000-2001 academic year (Perrin, 2002). In 2003-2004, 31,800 students participated (Hoffman, 2005).

By the late 1970s, dual enrollment partnerships had emerged throughout the United States as a means of providing opportunities for motivated, academically prepared high school students to begin their college careers. In Florida, dual enrollment was created by statute in 1979, giving high school juniors and seniors with a minimum grade point average access to college-level coursework at no cost (Hebert, 2001).

The popularity of dual enrollment programs grew through the 1980s, often in an attempt to ensure that advanced high school students and students who had completed their graduation requirements before their senior year would have access to challenging

coursework (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). In 1985, Minnesota launched its postsecondary enrollment options dual enrollment plan. The stated purpose of the legislation enabling PSEO in Minnesota was to promote opportunities for rigorous academic pursuits for a wider variety of students by offering the program at no cost (Boswell, 2001; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2001). The number of participants rose from 3,528 in 1985-1986 to 6,671 in 1994-1995 and 12,000 in 1999-2000 (Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2001).

Washington's Running Start program was created in 1990 by the Washington State Legislature under the "Learning by Choice" law, and grew from less than 1,000 student participants during the 1991-1992 school year to 12,500 in the 1998-99 school year (Boswell, 2001) and 14,313 in 2001-2002 (Washington State Board, 2002). 32 community and technical colleges and three public universities participated (Boswell, 2001).

In 1996, the Utah legislature approved dual enrollment resulting in the enrollment of 5,400 students during the 1997-1998 academic year. In 1999, Utah Governor Michael Leavitt announced the New Century Scholarships for high school students who accelerated their educational progress and completed an associate degree prior to September first of the year in which they graduated from high school. Seventy-five percent of the cost of the dual enrollment courses was borne by the state through the scholarships. Salt Lake Community College's concurrent enrollment program grew from 758 students in 1990 to over 9,000 students in 2000 (Peterson, Anjerwierden & Corser, 2001).

The Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment was approved in 1988 as a cooperative agreement between public schools and community colleges and signed by the state's Secretary of Education, community college system Chancellor, and Superintendent of Public Instruction. Dual-credit enrollments grew from 2,800 in 1991 to 4,575 in 1995 and 6,700 in 1998 (Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Carr, 1997).

Florida's dual enrollment program began in 1973 with legislation that approved the use of academic and vocational dual enrollment, early admission, credit by examination, the Advanced Placement Examination and the International Baccalaureate (Education Commission of the States, 2001). The number of students participating rose from 19,375 in 1992-1993 to 34,000 in 2002-2003. In academic dual enrollment, students attempted 207,813 credits in 1997-1998 and 305,230 in 2002-2003—an increase of 47% in five years (Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Windham, 2004).

### *Criticism*

Despite their popularity, numerous criticisms have been leveled at dual enrollment programs. Some concern the coordination between high schools and postsecondary institutions such as differing academic calendars, the effect on faculty teaching loads, tenure and promotion (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). Others include worries about the loss of students' involvement in their high schools: lost enrollment in high school classes (Andrews & Barnett, 2002); the loss of the best and brightest students to college classes and the removal of students from traditional high school social activities (Blair, 1999; Catron, 2001; Perrin, 2002); and the impact of dual enrollment on students' eligibility for financial aid (Andrews & Barnett, 2002).

While these can be judged legitimate concerns, more attention has been given to a narrower range of potential problems: the quality and integrity of college classes, the quality of faculty, and the cost of dual enrollment programs. Numerous authors have addressed the concerns about academic quality (Andrews 2000; Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Boswell, 2001; Clark, 2001; Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Karp et. al., 2004; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2001). Hebert (2001) reported that almost from the start concerns were raised about colleges' willingness to accept credits students earn while still in high school. Johnstone and Del Genio (2001) described the "practice of certain colleges or universities (especially community colleges) granting credit on their transcripts for what are described as their courses, but that are taught to high school students by high school teachers in high school venues" (p. vii). And in 2001, the South Dakota Board of Regents banned dual enrollment courses from counting for college credit due to concerns about the courses' lack of rigor (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). To address such concerns, community colleges in Illinois (Andrews & Barnett, 2002) required the same placement testing of high school dual enrollment students as their native college counterparts, required high school teachers to meet the colleges' faculty credentialing requirements, used the same syllabi and textbooks for on campus and off campus courses, had college department chairs observe high school teachers' classes, and used student evaluations to assess courses. Salt Lake Community College adopted many of the same strategies by requiring high school instructors to submit written proposals for courses and by providing on-going training for high school instructors to keep their teaching in harmony with on-campus instruction (Peterson, Anjerwieden & Corser,

2001). Similarly, the Arizona Council of Academic Administrators adopted quality assurance measures stating that credit may be granted only by the community college (rather than the high school); that courses must be approved using the normal college curriculum approval process; that students must follow the college's admissions, assessment and placement policies; that faculty members must be selected by the college and hold state community college certification; and that text books must be college-approved (Puyear, 1998).

Faculty qualifications have also been identified as a problem. The focus has fallen on high school faculty who may or may not hold the same credentials as their college counterparts. Interestingly, in one study Hebert (2001) found that that the learning outcomes produced by high school teachers were superior, and dual enrollment students were better prepared for subsequent university coursework than were those taught by college faculty. Twelve states have established policies regarding instructors of dual enrollment courses with three allowing courses to be taught by postsecondary faculty or secondary faculty approved by the colleges. Six other states require that high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses have the same credentials as their college counterparts (Karp, 2004).

Despite claims of economic benefits to colleges and state governments, concerns have arisen regarding the cost of dual enrollment programs (Catron, 2001). Funding patterns vary in the cost borne by state governments, school districts, and students, but some have argued that taxpayers pay twice and that schools and colleges are "double-dipping" when the same students are funded at high schools and colleges for the same course (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Catron, 2001;

Community College Week, 2003). Using this rationale, some states have simply eliminated funding for dual enrollment (Community College Week, 2003b) while others have established funding rules. Under political or fiscal circumstances where funds are cut mid-year, Perrin (2002) noted that dual enrollments present unplanned expenditures for school districts.

### *Rationale*

Perrin (2002) also described the educational and social developments as well as the policy priorities that fostered the growth of dual enrollment programs: raising educational standards, redesigning high schools to improve engagement and academic challenge, expanding options for learning, encouraging college attendance for all students, and reducing the duplication between educational levels. DiPuma (2002) summarized the development of community college dual-credit programs as a response to numerous factors: external pressures for improved access, improved transition to college, and improved workforce preparation as well as problems internal to the colleges such as declining enrollment, low test scores, high dropout rates, and the belief among college leaders that they must collaborate with high schools to prepare students to succeed in college. Clark (2001) considered the growing presence of dual-credit courses a major shift in the sequencing of formal schooling that could reduce the need for baccalaureate programs and change the processes and timing of the systems that lead students to four-year colleges.

As has been described, dual enrollment programs nation wide have grown rapidly, predicated upon numerous presumed benefits: the removal of duplicate courses through highly-structured articulation agreements, such as 2+2 and Tech Prep programs (Catron,

2001); the establishment of a more positive image for colleges in local communities and schools (Chapman, 2001; Helfgot, 2001; Perrin, 2002); giving college faculty exposure to the high school setting and fuller knowledge of the student population (Chapman, 2001); creating a basis for future collaborations between colleges, high schools and their communities (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Chapman, 2001; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Helfgot, 2001); access to high school faculty qualified to teach college-level courses (Helfgot, 2001); increasing interaction between high schools and colleges (Perrin, 2002); bringing more academically capable high school students to community colleges and improving the public image of community colleges serving a wide range of students (Hebert, 2001; Perrin, 2002).

Dual enrollment programs are also credited with reducing the risk of dropping out of high school for lack of academic challenges (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). In one study, this appeared especially true when the programs were designed to integrate work experience with academic studies, combine student choice with student responsibility, create close relationships between teachers and students, and extend students' social interactions beyond the school setting and with other age groups (England, 2001).

The literature indicates further benefits, especially for high schools and high school students: improved students perceptions of community colleges (Andrews & Barnett, 2002); improved school attendance, grade point averages, graduation and dropout rates (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000); improved academic rigor in the high school curriculum (Education Commission of the States, 2001; Wellman, 2002); improved aspirations and confidence in the chances for success in college (Boswell,

2001; Perrin, 2002; Robertson, Chapman and Gaskin, 2001; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio, 2003); heightened awareness of academic expectations in college (Perrin, 2002); access to a broader academic curriculum and expensive vocational programs that school districts can't afford (Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Catron, 2001; Chapman, 2001; Clark, 2001; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Hebert, 2001; Perrin, 2002); greater challenges for students including a broader curriculum and access to college credit, especially for rural high schools (Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Boswell, 2001; Chapman, 2001; Perrin, 2002); development of critical thinking and technical content skills (Robertson, Chapman & Gaskin, 2001); greater understanding of community college instructional programs (Perrin, 2002); intellectual challenges and professional development opportunities for high school faculty teaching college courses (Chapman, 2001); seamless transitions from high school to college (Boswell, 2001; Chapman, 2001; Clark, 2001; Haycock, 2002; Venezia, Kirst & Antonio, 2003); lower college costs for schools, students and parents (Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Boswell, 2001; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Hebert, 2001; Perrin, 2002).

Another rationale for dual enrollment common in the literature is that it provides at least a partial answer to what to do with the high school senior year (Andrews, 2004) which is regarded by some as wasted time in which students take easy courses (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Marshall & Andrews, 1991; Pierce, 2001) or stagnate in a “meaningless holding pattern until graduation” (Andrews, 2000, p. 32). Kirst (2000) reported that because college admission processes begin early in the senior year preparation for college primarily occurs between grades 8 and 11 which results in a lack of incentive to take rigorous courses or to perform well academically in



the final high school year. He further concluded that even though an estimated 70% of seniors go on to college, their weak academic work during the senior year is one reason the percentage of students completing baccalaureate degrees is not much greater than it was in 1950. Further, Kirst (2000) argued that the de-emphasis on academic work during the senior year is reflected in the rising cost of remediation, high dropout rates among students unprepared for college work, and poor academic skills among high school graduates entering the workforce or military service.

Another argument for dual enrollment programs is their impact on students' psychological preparation for college. Experiencing college courses first hand seems to create a familiarity with the environment (Marshall & Andrews, 1991), and it exposes high school students to both the academic demands of college studies and the non-academic, social setting, easing the psychological transition from secondary to postsecondary life (Bailey & Karp, 2003).

Accelerating progress toward degree completion is frequently cited as a benefit of and rationale for dual enrollment programs (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Andrews, 2004; Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Catron, 2001; Chapman, 2001; Clark, 2001; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2001; Perrin, 2002). Robertson, Chapman, and Gaskin (2001) found that accelerated placement in college courses was appealing to state legislators who believed students would arrive at college better prepared academically and with more self-confidence, increasing their probability of success. Troumpoucis (2004) argued for expanded access to dual enrollment programs as a means to allow advanced students who have already met their graduation requirements to continue their learning during their

senior year. Haycock (2002) summarized the rationale for the programs by writing that they reduce barriers between school systems that block students' advancement which frees resources to build the core skills of underachieving students.

While much has been written about the value of accelerated degree completion the primary motivation is fiscal: students' education is less costly when they move more quickly through the education system (Finken, 2003; Rivard, 2002). This is a significant consideration in light of the estimated average of 5.5 years required for baccalaureate degree completion (Andrews, 2004). Andrews & Barnett (2002) reported that parents in Illinois saved an estimated \$5,000 to \$24,000 in tuition expenses for students who completed up to one year of college credit through a dual enrollment program, and Blair (1999) reported that Washington families saved an estimated \$10.8 million in tuition while the state saved \$21 million in aid to high schools and colleges due to students' reduced time in publicly-funded education. In the 2001-2002 annual report on Running Start, Washington's dual enrollment program, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges concluded that students and parents saved \$17.4 million in tuition and taxpayers saved \$34.7 million because students took high school and college courses simultaneously (Washington State Board, 2002). Blair also reported that the state of Minnesota saved between \$5 million and \$10 million in support to high schools and college during the 1993-1994 school year. In fiscal year 2000, the Minnesota legislature and local school districts invested \$27 million in the state's post secondary enrollment option program resulting in an estimated savings of \$45 million to taxpayers, parents, students and the federal government. The state alone estimated it saved \$7 million the same year (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2001).

An important rationale for dual enrollment that applies to this study is its potential to enhance access to and success in postsecondary education. The League for Innovation in the Community College (Inside Track, 2002) reported that high school concurrent enrollment students who later enrolled in college courses performed as well academically as their native college student counterparts: a mean GPA of 3.32 for former concurrent enrollment students versus 3.28 for native college students. The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2002) reported that for the 2001-2002 school year dual enrollment students performed as well as native students at the University of Washington, achieving an average grade point average of 3.13. Peterson, Anjerwierden, and Corser (2001) reported similar grade point average data for dual enrollment students as well as survey results in which students reported that concurrent enrollment positively influenced their decision to attend college. Similarly, Puyear (1998) reported that 90% of high school students in Arizona dual enrollment programs graduated from high school and 83% went on to postsecondary education. Overall, Puyear found that dual enrollment students performed better in their first semester and first year in state universities than did community college transfer students as measured by grade point average. The strongest argument, in terms of student success, is its ability to make a high school curriculum more rigorous. Adelman (1999) found a statistically significant correlation between challenging high school studies and academic performance in college.

Equally important to this study is the creation of programs to serve a large number of average high school students who want a postsecondary education but are unlikely to pursue it (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Andrews &

Barnett, 2002; Catron, 2001; Chapman, 2001; Clark, 2001; Education Commission of the States, 2001; Perrin, 2002). Kerr (2001) concluded that dual credit programs extend access to affordable higher education, enable timely degree completion, and create a cumulative and sequential curriculum for the high school to college transition. Kirst and Antonio (2002) added that dual enrollment provides the benefit of preparing all students for postsecondary learning (not just the traditionally college bound) and that it serves advanced students ready to progress beyond high school. They also found dual enrollment was valuable to students who were not socially or emotionally comfortable encountering college for the first time. Hugo (2001) reported that dual enrollment courses provide a less-threatening alternative to examination-based dual credit options such as the Advanced Placement exam, while they also serve students considered “just below” the level of AP students (p. 68). Further, she found that non-majority student in a dual enrollment program were highly committed to their studies and aware of the potential benefits to their college futures. Hugo concluded dual enrollment gave non-majority students the opportunity to develop the attitudes toward higher education that are not typical among low-income students. O’Brien and Nelson (2004) found that even when controlling for demographic characteristics dual enrollees in Texas were nearly as likely as AP takers to earn advanced high school diplomas, were more likely to transfer from community colleges to baccalaureate-granting colleges, and were more likely to earn a degree in a timely fashion.

Like Adelman, Barton (2002) found that rigorous high school courses improved students’ chances for college success. But unlike Adelman, Barton proposed rigorous

academic experience even for students who historically performed academically less well:

We know that success in college is dependent on high achievement and the taking of rigorous courses in high school (and earlier). And we know that about 3 in 10 college freshmen are taking remedial courses. Success in improving college completion rates is tied to success in providing more rigorous courses earlier and in raising standards—all the more important for minorities and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds generally (p. 15)

Bailey (2003) reached a related conclusion for high school students regardless of their level of academic talent or skill:

[T]he relationship between a rigorous high school course load and success in postsecondary education....argues for the inclusion of middle and low-achieving high school students in dual enrollment programs. Since dual enrollment can increase the intensity and rigor of the high school curriculum, challenging students through these programs could lead to high levels of college success. (p. 1)

#### *The Impact of Dual Enrollment on Non-Majority Students*

Few studies have focused on the impact of dual enrollment programs on non-majority students, but those which have been conducted seem to indicate a positive effect. Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio (2003) argued that increasing broad access to college by multiple means including dual enrollment is a sound public investment for its impact on civic and economic well-being, improving individual economic security, increasing civic participation, and increasing college completion rates for economically disadvantaged students and students of color. Hagedorn, et. al. (2003) found that Hispanic female students were more likely than males or non-Hispanics to report that a dual enrollment program was instrumental in their determination to finish high school. An important finding was that the lower the student GPA the more strongly students were influenced by the program to finish high school. The authors concluded the program had

“a positive effect on students who would be least likely to continue their education in a post secondary institution” (p. 15). Hagedorn et. al. further concluded that for students whose first language was not English succeeding in a dual enrollment program required a high level of determination, low level of anxiety, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Non-majority students appear to benefit from participating in dual enrollment programs, but they historically have not participated at a level proportional to their presence in the overall student population. Two studies by Windham (1997, 2000) showed that dual enrollment for high school students in Florida had the greatest benefits for students who were White and of higher income and greater academic performance. In the 1997 study, Windham examined the number of degrees and certificates produced by the Florida Community College System and found that the completion of certificates by non-majority students were rising in comparison to their majority peers; yet, dual enrollment participation—college credit for courses taken during high school—was dominated by majority students. A similar distribution was found for majority students among all students attending college for the first time. In the same study, longitudinal tracking indicated non-majority students were less likely to successfully complete remediation than majority students. Windham concluded, “These two factors mean fewer minority students progress into degree-seeking status. The only remaining paths are changing to the non-degree awards...or leaving college altogether” (p. 5). Windham’s later study examined high school graduates enrolled in Florida community colleges during the 1998-1999 academic year who would have been eligible for university admission. The study found that high school graduates taking required college credits did

not reflect the ethnic distribution of the class as a whole. Further, it found that among the 14,500 high school graduates in 1997 and 1998, 88% of former dual enrollment students had taken a standard required nineteen credits and that 45% of them ranked in the top 20% of their graduating class. The study concluded that the dual enrollment program was serving the more talented high school students.

But a more recent study (Windham, 2004) indicated a substantial benefit for non-majority students. Overall, high school students who enrolled in community college dual enrollment programs enrolled in colleges and universities at rates significantly higher than those who did not. But significantly, Hispanic and African American students who took dual enrollment courses enrolled in higher education at rates exceeding that of Whites or any other ethnic group: 69.7% for African Americans and 68.5% for Hispanics compared to 63.3% for White students. The study does not address whether overall participation in dual enrollment among all non-majority groups has increased, but the results do suggest that dual enrollment may provide a new gateway to postsecondary education for minorities. They also could indicate that non-majority students have come to see dual enrollment as a means of access to postsecondary studies. Lastly, these results may be consistent with Carnevale and Rose's (2003) finding that race and socioeconomic status historically have been overstated as barriers to higher education.

The traditional role of the community college in higher education is the provision of broad access to postsecondary studies (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Eckel & King 2004). Non-majority and low-income students have traditionally attended community colleges in large numbers (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2004), and they continue to represent an increasing percentage of overall college enrollment (American

Council on Education, 2004). The CCSSE authors observed that “community colleges tend to serve students who have the fewest options” (p. 3). If these students do not succeed in the community college they are not likely to have access to higher education, better jobs, or their attending benefits.

It now appears that a significant step in the evolution of community colleges is their continued role of providing access with the expanded responsibility of doing so in collaboration with high schools. Callan and Finney (2003) identify community colleges and their collaborations with school districts and other postsecondary institutions as the most promising means of sustaining access to higher education and creating broader economic opportunity. They conclude, “Community colleges will play a critical role in the expansion of the educational capital—both for young and working-age adults. *At the intersection of high school learning and postsecondary education*, they are the primary institutions for adult education in America” (p. 13) [emphasis added].

If community colleges stand at the intersection of high school learning and postsecondary education and at the crossroads of racial and socioeconomic equity, they may in fact sustain their role as the most democratic of American institutions.



## CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This chapter explains the research design and rationale for a phenomenological study of the lived experience of non-majority students in a dual enrollment program. It describes the participants and the site, presents the methods for data collection and analysis, and presents measures to enhance trustworthiness.

### *Research Design and Rationale*

This qualitative study examined the lived experience of non-majority students who participated in a dual enrollment program. A qualitative design was appropriate for several reasons. First, as Creswell (1998) and Merriam (2001) state, a qualitative study is appropriate when no theories are available to explain a phenomenon; dual enrollment has existed for over thirty years and expanded greatly since 1990 (Hoffman, 2005), but what is known has been revealed by descriptive statistics gathered by participating institutions, college systems, and state departments of education. Studies have not explored how non-majority students experience dual enrollment. Further, a qualitative design was selected because it is effective for examining personal issues of gender, culture and marginalized groups (Creswell, 1998), and because of its flexibility in exploring individual experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A qualitative inquiry process also allows an investigation of social, human experience and the meanings participants have constructed to make sense of it (Merriam, 2001). Lastly, because this study could have relevance for both academic

and lay audiences, and provide a starting point for further study and/or real-world practice (Creswell, 1998), a qualitative approach was desirable.

A phenomenological approach was best suited to this study. At its core, transcendental phenomenology insists upon the centrality of personal, lived experience as the highest means of acquiring knowledge and gaining understanding. As asserted by Husserl (1970), “Ultimately, all genuine, and, in particular, all scientific knowledge, rests on inner evidence: as far as such evidence extends, the concept of knowledge extends also” (p. 61). Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) explicate Husserl’s thought by describing phenomenology as a combination of observation unfiltered by experience or judgment, and an intentional, reflective consciousness. The observer, freed from prior preconceptions, beliefs and knowledge of the phenomenon through the process of Epoche, intentionally sets aside experience in favor of observations of events themselves rather than their possible meanings. Phenomena are observed in their outward appearances in exquisite detail; then, in conscious reflection, the phenomena are exhaustively analyzed and synthesized to create a new whole, a reality combined of experience and one’s consciousness of it.

Applied to the research context, Moustakas (1994) explains that the aim of transcendental phenomenology is

to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essences or structures of the experience. (p. 13)

Also included in the research application of phenomenology is a comprehensive description of the context in which participants experience a phenomenon. Context is

significant in understanding the phenomenon because it indicates possible relationships between parts of the experience that are only implied by their original description.

Key to transcendental phenomenology is the process of *Epoche*, the intentional setting aside of prejudgments about phenomenon in favor of unbiased observation:

The researcher following a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in disciplined and systematic efforts...to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon, from prior experience and professional studies—to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22)

In a phenomenological study, the researcher assists participants in exploring the meaning of their lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). This makes the researcher an instrument of the study which can explore participants' experiences and make discoveries. To play this role, and to understand the experience of dual enrollment from the perspective of non-majority students, I bracketed my experience with dual enrollment, non-majority students in higher education, the college selected for the study, and the informants by describing my experiences, biases, prejudices and orientations in my research journal. This continued during the data collection process (Creswell, 1998). By bracketing my preconceived ideas, I was more able to follow my intuition and imagination while conducting interviews and analyzing data. By setting aside my preconceptions and beliefs about the topic, I could pursue my ultimate purpose of describing the lived experience of non-majority students participating in a dual enrollment program and how they made sense of the experience.

#### *Participants and Site*

I identified a gatekeeper at a community college with a dual enrollment program. I sent the gatekeeper a letter requesting assistance in finding possible participants. To

limit bias, I asked the gatekeeper to identify no more than 75 randomly selected, currently dual-enrolled, non-majority high school students, specifying only an approximately equal number of males and females. Because DCC students voluntarily provide demographic information when they apply for admission, this information was used to narrow the list of possible participants to those most likely to fit the population of interest. The college's institutional research office mailed letters to the participants inviting them to join the study and providing my contact information with instructions on how to reach me if they were willing to participate. Twenty-one of 75 responded.

The site for this study, Diversity Community College, has a new and growing dual enrollment program in which a large number of participants are non-majority students. Located in the western United States, DCC serves 9,500 students annually (3,200 full-time equivalent), and is accredited to grant certificates and associate degrees. Seventy-three percent of DCC's students attend college part time. DCC has the most diverse student population of all community college in the greater metropolitan area: 48% White; 25% Black; 13% Hispanic; 14% Asian, Indian, or Other. Sixty percent of all students are women. The average age is 29.

Diversity Community College serves the largest suburb of a major metropolitan city in the western United States. DCC's community, once predominantly White and middle class, is now racially and ethnically diverse. In recent years, White professionals and their families have moved nearer the downtown metropolitan area in a surge of urban revitalization and increasing property values. More affordable housing can now be found in DCC's community. Recent census bureau data indicate that a quarter of all residents in the area have a first language other than English, and current estimates state that

DCC's students come from over 100 countries around the world. Diversity Community College is proud of its rich mix of students and cultures, and it considers this student population one of its greatest strengths. DCC is also proud of its tradition of close relationship with the communities it serves, and maintains close ties with an urban state college where many DCC students transfer to complete baccalaureate degrees.

DCC's dual enrollment program is the result of a new and highly-publicized partnership between DCC and a large school district within the college's service area. Senior leaders in both organizations have stated the goal that all new high school graduates will graduate with some college courses completed. The partnership was in place for a year prior to this study.

### *Data Collection*

I met the first seven participants as scheduled in the college library. I recorded the interviews following a protocol I believed would elicit a comprehensive account of their experiences. I transcribed and coded the interviews, and I discovered that my interview protocol had not elicited data rich enough to create a full, textural description of the phenomenon or to identify clear themes in the responses. I attempted to contact these participants hoping to interview them again using a revised protocol. Two agreed to be interviewed again, though neither attended the scheduled appointments.

I made appointments with the remaining 14 participants in the college library as before. Twelve of the 14 attended the appointments. I met them for brief, introductory sessions in which I explained the nature and purpose of the study and the informed consent form. I also provided each an informed consent form for their signature, and scheduled a later time for the formal interview. Interviews lasted 45-90 minutes. Most

participants returned for a second interview lasting 20-30 minutes. The interviews were interactive and informal, utilizing a structured protocol of 6-8 initial questions followed by open-ended questions and extended responses. This time, the protocol was far more effective in evoking a comprehensive account of each person's experience of the dual enrollment phenomenon. I varied, altered, and discarded questions as needed to prompt the participants to share the full story of their experience. Before, during, and after the interviews I made entries in a journal, recording my impressions of the participants, their descriptions, and the interview process.

As a researcher, I was concerned that the insubstantial data that resulted from my interviews with the first seven participants may have resulted from my status as a White male. Participants seemed unwilling to share information that might be considered personal, or that might seem negative about their schools or their teachers. To determine whether this was the case, and to enhance the trustworthiness of my study, I enlisted two Black colleagues, one male and one female, each of whom agreed to conduct one of the remaining interviews. I transcribed and coded these interviews as I did all the others, and confirmed that the data were comparable to the data from the interviews I conducted. I also confirmed that the themes in these two participants' responses were similar to those of the participants I interviewed. I concluded that my status as a White male did not negatively influence the data.

### *Data Analysis*

Utilizing transcriptions of participant interviews, I pursued a phenomenological reduction of data with *Hyper Research*<sup>TM</sup>, a qualitative analysis computer program. This culminated in a complete textural description of the experience. The reduction was

facilitated by an inductive, three-step, constant comparative data analysis process described by Strauss and Corbin (1998):

In *open* coding, the analyst is concerned with generating categories and their properties and then seeks to determine how categories vary dimensionally. In *axial* coding, categories are systematically developed and linked with subcategories. However, it is not until the major categories are finally integrated to form a larger theoretical scheme that the research findings take the form of theory. Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining categories. (p. 143)

Following this process, the text of the transcribed interviews were broken into smaller units of meaning and coded with descriptive terms I assigned, or with *in vivo* terms taken from the participants. I started by creating broad categories of data, followed by a review of the categorized data through multiple “visits.” I sought relationships between the categories, then integrated and refined the categories to produce a comprehensive description of the experience to reveal its underlying structure and its essence.

### *Trustworthiness*

The assumption that reality is subjective, multidimensional, and evolving is the primary feature of qualitative research, a contrast to the traditional, positivist, quantitative approach characterized by a belief in a fixed and objective reality that can be measured. Regardless of the differences, researchers from both traditions wish to present convincing arguments based on designs that lend credibility to their findings. Because of their belief in the fluid nature of reality and the conclusion that quantitative measures can not fully capture it, qualitative researchers depend on measures of *trustworthiness* to judge the credibility or dependability of a study and its results. Drawing on the language of the quantitative tradition, Merriam (2001) redefines the terms “validity” and “reliability” to provide a basis for creating and measuring qualitative trustworthiness.

Merriam defines internal validity as a measure of how congruent research findings are with reality: “Do the findings capture what is really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring?” What is being observed in qualitative research, Merriam asserts, “are people’s constructions of reality—how they understand the world” (Merriam, 2001, p. 201). To provide internal validity, I utilized two member-checking strategies. First, I gave each of the ten members who participated in second interviews a transcript of their first interview, and I asked them to confirm that the transcripts accurately presented their words and their intended meanings. All confirmed that the transcripts were accurate. Two of the 12 participants did not attend second interviews, but I emailed them transcripts of their interviews and asked them for the same confirmation as the others. Neither responded. As I was drafting the results presented in Chapter Four, I sent all informants my interpretations by email. I asked them whether they understood my conclusions and whether my conclusions logically followed from what participants told me. I also invited them to send recommend revisions (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Six of the 12 participants responded to my emails; all affirmed that my conclusions were logical, and none of them suggested revisions.

External validity, as defined by Merriam, “is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 207). The question underlying this concern is whether it is possible to generalize from a single case. Merriam answers, “The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered” (p. 210). In the qualitative paradigm, this transfer must be made by readers or users of the



study who find patterns that explain their own experience or events in the world around them. I have presented a rich, thick description of the phenomenon, providing sufficient detail for readers to determine whether their situations match the research situation so that findings can be transferred (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1990; Merriam, 2001).

Finally, Merriam defines reliability as the extent to which findings can be replicated. This is problematic in the social sciences because human behavior is never static; there are many interpretations of what happens and no benchmark by which to measure reliability in the traditional sense. Rather than “demanding that outsiders get the same results,” I provided sufficient description to allow “outsiders” to concur that the results make sense: “the question...is not whether findings will be found again but *whether the results are consistent with the data collected*” (Merriam, 2001, p. 206). To provide this kind of reliability, I made explicit my assumptions and views on the group being studied in my journal to create an audit trail showing how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### *Introduction*

This chapter presents the findings of my study, *Negation and Affirmation: The Lived Experience of Non-Majority Students in a Community College Dual Enrollment Program*. By analyzing the transcripts of interviews with twelve participants through phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis unifying themes in the participants' lived experience, the structure of the experience, and the essence of the dual enrollment phenomenon, *Identity Clarification*, emerged.

Two categories of themes emerged from the analysis: *Themes of Negation* and *Themes of Affirmation*. The *Themes of Negation* are *Racism and Bias*, and *Mixed Messages*. The *Themes of Affirmation* are *Positive Expectations*, *Respect and Equity*, and *Confirmation*.

The *Themes of Negation* describe the participants' memories of interactions with important others, but especially the teachers and officials of the schools they attended before beginning their dual enrollment courses. These themes represent messages the participants received which, intended or not, had a potentially negative effect on the participants in their high school academic experience or in their aspirations for college attendance. *Racism and Bias* expresses messages which devalued the participants based upon their race or ethnicity and which had either a discouraging effect regarding the

participants' likelihood of academic success or the effect of distracting the participants from their studies and future goals. *Mixed Messages* expresses the contradictory messages received from family members' experiences, words, or actions which created an atmosphere of ambiguity or negativity about the value of college, or which presented the participants choices with the potential to guide them away from college pursuits.

The *Themes of Affirmation* describe the participants' interactions with significant, authoritative or valued others which had the effect of propelling students toward college-going goals or of sustaining college attendance after the participants arrived on a college campus. *Positive Expectations* expresses messages which predicted successful outcomes of college attendance or the messages received from the experiences of family members which encouraged college pursuits. *Respect and Equity* expresses the feeling of being valued, included, and welcomed by people within the college environment or by others outside the college environment which built self-confidence and self-esteem. Lastly, *Confirmation* expresses the messages which confirmed for participants that their motivations, short-term academic successes and academic relationships would sustain them in their continued participation and longer-term success in college. Each of the *Themes of Negation* and *Themes of Affirmation* carries with it secondary or supporting themes which will be explained as the major themes are explored.

The themes are expressed as often as possible in the words of the participants themselves to create a rich, textural description of the experience of students participating in a dual enrollment program. To help contextualize these stories and voices, the college all the participants attended for their dual enrollment courses is described, and brief biographies of each participant are presented. The biographies can not provide a

complete description of the participants' experiences and relationships, but they present the context of their lives preceding dual enrollment and during the experience. They are presented in random order, and readers should not presume that any particular participant's background is more significant to these findings; the commonalities among their experiences are in many cases self evident and in their totality present a background readers can use to more fully understand the participants' perceptions and experiences.

### *The College*

Diversity Community College serves a suburb of 350,000 residents near a large metropolitan city in the western United States. Located in what was once a predominantly White, middle class suburb, DCC and its surrounding communities have evolved in a few years' time to become one of the most racially and ethnically diverse cities of the greater metropolitan area. The nearby urban center, once dominated by low-income and non-majority populations, experienced an economic revitalization in recent years and a surge of re-urbanization; younger, White professionals and their families have moved nearer the city center with its trendy shopping districts, restaurants, and night life. More affordable housing can now be found in the community DCC serves which has attracted a growing non-majority and immigrant population. Nearly 100 world languages are spoken by children in the school district nearest DCC, and recent census bureau data indicate that a quarter of all residents in the area have a first language other than English. The demographic shift has been dramatic and swift, and DCC has made a high priority of welcoming and serving its newly-diverse student body.

### *Participants*

Hugo is an eighteen year old who enjoys conversation and freely shares his experiences, opinions, and feelings on a wide range of topics. He is one of eight children scattered across Central and North America. Hugo was born in Costa Rica and laughs when he explains that he is not Mexican as people often assume because of his name and his fluency in Spanish as well as English.

When he was in elementary and middle school, Hugo and his family moved often because of his father's military career. Spanish was his first and only language until he was five years old, but Hugo does not remember a time when he did not speak both Spanish and English. A significant and humorous memory from his elementary school days is arriving at a new school and being placed in a bilingual classroom. Most classroom activities were conducted in Spanish, and when his teacher and school administrators discovered he was bilingual, his parents received a congratulatory letter informing them that their son had learned to speak English. Later, when Hugo's parents enrolled him in middle school, they checked a box on the registration form indicating Spanish as Hugo's first language. An English literacy test was administered even though he grew up speaking the language.

As a high school student, Hugo had aspirations as a professional musician and record producer, and he planned to attend a nearby university to study music and recording arts. But Hugo changed his goals and is deciding on a different career direction because he is now married and has a four-month old baby. He and his wife live with her parents.

Hugo confesses difficulty balancing the competing priorities in his life. He feels a strong sense of responsibility to care for his young family and works hard to meet their financial needs with his job as a pharmacy technician. He feels fortunate to have the position which pays the best wage he can find with a high school diploma as his only credential. The competing priorities of work, family, and school combine to make his life barely manageable. The multiple demands are made even more difficult by the fact that he does not own a car and depends on public transportation. Hugo experienced his first college classes through dual enrollment at DCC.

Monica is seventeen, quiet and soft-spoken, often pausing and carefully measuring her words before answering questions. She lives with her mother and two younger brothers in a family that has always struggled financially. A few months ago, Monica's grandmother moved in to take care of the younger children, both in elementary school, but Monica feels a strong responsibility to take care of her little brothers and often helps her mother and grandmother by looking after them. Neither her father nor the fathers of her younger siblings have provided financial support to her mother.

Monica's mother was a teenager when she and her brothers were born, so her mother did not finish high school. Most people in Monica's extended family did not graduate from high school; one uncle and two cousins did. The rest dropped out, though some completed GED's. Monica's mother began college classes but attended for only a year. Monica is thus only the second person in her family to attend college, and she wants to be the family's first college graduate.

Monica says she has learned from the academic mistakes and financial struggles her family has traditionally faced. Her mother works long hours as a grocery store

manager and tells Monica that she feels she has a good life, but that she wishes for more for her children. Monica's mother tells her that she should not limit herself, and that she should pursue a career that is satisfying and financially rewarding. Accordingly, Monica has enrolled in her high school's academic and vocational programs, spending some of her school days at her home campus, other days at a vocational center studying cosmetology, and evenings taking dual enrollment college classes at DCC. Additionally, Monica works half-time as a restaurant hostess. She says "it's a lot to take on" but adds she is determined to live a different life than her parents.

Gwen is seventeen, speaks rapidly, and laughs nervously as she describes the numerous demands she feels have been placed upon her. Gwen feels pressured by the high academic standards of her high school and by her parents who expect her to match the performance of her older sister who is the family's first college graduate. Gwen also feels she must somehow compensate for the academic failings of her younger brother who dropped out of high school and ran away from home two years ago.

Gwen's parents emigrated from Vietnam in the late sixties and have held fast to their ethnic traditions and a network of Vietnamese family and friends. Neither of her parents attended college; Gwen feels that as a result her parents expect her to exceed their accomplishments. She also overhears the conversations of her parents and their friends as they compare the successes and failures of their children.

Gwen performs well in school because her parents demand it, but believes she will never fully rise to their expectations. She believes her parents expect her to be her high school's valedictorian which she sees as impossible. She took her first dual

enrollment classes at DCC in the fall semester of her high school senior year and plans to enroll again.

Sabine is an eighteen year old who speaks freely about her family and her experiences, laughs easily, and describes herself as energetic, outgoing, and optimistic. She lives with her mother and younger brother. The family has moved frequently, sometimes being evicted from apartments but always finding another place to live. Sabine does not remember it, but her mother recently told her that when she was small the family was homeless once and spent two nights in a public park. Despite the hardships and frequent moves, Sabine credits her mother with always finding a way to keep a roof over the family's heads.

Some of Sabine's best memories are of her elementary school years living in a large apartment complex filled with families and children. The apartments were for low income families, and many races and ethnicities were present, but Sabine does not remember thinking about money, race, or ethnicity: "There was every single color....There really wasn't a group that I knew of that I was a part of because they were all different races and ethnicities."

Throughout her childhood, Sabine recalls that most of the time her mother was away at work, so she and her older brother were often home without her. Sabine felt like the older sister because she had to clean and cook without her brother's help in addition to doing her homework. She describes her duties as taking care of the house and taking care of her mother when she was drunk. "I've always had to step up and be the leader" Sabine says, "and do what I had to do to help the family, to help my mom and my dad." Now, Sabine and her mother are waitresses in the same restaurant. Sabine is determined



to complete a college degree to escape the financial pressures with which she has always lived. She took her first dual enrollment class at DCC last fall.

Ernesto is eighteen, polite, friendly, and soft spoken. His soft-spoken delivery comes partly from speaking English as his second language. Ernesto, his parents, and his younger siblings emigrated from Baja, California, in 2000 when he was ten to “find a better life.” Ernesto’s parents own a small restaurant and work many hours to keep the business going. As a result, Ernesto often supervises his younger siblings in his parents’ absence.

Ernesto recalls having a difficult time learning English when his family moved to the U.S. The first elementary school he attended conducted classes in Spanish, and Ernesto was slow to learn a new language. Later, his family moved again, and Ernesto attended an elementary school where only English was spoken; there, he learned the language quickly and easily. Ernesto’s parents support his college aspirations. In Mexico, his mother attended high school; his father completed a college degree in engineering.

Four years ago, Ernesto was diagnosed with a serious illness and spent most of his high school career enduring exhausting treatments. Prior to the onset of his illness, Ernesto began to lose interest in school but his health problems inspired him to “be a better person” and work harder at his studies. He is proud of his academic success in high school, and he has been recognized on more than one occasion for his accomplishments. He began feeling well again only a few months before beginning his dual enrollment classes at DCC.

Rose is seventeen. Her mother was born in Thailand and was brought to the United States by Rose's aunt. Rose lives with her older siblings and her mother. Her uncle lives nearby, and she has an aunt who lives in the Midwest, but the rest of the family is still in Thailand. She says life was hard for her mother when Rose was small because she had another child from a previous relationship; her father didn't stay long after Rose was born. Rose believes that her father still lives in the United States, but neither she nor her family members talk to him. When Rose was eight, her mother got married again but neither Rose nor her siblings have gotten along well with their step father. Rose's family has moved often over the years, rarely living in neighborhoods with other Thai families but almost always living in areas with a racial and ethnic mix.

Though she was born in the U.S., Rose started out speaking Thai and struggled in school at first because her English language skills were poor. Eventually she took English language classes and began doing better. Other than the rough start, Rose has performed well as a student, especially when she takes "hands on" classes where she can teach herself and learn by doing.

No one in Rose's family has enjoyed academic or financial success. Rose's mother started classes at a technical college once but did not finish; she eventually took a job as a baggage handler at an airport, where she has worked her way up to a supervisory position. Rose's sister had a baby just after graduating from high school and hasn't attended college. Her brother was always ambivalent about school and once ran away from home. As a result of these circumstances, Rose feels pressure from her mother to perform well in school and succeed in college. Accordingly, Rose has been successful in

high school and now sees her dual enrollment classes at DCC as her first step toward a better life than the rest of her family members have lived.

Jason is eighteen. His parents moved to the local area shortly before he was born and divorced when Jason was ten. Since then, Jason has lived with his mother, and his father has lived on the East Coast. Financial hardships for Jason and his mother began when his parents divorced, and they have moved often, sometimes after being evicted. Nevertheless, Jason says his mother has always found a way to survive. He is especially grateful for his large extended family which lives nearby and has banded together to help one another in times of financial need.

As he grew up, Jason was surrounded by people of different races and ethnicities. His father is Black and had many Black friends. His mother, also Black, had many White friends and one of his uncles married a Hispanic. Jason says he has always been comfortable around a variety of people.

Recalling his school experience, Jason says he was never a trouble maker so he did not experience the difficulties he observed in many of his classmates. But around the seventh grade school began to seem too easy; he noticed he didn't have to take notes to pass tests, and he started losing interest. Later, when school was more challenging again, he found himself falling behind. Eventually he dropped out of high school, but he returned to an alternative school where he discovered he was only a few credits away from meeting his graduation requirements. A school counselor encouraged him to take dual enrollment classes at DCC to simultaneously fulfill his high school graduation requirements and get started in college.

Stuart is seventeen and has a family history of academic success. His mother came to the United States from Hong Kong to attend college and later graduated and became a nurse. During college, she met Stuart's father who graduated with a degree in chemistry from an elite West Coast university and went on to a career as an Air Force pilot. The Air Force took Stuart's parents to Japan where Stuart was born.

While he only remembers living in the United States, Stuart feels a connection to Chinese culture because his parents still speak Chinese and observe Chinese traditions. They speak Chinese at home sometimes, and Stuart practices his Chinese by speaking with his aunt who speaks no English. Stuart's parents tell their children stories about growing up in Hong Kong, take them shopping at Chinese stores, and dining at Chinese restaurants.

Stuart recalls a strong family orientation throughout his childhood and adolescence. The family enjoyed many outings and out-of-state vacations. Stuart started first grade in a neighborhood school, was later home schooled, and at some point during his elementary years was enrolled in an online school where he will soon complete his high school graduation requirements. Whenever he gets stuck on his homework, Stuart can depend on help from his parents or his older sister. His sister took dual enrollment classes before she graduated from high school which inspired Stuart to do the same. He recently completed his first college chemistry class through dual enrollment at DCC.

Isaac is eighteen, outgoing, and a successful high school athlete who plans to play college football. He has attended three different high schools in the metropolitan area but has spent the last two years in a predominantly Black high school where he is the senior

class president. Isaac's younger sister attends the same high school, and she intends to follow her brother into dual enrollment classes at DCC.

Isaac's mother attended beauty college and once operated her own salon. His father attended college in a neighboring state on a football scholarship and now owns a small defense contracting company where Isaac works during the summer.

Isaac describes his grades as good overall though not as good as his parents would like. He's had mostly B's and C's and some D's but says his extracurricular activities help keep his grades up. Isaac says his parents are proud of his desire to try college classes, but they are also watching his performance in dual enrollment at DCC to see whether he is truly ready to move away from home to attend college. He says the DCC classes are a chance to find out whether he really wants to go to college without the expense and risk of starting out at a university.

Katina is seventeen, quiet, and thoughtful when she speaks. The most important feature of Katina's and her family's life is their religious commitment. Her parents are the pastors of a church they started a few months ago, and Katina is involved in the ministry, singing and sometimes performing in a praise dance group. The moral and ethnical standards which her parents have taught her have at times made her uncomfortable in social situations where her peers did things with which she disagreed, but she believes those standards have given her a guide for living. As her grandparents and parents did, she intends to raise her children in the church.

Katina recalls a multi-ethnic and multi-racial upbringing. When she was small, her family was close to a Hispanic family that lived in the same apartment building.

Katina's mother had a White friend who was married to a Black man. She believes these experiences have allowed her to view people without regard for their race or ethnicity.

Katina's parents married when they were 18 years old and moved to the local area. Her mother attended a business college for a short time; her father has never attended college at all. She describes her father as a good provider; if ever the family was in need, he was able to do what he needed to provide for the family. Katina has three siblings including two older sisters, one of whom now attends a state university. Besides Katina and her sister, no one else in the family has attended college. Dual enrollment classes at DCC are her first step toward a degree.

Amy is seventeen, energetic, talkative, and eager to tell her family's story. Her parents are Chinese speakers from Vietnam who came to the United States during the Vietnam War. Amy is an only child, and her parents have always been attentive, especially to her schooling; she had tutors beginning in elementary school.

Amy's extended family lives nearby, but Amy did not grow up surrounded by other Asians, Chinese or Vietnamese; her friends have always been of different races and ethnicities. In fact, she does not consider herself a minority because she does all the same things her peers do including attending college. Amy has a difficult time explaining her ethnicity because she and her parents speak Chinese but consider Vietnam home, and her parents keep alive some Vietnamese traditions. Amy has heard that students are more successful in college if they take harder classes, so she has enrolled in Advanced Placement courses in high school and dual enrollment classes at DCC.

Sierra is an eighteen year old whose family moved from California three years ago. Less expensive housing drew her parents to the area, and Sierra remembers the

move as a fresh start for the family: for her, a new school and different friends. Sierra helps her parents take care of her younger siblings and her parents remind her that she must be a positive role model for them. She and the younger children often do their homework together, and she helps the younger ones, especially with math.

Sierra's high school was populated mostly by Black and Hispanic students. It was a welcomed change from her old school in California where the atmosphere was dominated by racial tension. Like her old school, students at her new school grouped themselves by race and ethnicity, but she liked her new school because it was acceptable to talk to students outside her own group.

There is no history of academic success or college attendance in Sierra's family. Both of her parents dropped out of school in Mexico, her father leaving school at the age of nine because his parents couldn't afford books. When he did go to school, math was his favorite subject, and it is Sierra's favorite now. The fact that her father had to leave school as a child motivates Sierra, and over the years he has encouraged her to stay in school, telling her she'll regret it if she doesn't. She sees this regret in her cousins who have families and children but do not have stable jobs and struggle financially. As Sierra explains, "The way I see it is if you want to get somewhere in life you need to go through education." Dual enrollment at DCC is her first step.

The biographies presented here are intended to give a sense of the participants' lives and personalities and to provide a context for examining their experience of dual enrollment. The upcoming themes are presented through their voices. The themes reflect the commonalities among the participants' experiences and are presented with their

accompanying supporting themes to add texture and dimension to the descriptions. The supporting themes are explained as they arise.

### *Racism and Bias*

The theme *Racism and Bias* expresses negative messages participants received related directly to their race or ethnicity. The supporting themes of *High School Peers* and *High School Personnel* reflect the most common sources of the messages. I chose the name *Racism and Bias* to express as directly as possible the nature of the messages participants received. Participants experienced discriminatory messages that varied in intensity and reference to race and ethnicity. At best, the words and actions of *High School Peers* and *High School Personnel* combined to create a social context characterized by a consciousness of racial and ethnic difference; at worst, peers and school personnel used direct, discriminatory language.

Nearly all of the participants in this study reported experiencing racial and ethnic bias among their high school peers as significant in their high school experience. Minimally, the participants described an environment of racial and ethnic consciousness as the context of their social and academic interactions:

I mean you hear it all the time. That's what people talk about. When you talk about somebody, it's they're Mexican, they're White or they're Black or they're this or they're that. You hear it everywhere.—Sabine

It's mostly just race-wise. Like there are Black kids over here, and then the Asians are over here, and the Mexicans are over here....Usually when they look at Asians they think of Asians as the same thing like either Chinese or Vietnamese or Japanese. When I say I'm Thai, a lot of people think Taiwanese or Taiwan.—Rose

Racial and ethnic bias consistently was criticized by the participants who said they judged others based on individual characteristics rather than membership in a particular



group. As Amy summarized, “I just think they’re being stupid and immature. It doesn’t faze me, you know? You can have your thoughts about whatever, but I don’t really care, you know?” Nevertheless, in the context of racial and ethnic awareness and separation, students’ words and actions were reported as negative and disrespectful:

There are some people who disrespect others because of their race, and that has happened to me every now and then.—Monica

This was the first time I knew that made a difference to me, and there was this group of Black girls and they didn’t like me. I don’t know why they didn’t like me, but they didn’t....That’s where it kicked in to me that there’s such a thing as racism and all that, because she’s like, you little Mexican, and I was like what? I never really thought of myself as a Mexican—you know Hispanic or something like that, but I never really thought of it that way.—Sabine

While experiences such as these did not seem especially disturbing, bias expressed by high school peers prompted some participants to feel the need to identify themselves with a group to feel included or to avoid rejection:

I had to find a group that would be similar to my background, like my color and things like that, because I didn’t really think I fit with others....It just seems difficult to join other groups that are not your color because you see at school that there’s almost like different groups arranged by color.—Ernesto

Like the Mexicans would hang out with the Mexicans....It was like if you hang out with somebody else they automatically kind of kicked you out of a certain group.—Sierra

Participants stated that their pursuit of dual enrollment was motivated in part by proving to others, especially teachers, administrators and student peers, that they did not fit the stereotypes associated with their ethnicity, and that success was possible despite negative assumptions to the contrary.

Statements of racism and bias from school personnel in the high school environment included indirect racial references, attempts at humor, and stated

assumptions of future failure. Gwen recalled this comment, ostensibly presented as humorous, which seemed nearly to take the form of a compliment:

In one of my classes, there are only three Asians and we're the only ones with A's. And even our teacher decided to point it out when she was trying to teach us to compare and contrast. She was like okay, I don't mean to be stereotypical, but someone tell me why Gwen and Janine have A's. And guess what—they're Asian.

Gwen remembered that students laughed when they heard this “because they know it's true.” But as Stuart pointed out, assumptions about Asian students' academic skill can be inaccurate. Katina said she rarely experienced biased treatment, except

always being asked like are you sure you can pay for this? Other than that, nothing.... You know, like field trips at school, teachers, you know, if it costs like ten dollars. You know, are you sure you can pay for it? If you're not able to we'll help you out or whatever.

But Katina also remembered other subtle instances of racial bias:

I'm always asked if I need a little extra help. I don't know, sometimes I think it's just because those teachers are trying to make sure they don't give me a reason to say you're treating me this way because I'm Black. I think that's why.

Sabine also remembered a subtle experience she had not reflected upon until being interviewed:

Ha! I bet you that one teacher—she has background of being all over the world and country and stuff like that about different races and ethnicities. She's been around forever and it's like I was the only one in the classroom she argued with.... I don't know what it was. I honestly I don't know if it was because I was Hispanic or that kind of thing, I really don't. But she didn't argue with anybody else.

In and of themselves, these experiences did not seem especially damaging for participants, but they did remind them of the differences between themselves and others that they described as unfounded “opinions.”

Other experiences of *Racism and Bias* focused on the feeling of being unfairly categorized as students who might cause trouble or who might be disengaged from academic pursuits. Ernesto thought high school personnel were making unfair assumptions:

You're seen with people who look like you and people think that you're the same as them in actions and stuff, but maybe you're not; you're different than others. Maybe you're a better person even though you're the same color as somebody else, or maybe the opposite. Maybe you're bad and the others are good, and people start thinking that the whole group is like bad or something.

Ernesto gave the example of witnessing a fight between two students in his high school and finding himself implicated along with some of his classmates:

It was a Black person and a Hispanic person, and at the end they ended up gathering everybody that was around there and was that certain color and that other certain color into the big gym, trying to make them both understand that they shouldn't be fighting. But they just picked out those two certain groups and nobody else there....That felt intimidating because the whole school knew something was going on between two races and they were getting disciplined.

Jason, who also witnessed fights at his high school, also found himself involved in subsequent actions by school administrators:

I had witnessed a fight and they said somebody had a gun or something like that, and they told me that they searched my locker....Always like I could tell it was being searched, because sometimes I would come and it would be cracked open. And like when I would go out for lunch or something, I would leave like my CD players and all types of stuff in my locker, and none of that would be missing, so I knew somebody couldn't have been just breaking into my locker.

Participants stated that the broad generalizations felt unfair and discouraging. Family members supported them at home, encouraged them, and gave them strategies for handling situations in which their race or ethnicity was negatively portrayed, but the discouraging effects were clear. Jason recalled feeling ready for the high school day when he left home in the morning, but upon arriving at school began wondering how

much more discouragement he could take, and whether it might be better just to drop out of school. He reported the most egregious incident of racism in this study:

I remember having a gym teacher think, it might have been at [name of high school], I guess I was doing sad pushups or something, and he was like you're going to learn how to do better push ups when you go to jail. And I was like that was unnecessary. That was like so uncalled for....That just made me feel like that was the stereotype that you automatically say I'm going to jail. Like that's what you see in my future is jail.

Like Katina, Sabine and Ernesto, Jason strongly felt the effect of unfair or inaccurate assumptions and the need to succeed academically to overcome them.

### *Mixed Messages*

*Mixed Messages* expresses the theme of the wide array of messages participants received from their families about education in general and college in particular. I chose the name *Mixed Messages* to express the range of simultaneous and contradictory messages presented to participants by their family members as often in their choices regarding education as in their actual words. The messages were mildly encouraging at best and discouraging at worst and included expressions of a lack of interest in education, questions about the value of college, and conflicts between school and family responsibilities. The supporting theme, *Family Responsibilities*, presents conflicts between participants' academic goals and family needs. Participants never expressed that they had to choose school over family or vice versa (later analysis will show high levels of family support), but they did feel stress as a result of balancing family circumstances with doing well in school. The most evident supporting theme, *Family Academic Priorities*, focuses on historic family choices to pursue or complete formal education at the high school or college level. Lastly, *Family Academic Failure* expresses common family histories among the participants, especially the failure to finish formal schooling.

The *Family Responsibilities* theme expresses the pressures and conflicts participants felt as their family lives merged with their lives as college students. Participants' family members did not urge them to quit college, but family members did depend on them in significant ways. The responsibilities were common to all students with families, and the combination of responsibilities and pressures felt by the participants (who were simultaneously attending high school, college, and working while living at home) was a significant factor that made college harder than it would have been without the constant and immediate presence of their families. It is important to remember that the participants in this study are not teenagers on a university campus free from the restraints and responsibilities of home, but high school students working and attending a community college while still participating in their family's lives.

Hugo's first semester of college was positive in many ways, but the challenges of his family and job made success in school extremely difficult:

I'm trying to carry on being a full-time student, a full-time worker, and a full-time family person....It's been a lot harder for me than just your average student which by no means am I making excuses you know because I know it's my fault, but it's definitely been pretty hard.

At the time of his interview, Hugo was anticipating grades of D or F in two of his college classes.

Monica, who lives with her mother and grandmother, is expected to help care for her two younger brothers for whom she is an important role model. In addition to attending her last year of high school and attending her first college classes, Monica works twenty hours per week. Financial pressures are great; the fathers of her brothers do not help support the family. Monica observes her mother's struggle and tries to lighten the load: "My mom is so frustrated and just overwhelmed and I try to fix

everything and it's not working." Additionally, Monica's aunt, her mother's sister, also attends DCC and asks for Monica's help with her assignments:

She's just like, I need your help with this class and all this, and you're still in school so you can help me. I'm like, I'm trying to do my own classes, too. I'm sorry. I try to help her and it's worked, but I'm like I can't do this anymore....I really try to balance out. Sometimes I'm like okay, just go away. I'm sorry. I can't do this anymore.

Sierra's and Ernesto's experiences are similar. Sierra's parents expect her to be a positive role model and to help her younger brothers and sisters with their homework.

She defines success in school as success for her siblings as well as herself:

It's good just because we know, okay, I could help you with this, you could help her with that, and you could even help somebody else....We all try helping out our little brother because he's the youngest one. He's nine. But we still try. And I know right now his teacher says he's doing really well. And we like to know that we're actually doing a good job in helping him, because whenever we know we are actually understanding this, we're helping him in a good way. We're all really connected.

Ernesto felt two responsibilities—performing well in school and taking care of his younger brother and sister—that were of equal importance:

I had to help my family and almost raise my brothers because both of my parents they were always working. So I had to take responsibility for my two younger brothers and sister....I felt like it was like both the same: I had to keep up at school and take care of them and make sure I was doing both.

Family responsibilities placed significant demands on participants' time and energy, but as will be shown later, family members were also a key source of encouragement.

The most important feature of the *Family Academic Priorities* theme is the ambiguity family members of the participants expressed, in words and actions, about the value of participating in formal education or supporting a family member attending college. Simply stated, family members of many participants in the study did not consider education a priority or were ambivalent about its value:

My brother started taking a couple classes here, and he decided college wasn't for him. So he's just kind of doing his thing, I guess you could say. You know, working....My other older brother, he's nineteen, he joined the Peace Corps....so I don't know if he has any plans on going to college at all....My dad right out of high school went to the Marine Corps. My grandparents never talked to him about college so he never really found it necessary.—Hugo

My brother doesn't see education as a priority. He doesn't really care about school....My music class—my brother loves music but I don't talk to him about school because he doesn't care. [My dad] is like thinking college is a negative thing because he doesn't see it the way I see it. He doesn't see it as a learning experience. He sees it as an experience to drink and party and do all that because that's how he knows it. —Sabine

Perhaps the most striking example of ambiguous messages about school is Jason's experience:

When I told everybody that I wasn't going to graduate [from high school] last year, no one seemed surprised, so I didn't know. It was kind of weird—like everybody kind of expected it. It was like a lot of pressure but low expectations. I don't know how to say it, but it's like they don't expect you to [graduate from high school], but it would be great if you could, you know? I don't know. It's kind of hard to explain. It's kind of like a contradiction.

A similar mixed message about the value of college came from the school and college attendance patterns of the participants' family members. Both of Stuart's parents attended college, so the clear message to Stuart from the beginning was that he and his sister would attend college. But for Rose, Amy, Hugo, Ernesto, Isaac, Monica and Katina only one parent attended, and most members of their extended families did not attend college at all. Many left formal education before graduating from high school. For Jason, Gwen, Sabine and Sierra, neither parent attended.

One result of the context of mixed positive and negative messages, attendance, non-attendance and academic failure by family members was for participants to adopt attitudes similar to their parents or peers. Monica recalled her response to high school teachers and counselors who pushed her to consider college attendance: "I always was

like, why? You know in my family why does it matter?" Ernesto's response was similar: "I think I was like in another world, thinking about other stuff and not putting education into my thoughts." A more common response among participants was to pursue college attendance but to feel as if their experience was not understood by their family members. Monica felt her attendance was supported by her family, but said

I don't think they understand it either. It's like when I'm trying to do homework, and I'm just overwhelmed they go, oh, you'll be fine. I know I'll be fine, but oh my gosh, I have finals this week, and I have this and this and they're like oh, well, just study. But sometimes it's like oh, okay, thanks.

Monica said her family members don't know how much time and energy college takes, especially when working while attending high school. Gwen expressed the same frustration Monica felt. She said her parents were insistent about good grades but lacked the experience to know what is necessary to succeed in school. Gwen said that if they understood,

it would make things so much easier instead of getting yelled at and lectured. Why are your grades dropping? It's a hard class. What does this weighted mean? It means it goes up a letter grade. And it would just be easier if they understood that this B should be an A because it's weighted, and if they knew that, they wouldn't be yelling at me because it's actually an A and not a B. They never went to college. They don't know what that's like.

Sabine's experience is similar. No one at home truly knows how she feels about college either because they have not experienced it or have not valued it:

My mom's been through school, but she never really liked school just like my brother. My dad never finished high school, so he doesn't understand anything that I have to talk about school, so it's totally different. I can't go home and talk about school really unless it's about my friends or what happened that day. So home and school's totally a different world. I go home sometimes and I can't even do my homework because it's just not the environment I'm used to doing work in. I go home and I sit there at the kitchen table, and I'm like I really don't feel like doing this, or I'm not in the mood to do it. But when I'm at school and I'm sitting there, I'll do homework all day if you want me to.



A very significant component of the participants' experiences of their families' academic priorities is a common history of academic failure among parents, siblings, and extended family. As Ernesto simply stated, "Not very many have gone to college or even finished high school." For Sierra, neither parent attended high school "and my dad tells me that at age nine he started working." Other examples reach across generations:

I guess the younger generation, like a couple of my cousins who are a few years older than me, finally graduated high school, but they're pretty much the only ones....I have one other uncle who graduated high school, but the rest got their GED or didn't finish. My mom went for maybe a year, but she couldn't finish.—Monica

My mom started college. She never finished. My dad, I don't think he ever graduated high school....I don't think either one of my grandparents [on my dad's side] ever graduated.—Sabine

Jason tells a similar story. If he graduates from high school, he estimates he will be the first in his family in ten years:

Maybe longer than that because the last cousin I can remember graduating is my cousin Jack and he's about 32 now, so it might have been that's when he graduated from college. But as far as high school graduation, the only one I could think of is my cousin Sterling.

Like Ernesto, Jason stated that there are few college educated people in his family. He has an older cousin who attended college, but he doesn't see him very often. Jason said the lack of college experience in his family left him with no first hand information about college resulting in making his own (inaccurate) assumptions about college.

### *Positive Expectations*

The theme of *Positive Expectations* expresses predicted success for participants' current and future academic pursuits. The supporting themes related to *Positive Expectations* are *Family Members* and *Teachers and Counselors*. I named this theme *Positive Expectations* to give a sense of the optimism that characterized the participants'

outlook, especially as it contrasted with the pessimistic responses it would be reasonable to expect given the earlier negative predictions, incidents of bias and racism, and ambiguity about the value of education.

*Family Members* were influential in motivating participants. This supporting theme could also be called *Failure as Motivation* because it expresses the important effect that family academic failures had on participants. Faced with a long history of failure, it would be reasonable for participants to conclude that they would not succeed if family members had not. Instead, participants found inspiration in the stories of failure by taking on the challenge of being the first in the family to attempt college (or even graduate from high school), all with strong family support. Academic failure, as described in the participants' stories, is sometimes the result of a devaluing of school, but it is also the result of circumstances beyond family members' control such as poverty or racial discrimination. Lastly, *Failure as Motivation* is broad enough to encompass not only academic shortcomings but professional and financial ones as well. Several of the participants experienced financial stress in their families and observed it widely in their extended families. But uniformly, participants whose families experienced the least academic success and most financial stress found motivation in the failures they observed. Sabine expressed the feelings of most participants in stark, pragmatic terms:

If I don't complete school....then I'm not going to go anywhere. And I learned that because my dad didn't complete school and didn't go anywhere. My grandparents didn't complete school and didn't go anywhere.

Personal, immediate family experiences of academic and financial shortcomings were also observed in extended families struggling with the same difficulties as generations before them. Some participants just wanted to avoid the mistakes they had seen:

I've seen my cousins. Now they're regretting not finishing college. Now they have their kids, and they're trying to find a stable job, and they can't because they don't have even their basic degree. And I know I don't want to go through that whenever I get older.—Sierra

My sister pushed me, too because she had a baby right after high school and everything, and she didn't want that for me. Even though she's really happy with her baby and her husband now, she thinks I should get more into school so I try harder because of them.—Rose

My mom started school and she never finished, and so it made me want—gave me the drive to understand that I need that, because without that she couldn't go any further. She stopped right there with her education. She couldn't get any higher in any kind of rank....So that made me know that I wanted to do something better with my life. I wanted to have good grades.—Sabine

Monica summarized the academic failures of most of her extended family members and saw in their experiences the connection to a happier life:

They're kind of really unhappy with where they're at. And I think that education builds your career and with a career you can do something you love. And I don't think you necessarily need a career and to make a bunch of money to be happy but I think you should do something that you really enjoy. And I think with college you can know what you need to know to do what you want. And just seeing how unhappy and upset and frustrated they are made me want to say okay, if that's the path they took and they don't like it let me try something else.

Others seemed to want to finish the tasks their parents had begun, or take advantage of opportunities their parents never had:

I know they didn't have a chance to take a college class, so since I did have a chance I'm going to take it, you know? Since, you know, it'll help me, so do it. Like no pain, no gain. I don't know how, just the harder you work the more you're going to gain kind of thing.—Amy

My mom was younger when she had all of us. So like she didn't finish high school, and a lot of my family didn't. Most of them got their GED. So this was a big opportunity for me to take it a little bit further and pretty much do what they couldn't or didn't have the opportunity to do.—Monica

The stories of family members' failures and dreams deferred were not the only source of inspiration for the participants in this study. Motivation to succeed in high

school and pursue college also came from family members' words of encouragement and their expectation that their students would—even must—succeed. In a few cases, parents gave participants a caring, supportive form of encouragement:

[My mom said] just be willing to do what you want to do and don't limit yourself. And that's what I've heard is don't limit yourself. And that makes sense.—Monica

They had always wanted me to do well in school and they saw that I was doing well at school, so they were always telling me to keep doing well, and they always wanted me to stay in school.—Ernesto

It's been my dad more, but my mom also says, oh well, you should keep going to school. So as soon as I got here my dad would take me to school, drop me off, and so since it was my dad taking me to school I kind of felt more support from him because he would always say, whatever you need to keep going to school you can count on me for it.—Sierra

My parents, they have high expectations.—Stuart

My dad's been pushing me to go to college, even when he wasn't like physically around he was still pushing me to go to college. And my mom she tells me stay in school. My mom's like on my back, but I appreciate it.—Jason

Supportive messages such as these had a significant effect on participants who said they were thankful for the encouragement or knew their families would always be with them. But participants also experienced support in the form of high expectations and the pressure to succeed:

I notice that my parents are more like, you have to do this harder class and you have to do this and you have to do well....I don't know, since they came from like another place they expect me to do better and outshine them....They want me to do better than they did.—Amy

Oh, my mom. Like just she always pushed it. You need to do well in school. You need to do this. And when I was in elementary school it freaked me out. I was like, oh my gosh, I always have to have A's. I need to do really, really good, and I need to pay attention and I need to do this. And after a while it's like ah, she was right.—Monica

It's always been you're going to college. You know, it was never anything other than you're going to college. You're going to middle school, you're going to high school, you're going to college. That's always how it's been presented to me.—  
Isaac

Gwen's mother never went to elementary school, and her father finished high school in Vietnam, but neither completed further formal education. Their expectations of Gwen are high for several reasons:

My sister graduated, but she really wasn't the best student. My brother dropped out in high school, so they're expecting me to be the shining star of the family, be the valedictorian and everything....It's again that pressure thing. You're going to be the best. It's the fear of, you know, failing....It's just a lot of pressure. It's pretty much saying save the world for us.

Rose's mother, who went to a technical college briefly but did not graduate, combined encouragement with an insistence upon success:

When I start getting lazy with school, like I'm not trying as hard, then my mom gets kind of disappointed in me because she wants so much for me....It's kind of pressure, because the way she puts it, I'm her only hope now, that I need to go to college and I need to do all this stuff, so it's all this pressure saying that I have to accomplish all this stuff because no one else could.

Likewise, Katina's mother maintained a combination of encouragement and seriousness about school:

Education was pushed a lot. None of us have ever been a failure in school...because you know she wasn't playing around. We had to do our homework. We came home from school we had to do our homework. We had to study. For parent-teacher conferences, she was always there.

Jason summarized the feelings of several participants who knew school was harder for them because of their non-majority status, but that it helped to have family members who helped them develop the strategies to move beyond racism and bias:

I guess you have a stereotype about yourself that life is going to be harder for you, that you can't be regular—you have to exceed the challenge....My grandpa's old. He lived back in the segregation days. And this is what he always told me: you can't be with the pack. You have to be ahead of everybody. You have to be the best whatever you do. So I don't know, I guess that just kind of stuck with me.

Another source of positive expectations for the participants was teachers and counselors. Three participants credited teachers and counselors with “pushing” college (Monica, Hugo, Stuart), two reported being assured they could succeed if they worked hard (Jason, Ernesto), and one said counselors explained the steps of college applications (Ernesto). Three participants (Katina, Sabine, Monica) reported receiving emotional support from teachers who listened to them and boosted their self-esteem.

### *Respect and Equity*

I chose *Respect and Equity* as the name for this theme partially because *respect* was a term that appeared naturally in the comments of several participants as they described their dual enrollment experience, and partially because *respect* is a broad enough term to encompass multiple experiences participants had while attending college through dual enrollment. In clear contrast to their previous experiences of disrespect, participants experienced multiple forms of respect from *college faculty* and *family members*. I chose the term *Equity* because it best describes participants’ experience in the dual enrollment classroom in which they were identified less as individuals or members of non-majority groups and more as students indistinguishable from their college peers. They also experienced equitable grading of their academic work by college faculty members.

One of the greatest contrasts participants described when comparing their experience of dual enrollment with their prior school experiences was in their interactions with *college faculty* members. As noted earlier in the theme *Racism and Bias*, previous high school teachers and administrators expressed low expectations, predicted a college experience participants found frightening, and even communicated messages of racial

and ethnic bias. Participants' experience of college faculty was markedly different; they perceived college faculty as unbiased in their interactions with students and in their assessment of students' academic performance. Equitable treatment and the absence of negative assumptions about students by faculty were influential parts of participants' dual enrollment experience.

Several participants confessed the fear that they would be treated differently from other students on a college campus because they were still enrolled in high school. They were genuinely surprised that they were treated the same as their college peers:

They didn't change the way they treated me there. It's just like oh, my gosh, you're still in high school.—Monica

I wasn't sure what to expect, because I wasn't sure how professors would act if they would treat me differently since I'm in high school. But my professors didn't seem to really notice.—Gwen

Participants described college faculty members treating them as peer adults rather than adolescents to be monitored and controlled:

I feel more comfortable in a college class now than in a high school class because I can learn better for one. I get more respect. I mean it just makes a huge difference. And I love it. I love college. I love coming here because the teachers give you respect like they would an adult.—Sabine

If I talk in my high school classes, teachers will stop and call me out and go shhhh. And if I do that in college I just feel like I'm an immature child. My personality changes as well. I just try to be more respectful toward my professors than I do at school.—Gwen

In addition to treatment as adults, participants were encouraged by faculty members' evaluation of their academic performance. Isaac felt that college faculty members evaluated him based on standards equally applied to all students in the class:

They didn't necessarily ease the academic load. Like never once did I receive an assignment that was different from anybody else in the class. Like I was expected

to do the work that the college students were doing and so forth and so on. So that was another cool thing.

The equity Isaac described was expressed by many participants who also experienced a sense of objectivity—almost anonymity—in the way college faculty members interacted with them. Sabine contrasted the subjective and familiar relationships with high school teachers to the less-personal, more objective relationships with college faculty:

[In college] you don't get to know the teachers personally....In high school, you're in the class for two hours every day, and you get to know them personally. And you become friends or enemies. Here, there's only one thing they have to do. They expect to teach you. If you don't want to learn it, that's your control. They can't assume anything because all they expect is to teach you and you make your own decisions. So I don't think any of my postsecondary schools have really thought much about me.

The relative anonymity of the college classroom, combined with the experience of equity in individual treatment, expectations, and grading, resulted in a feeling of respect that participants found surprising and motivating.

Participants' experience of being treated like their peers in the college classroom also stands in an interesting contrast to their expressed desire to be recognized as successful individuals outside the classroom. All participants found that the recognition of their individual accomplishments by *family members* was encouraging and rewarding. Sabine found new respect from some family members and enjoyed the accolades of people outside her family when her mother shared the news of her daughter's college attendance:

I have more respect from my brother which I didn't have before; let's just put it that way. Because he realizes that I'm trying to do something for myself....He never really paid attention until I'm trying to do something now....It just makes a big difference, and even at work it's the same way. My mom, she goes and brags to everybody, so the next thing you know, they come around the corner, oh, so you're a college student, too? You get more respect because you're doing well.



Isaac also said he felt a new respect from family members when they discovered that he was truly ready for college. His success in meeting the challenge posed by his parents had a multiplying effect:

My parents are very proud that I was doing the dual credit system because it was their way of saying this is college. Let's see if you can make it in college....[I gained] confidence in the way you know other people looked at me: peers, teachers, parents, aunts, uncles, friends' parents, everything. That was the main thing that changed. The family side, my family thought it was the greatest thing you know like wow, you're in high school taking college classes like yeah, that's our baby and that kind of thing.

Like Sabine and Isaac, Ernesto found a vision of his future in his family's recognition of his college attendance and success:

Well, family members think I'm a good person and like exceeding in life because I'm going to college. Not very many [members of my family] have gone to college or even finished high school, so when they see that I'm going to college they really see that I'm exceeding in life, and that I'm going to be a great person.

### *Confirmation*

I chose the term *Confirmation* for this theme because it expresses a contrast to the participants' earlier experiences of *negation*, and because it expresses the confirming sense participants had arriving at and succeeding in college. It is also unlike a term such as *accomplishment* with its connotation of a single point or moment of achievement; *Confirmation* helps express the abilities and motivations participants had all along that were confirmed through their journeys which began with negative expectations, bias, and ambiguity. The supporting themes of *Intrinsic Motivation*, *Peer Status*, *Success Realized*, and *Role Modeling* will be defined and explored as the data is presented.

The supporting theme of *Intrinsic Motivation* captures participants' discovery of their own reasons for pursuing college attendance and success. I chose *Intrinsic Motivation* as the name for this theme because it signifies participants' decision to attend

college for personally meaningful reasons rather than pursuing it in response to extrinsic factors such as parental expectations or school officials' prompting. While there were slight variations between participants and some presented more complex explanations than others, all participants described either having intrinsic motivations throughout their school careers, or discovering them in the context of their dual enrollment studies.

Monica said she had "always really cared about school" and had been "pretty much an 'A' student the whole way through." Even before she knew about dual enrollment, she was a determined student who was interested in school:

I was like okay, you know, because I've always known I wanted to go to college. I know that's what I want to do. And no matter what, I'm going to get through it somehow.... I've always been the strong one in my family.

Even though she felt she had always possessed a strong commitment to school, Monica found inspiration and motivation in her dual enrollment experience. In high school, she felt as though much of the responsibility for learning lay with her teachers and their constant promptings and reminders. In college, Monica discovered she was responsible for her studies, a shift in responsibility she found motivating:

I like that because when you have that you need to do it for you. Not because you're getting a grade. Like in college, you focus on it because you need to learn it or you want to learn it. And then in high school it's just because this is due.

Ernesto's experience was similar. Like Monica, Ernesto remembered that his high school teachers created an environment in which students achieved what they did for their teachers rather than for themselves. The shift in responsibility clarified for Ernesto the source of his motivation:

In college, since you're not being reminded about things, you're doing them because you want to get a good grade. But in high school you do them because teachers are expecting you to do them and they're reminding you and giving you warnings for due dates. But in college they don't give us warnings or anything. I

feel like if I do the work I'm doing it because I like to do it, or I want to do well in that class.

Isaac did not feel that his teachers had taken as much of the responsibility for his learning, but he admitted that his academic achievement in high school was partly motivated by maintaining his athletic eligibility. Separated from the context of high school sports, Isaac also discovered personal motivations:

To be able to say I'm going to college because I want to do to college and I can do college was good for me. Plus, I don't want to have to go to college and spend thousands and thousands of dollars a year to say oh, this isn't for me.

Amy, who always felt pressure from her parents to perform well in school, initially stated that she participated in dual enrollment to prove to her parents that she was capable of succeeding in college. But in the context of college studies through dual enrollment, Amy discovered that an equally powerful personal motivation was to accomplish more than her peers and to distinguish herself from them:

I don't know how to explain this. I just have to do better than people, you know, this kind of thing. I have to take better classes, I have to take honors and AP and all that stuff....I just don't want to be like one of those stupid teenagers who's like oh, I wish I hadn't done that when I was a freshman....I think more ahead of time than just for the moment, not like I'm just going to have fun right now, I don't care what happens later, and then later I'm like, oh, wish I hadn't done that, you know? I just don't want to make those mistakes. Those are stupid, you know?

Katina did not begin dual enrollment studies to avoid the errors of her high school peers; she started dual enrollment to find out whether she really wanted to go to college. At first, she worked hard in her dual enrollment classes out of a sense of obligation to finish what she had begun, describing it as "something I got myself into....I know it's going to be challenging but I'm going to. I have to." But as she continued the classes, she discovered that there was more than an obligation that kept her in college; the expectation that she "had" to continue was eventually replaced by a desire to "not be mediocre, to be

different and do something not a lot of people have done.” Like other participants, Katina’s discovery of personal, intrinsic motivation propelled her forward in her studies and eventually motivated her to act as a role model for other female non-majority students.

The discovery of personal motivation and the acceptance of individual responsibility were significant encouraging experiences for participants. But participants also experienced a sense of confirmation when their intrinsic motivations were supported by attending classes with equally motivated, like-minded students. They also experienced support when they discovered that they were more like their college peers than they expected. The theme *Peer Status* describes participants’ discovery that, despite expectations to the contrary, there were others like them in college with a high level of engagement in learning, similar demographic characteristics, and emotional maturity.

The participants’ engagement in learning was affirmed by their college peers. In their peers they observed behaviors they admired and believed they possessed:

Here in college they do care. They’re paying for it. They want to be here. That makes me give more of an effort because I know that they’re here for a reason and I’m here for a reason, too. And nobody’s here to mess around. They want to get what they have to do done.—Sabine

People pay attention. They’re engaged. They are there for the class, not because they have to be, because they’re interested....In college, everyone seems to be learning from everyone else. It’s not just like, oh, let’s get this class over. They’re really engaged in what you’re talking about.—Monica

When you’re in high school, people don’t even know if they want to be there half the time....A lot of people just come there once in a while and just socialize, and that’s where I was at a certain point. But here, it’s just okay, I’m paying for this so let me go to class—Jason

Participants found encouragement in the like-mindedness of their new college peers, but this similarity was enhanced by the discovery that their peers were more

diverse as a group and more like themselves than expected. Referring to her older college counterparts, Amy observed, “Since they’re older people I guess they’re less judgmental.” Monica also found an openness she didn’t from her college peers, and was surprised to find that

at DCC, they just are so different, like diverse I guess....I really like meeting different people. And like even here, the races are so diverse and I think it’s great.

Similarly, Katina found that the combination of students with similar motivations but different backgrounds was an especially comforting, positive experience:

We’re at different places in our lives, [but] we still go after the same things in school, you know, like with classes and everything....I could go to them for help because, you know, they’re open.

Before beginning dual enrollment, Ernesto thought that he would find no minorities other than himself in college. Had that been the case, college would have been harder “because it just seems harder to fit in to an environment that’s the same. Being the only one different, trying to fit in, gets more difficult.” What he discovered in college provided an unexpected sense of comfort:

There were different people: there were people who were older than me; there were people about the same age as me. I felt like I fit in because there were like a lot of different people, and there were also a lot of races in classes. I thought I fit in.

In addition to finding similarities to their college peers, participants described themselves in contrast to their high school counterparts. They especially noted the disruptive behaviors displayed in the high school context which Amy characterized as “the stupid immaturities at school.” Participants described themselves as more mature than most of their high school classmates:

I act really grown up compared to some people....Oh, hey; do you want to go do this? Oh, no, and I think about everything that could go wrong or the consequences good or bad. And I feel okay. So I guess I've been like that with everything.—Monica

High school is kind of funny because you see loud freshman running around chasing each other and people throwing stuff in the lunch room, then you get here and everybody's just calm. I mean there's a million people outside, but it's like really just fine and relaxed here. I like this way better than high school as far like the experience goes because everybody's just calm, cool.—Jason

It's like a whole different mind set....[High school's] a little more wild and people are loud and they're crazy in class, and you have to really pay attention just to understand the teacher sometimes. Like today in my math class, I couldn't hear a word he was saying, and I was just like be quiet. And going from there to here it's like I can relax, I can know that I'm going to get something done. I'm going to learn something from that class because everybody else is there to learn, too, so I go and sit in class and I'm just more calm and more collected, and I understand better, and I just feel like you have to go from taking care of kids to working with an adult.—Sabine

With the distractions of their high school peers' disruptive behaviors set aside, participants said they were able to participate fully in their college experience.

In addition to new-found desires to attend school and a new identification with their college peers, participants found affirmation in the realization of academic success. The theme *Success Realized* describes participants' discovery that success was possible despite their anxieties and the pervasive discouraging messages of their earlier school experiences.

Many participants confessed anxiety about their ability to succeed in college. As presented earlier in this chapter, participants experienced negative and discouraging messages about the likelihood of their college success earlier in their school careers. Upon their arrival in college classes, participants realized they had simply overestimated the difficulty of college studies:

I really thought college would be hard, but it was a lot easier than I expected.—Gwen

You do have to work at it and you do have to pay attention and have to do the work. And like yeah it is hard-ish, but it just depends on how much effort you put into it.—Amy

I was just like okay, it's just college and it's not too bad.—Sabine

I was very nervous about going into college since college used to seem very, very distant and in the future, but as soon as I got into it, it didn't seem quite so bad and it was just almost like a high school.—Stuart

It wasn't as hard as I thought.—Isaac

As the quotations above indicate, participants previously believed college success was not necessarily within their reach. Ironically, even though participants had been successful as high school students, they did not see that success as predictive of their success in college. Sabine's experience is illustrative:

I think I was talking to my counselor and I think there's only about ten of us [in dual enrollment]. Five-hundred and sixty seniors at my school and there's only ten of us. And I'm just like, wow, that makes a difference....I just didn't get it I guess until I came here. I didn't really realize. My mom's excited and my grandma's excited—oh my gosh, she's in college!

The discovery that their potential success could be translated into actual accomplishments on a college campus was a significant experience for participants. It affirmed that they had risen to a higher academic standard:

I can get the grades in high school but it was like wow, new challenge. I'm still in high school. Let's see how good you really are. You know, yeah, just putting more thought into it.—Isaac

I never really thought it would really be an option like I could attend college courses and I mean I always thought like to do something like this you'd have to be like a 4.0 student or something. But it shows that anybody can do it and anybody can go to college.  
—Jason

After seeing that I was doing like in between good and not so good, I still tried my hardest to get everything done from the review chapter. But after the review chapter, it seemed to get easier and easier, and then I decided I was doing well after that, and I would be able to finish the class with a good grade.—Ernesto

The result of rising to a higher standard also built the confidence participants needed to think of college in the future tense:

I didn't really know if I really would have gone [to college]. If I really hadn't probably come here first and actually seen how it is....I probably would have tried to just graduate high school and then that would be it....This experience made me want to say, okay, now I'm ready to go to a university....It really has me completely sure that I want to go to college. I mean I'm here, I'm doing it, I might as well come back next year, take a full schedule, take a year after that and go to a university.—Jason

Knowing that I can do the work, that I can make the transition to the next level and still have success and stay up to par with the work. Like the work wasn't a foreign language all the time. Like it was presented to me like it would be, but yeah, just knowing that I can do the work and survive in college. That's what stands out to me the most from this whole experience and process.—Isaac

The supporting theme of *Role Modeling* presents participants' affirming experience of being recognized for their college accomplishments and becoming examples of success for friends and family members. Recognition affirmed for participants they that had accomplished more than their high school peers:

It feels good to be able to say I have college classes at a college especially DCC because a lot of people know about DCC at my school. They're just like wow....It just makes me feel good being able to say that, and knowing that I'm doing well in these classes and being able to say I'm getting it done. Even in my classes, my teachers are surprised—well, you're still I high school? I said yeah, and there's people that are in my class that are like in their mid-twenties, and it just makes a difference. I feel like I'm part of that percentage that's going to do well because I'm doing better now, earlier.—Sabine

I've talked to a few students and they're like that's really cool you're doing it. I wish I could do that.—Katina

They were just like so amazed. Like really, I didn't think you could, or why would you want to? So I guess it was kind of inspiring to them.—Monica



The accomplishment of college success brought participants recognition, and the new and welcomed responsibility of serving as a role model for significant others in their lives:

My brother and I don't really talk about stuff, but I guess he told my mom that I'm his inspiration. So it kind of helps to understand that I'm getting the support that I need from him because I've never gotten it before.—Sabine

I have my parents' support, and then my parents expect me in a way to help out my younger brothers and sisters just because they see me as the role model....I guess the way that I'm here in college right now is also going to give them a motivation to go to college....My youngest sister she's only 11. She's like oh, I want to go to [state university].—Sierra

My younger brothers are my life. Like I try to be their role model and it's all worked.  
—Monica

People will know that I did it, and if I did it they can. It's just whatever you put your mind to: how you want to succeed. So I think if a lot of girls my age or younger see me then they'll want to do the same thing....They can find success within themselves, and they can maybe be the first to do something great.—Katina.

### *Structure of the Phenomenon and Summary*

The themes that are common to the participants' unique, individual experiences—the *Themes of Negation (Racism and Bias and Mixed Messages)* and the *Themes of Affirmation (Positive Expectations, Respect and Equity, and Confirmation)*—provide the structure of the experience of the dual enrollment phenomenon. The *Themes of Negation*, which describe the participants' interactions with teachers and officials of the schools they attended before beginning their dual enrollment courses, represent messages with a potentially negative effect on the participants in their high school and college academic pursuits. Messages of *Racism and Bias* devalued participants based upon their race or ethnicity and discouraged or distracted them from their studies and future goals. *Mixed Messages* created an environment of contradiction, ambiguity, or negativity about the

value of college and carried the potential to guide participants away from college pursuits.

The *Themes of Affirmation* express experiences which propelled participants toward college or sustained their college attendance after they arrived on a college campus. *Positive Expectations* expresses predictions from family members of successful outcomes in college. *Respect and Equity* expresses the feeling of being valued, included, and welcomed by people inside and outside the college environment which built self-confidence and self-esteem. Lastly, *Confirmation* expresses participants' discovery that their motivations, short-term academic successes and academic relationships had the potential to sustain them in their continued participation and success in college.

#### *Essence of the Phenomenon*

The themes described above can be synthesized to form the essence of the dual enrollment experience, *Identity Clarification*. Before dual enrollment, participants were identified first as "minorities" in school environments characterized by *Racism and Bias*. Their interactions with teachers, school officials, and peer groups were mostly based on their race or ethnicity and left participants feeling as if they had been unfairly stereotyped. Additionally, participants felt pressure to identify themselves with ethnic or racial groups to fit in. Outside the school context, some participants' family members gave them *Mixed Messages* about the value of college or their likelihood of success; others were supported by their families but felt family members did not truly understand the pressures of college attendance. In this context, participants misjudged the demands of college leading them to question whether they were equal to the college task.

Doubts about college diminished during the dual enrollment experience when participants began to think of themselves less as minorities and more as college students. Family members perceived them as college students and expressed *Positive Expectations* after participants began attending classes and receiving good grades. Simultaneously, participants were encouraged by the *Respect* of college faculty members who treated students equally regardless of race and ethnicity and by the *Equity* with which college faculty treated students in academic standards and grading. In this environment, participants *Realized academic Success* and enjoyed *Peer Status* among like-minded students guided by their own *Intrinsic Motivation*; joining a group of academically successful peers created a sense of *Confirmation* that participants had the necessary characteristics to succeed in college. I synthesize all this as *Identity Clarification* because many of the characteristics that supported the participants' success—valuing education, academic determination, and family support—existed before the dual enrollment experience. The dual enrollment experience did not transform participants from failed students to successful ones. But it did replace the ambiguity and mixed messages of their earlier school experience with consistent messages that participants were capable, welcomed, and expected to achieve which affirmed their ability and their place in college.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings from my study of the lived experience of non-majority students in a dual enrollment program. It also presents connections between my study and the existing literature, and implications of the findings for practice in community colleges.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the structural meanings of participating in dual enrollment?
2. What themes or contexts account for this experience?
3. What underlying structures precipitate thoughts or feelings about being in dual enrollment?
4. What are the consistent themes that help describe the experience?

### *Summary of the Findings*

Twelve non-majority students who experienced the phenomenon were interviewed. Participants' stories provided the data I needed to create a rich textural description of the dual enrollment phenomenon as the students experienced it. I examined the phenomenon from their perspective, completed the process of phenomenological reduction, and discovered the themes in their experience which provided the structure for the essence of the phenomenon, *Identity Confirmation*.

The themes that emerged from the data analysis that support the essence, *Identity Confirmation*, fell into two categories: *Themes of Negation* and *Themes of Affirmation*. The *Themes of Negation* describe participants' interactions with personnel at the high schools they attended before beginning their dual enrollment courses, messages with a potentially negative effect on participants' high school and college academic pursuits. Messages of *Racism and Bias* devalued participants based upon their race or ethnicity and discouraged or distracted them from their studies. *Mixed Messages* created an environment of contradiction, ambiguity, and negativity about college and had the potential to guide participants away from college studies. The *Themes of Affirmation* express those experiences which propelled participants toward college or sustained their college attendance. Supportive messages from family members created *Positive Expectations* which predicted college success. The supporting theme of *Respect and Equity* expressed being valued, included, and welcomed through experiences that built self-confidence and self-esteem. Finally, the theme of *Confirmation* expressed messages that confirmed participants' motivations, their short-term academic successes, and relationships with the potential to sustain them in their continued college pursuits.

#### *Connections to the Literature*

The following pages present connections between my findings and related findings in the literature. They are presented in the same order as the themes in the preceding chapter.

*Literature Related to the Theme of Racism and Bias.* Fries-Britt (2000) found that non-majority students enter college with a history of numerous discouraging experiences based on their race; she reported it was common for high-ability students to describe

experiences early in their education where they felt unsupported. Discouraging experiences identified in her study were clearly based on race bias, as Black students faced years of struggle to overcome blatant acts of racial discrimination in the assessment of their academic performance. Participants in the Fries-Britt study told stories of the necessity of personal and parental advocacy related to grades on examinations or assignments or related to participation in school activities. Participants in my study did not report direct acts of discrimination that affected their high school grades, but they did report multiple incidents in which racist statements from school personnel had a discouraging effect. Participants seemed to advocate for themselves, rather than for their grades, to prove their capability to those who discouraged them.

Karp and Hughes' (2008) study of credit-based transition programs includes a confirmation of the same finding. They found that race played an active role in determining whether students would enroll in courses designed to create high school to college transitions. One student in their study said students did not enroll "because they know they'll be the only one that's of color or of a different race, so they won't take the class." As the authors summarized, "Thus, there was beginning to be an understanding that an elite, nondiverse program, however officially open access, would be self-perpetuating without measures taken to specifically broaden the student population" (p. 851). My finding that non-majority students fear being alone in college and that they find comfort and encouragement in a diverse group of college peers with similar academic aspirations is consistent with Karp and Hughes' conclusions.

*Literature Related to the Theme of Mixed Messages.* The importance of familial influence found in my study is consistent with the findings of Greif, Hrabowski and Maton (2000). In their study of Black mothers of academically successful sons, the authors found themes similar to mine in the encouraging messages of supportive home environments. They assert that particular aspects of child rearing and specific features within the home environment strongly influenced Black males' academic and professional success.

As I did, Greif et al also found that parents supported childrens' educational aspirations by telling stories of how previous generations' success was impeded by a lack of education and gave warnings about future shortcomings for students if they did not get an education. My findings are similar regarding the importance of learning from family academic failures (and their subsequent economic consequences) and the disappointments of previous generations. It may seem contradictory or counterintuitive that family academic failure serves as a motivation, but the stories of family members' failures were not perceived by participants in my study as predictions of their own future failures; rather, they were perceived as warnings of the consequences of failing in high school and/or not attending college or completing a degree. Most of my participants were raised in an environment of *mixed messages* or *ambivalence* about college, but all were raised by at least one parent who provided some form of support—ranging from encouragement to demands for success—which accompanied the stories of past family failures. In many cases, the words and actions of a single member of the participants' families—the father who always drove his daughter to school, the mother who constantly reminded her daughter not to be limited by her race, the grandfather who graduated from

college though his own daughter didn't—seemed to shield participants from negative or ambivalent messages received from other members of their immediate or extended families. Interestingly, support mostly came from parents who had not experienced academic success themselves. Though they did not (or could not) help their children with homework or understand the demands of college, they consistently maintained the message that their children's future depended on graduating from high school and attending college. Their encouragements and warnings were repeated regularly enough to become axiomatic for the participants.

My findings divert from those of Greif and colleagues who concluded that a key factor supporting student success was a home maintained as a learning environment. Participants in my study did not report that their homes were supportive; rather, they reported home as a discouraging or complicating factor in their high school and college pursuits. Participants reported that family responsibilities—holding a job, caring for siblings, helping siblings with homework, managing an unscheduled and chaotic family lifestyle—competed with school work for their time and attention. Two participants reported intentionally not thinking about home while at high school or college, and vice versa; educational settings and home were kept separate because attending to them simultaneously was overwhelming.

My findings on familial influence are also inconsistent with McDonough (1997, 1998), Swartz (1997) and Paulsen (2001) whose research is theoretically based on Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of *habitus* and *cultural capital*. As summarized by Paulsen, *habitus* "refers to the enduring, internal system of attitudes, beliefs, actions and fundamental values, acquired from the immediate family, school, and community



environments of the student,” and *cultural capital* “refers to the kinds of symbolic wealth transmitted from middle- and upper-income parents to their children to sustain family status across generations” (p. 75). Paulsen concludes that students’ social class, cultural capital and *habiti* “consistently frame, structure, and constrain their patterns of college-going decision making.” The implication is that students’ *habiti* and cultural capital reinforce one another and function to exclude subjugated classes from higher education, thus maintaining existing class structures.

My participants attended schools that could have promoted *habiti* that devalued college or made it seem undesirable, even impossible. The direct racism and ethnic bias they received from school personnel could have discouraged them enough during their middle and high school years to stop their academic pursuits; similarly, the messages of ambivalence and failure they received from family members and peers could have justified dropping out of high school. But my participants were not constrained by these experiences and persisted through high school to college. A partial explanation is that *habiti* can change: as Wacquant (1998) explains, *habitus* should be understood as not only a principal of social continuity but also of social discontinuity because “it can be modified through the acquisition of new dispositions and because it can trigger innovation whenever it encounters a social setting discrepant with the setting from which it issues” (p. 222). My participants appeared to acquire new dispositions about college from a single family member, usually a parent, despite pervasive, contrary messages received elsewhere. They also became aware of the discrepancies between their own academic success and their familial contexts of academic failure as well as their expectations of college and the reality of finding themselves in a college classroom. One

example is Ernesto's discovery that, contrary to his expectation, he was literally not the only Latino on campus. Another is Sabine's observation that she "just didn't get it" until she arrived at college: "I didn't really realize. My mom's excited and my grandma's excited—oh my gosh, she's in college!" For my participants, new dispositions toward college were promoted by influential adult family members and reinforced by college attendance. The effect was strong enough to overcome deficits in cultural capital.

*Literature Related to the Theme of Positive Expectations.* Another study of family influences on college success by Choy, Horn, Nunez and Chen (2000) examined the transition from high school to college for students whose parents did not attend college. The authors found that parents' college attendance predicted childrens' attendance: among high school graduates who attended college, 27% had parents who did not attend college; 42% had parents who attended some college; and 71% had parents both of whom attended college. The authors also found that among students with the least likelihood of going to college, most simply never entered the college "pipeline" by not choosing challenging high school courses, participating in college outreach activities, or expressing college aspirations by the tenth grade. Forty-four percent of high school graduates with any risk factors never entered the pipeline. The authors concluded that the most effective means of increasing college access is to increase students' college aspirations.

My *Positive Expectations* theme is consistent with these findings. Despite numerous indicators to the contrary, especially in the context of *mixed messages* about the value of college, participants in my study reported having thought about college well in advance of their dual enrollment experience. It should be noted that my participants

were already among their more successful peers, as described in the Choy study, because they persisted in high school to the senior year. They considered college early in their school careers, and several had a parent with at least some college experience.

Additionally, all had a family member (usually a parent) who talked about college and emphasized its value. The population of my study affirms Choy's finding that at-risk students, who enroll in college despite social or educational disadvantages, have parents who are engaged in their childrens' education and talk with them frequently about school. In the Choy study, students' chances of enrolling in college were doubled when parents frequently discussed school matters. In my study, enthusiastic support and the recognition of students' accomplishments compensated for social shortcomings in fostering college-going ideals.

My findings are also consistent with Karp and Hughes' (2008) work on credit-based transition programs. As the authors explain,

preparing students for college coursework, and college itself, begins long before students enroll in college-credit-bearing classes....data indicated that much of the "action" comes prior to capstone college courses. Students have opportunities to gain academic skills, feelings of success and motivation, and learn social and procedural skills at multiple points in their CBTP experiences, and this learning may influence their future program experiences and ultimate program outcomes. (p. 859)

I also found that the seeds of college success were planted well before college attendance; dual enrollment functioned to confirm students' pre-existing motivations. *Positive expectations* arose from various sources—even the past academic failures of people close to potential college students—and they had an important effect on developing students' consciousness of the value of postsecondary studies as early as middle and high school. It appears these early messages even had the effect of limiting the impact of later, negative messages students received in their high school and college experiences.

*Literature Related to the Theme of Respect and Equity.* My findings differ from Fries-Britt's (2000) in students' reports of their direct interactions with faculty members. In her study, Black students were reluctant to speak with college faculty members unless they were accompanied by their racial student peers. Participants in my study reported no reluctance in speaking directly with college faculty, and they even noted a feeling of greater connection with college faculty than with their former high school teachers. Peer support was never reported by participants in my study as essential to faculty interaction; rather, they recalled a feeling of being able to speak freely with faculty. The difference between Fries-Britt's findings and mine may be explained by the fact the participants in my study encountered faculty in a community college rather a traditional university, where class sizes are larger and faculty members have responsibilities other than teaching lower division undergraduates. It also may be explained by a context of greater diversity on a community college campus where faculty members are more comfortable with a diverse student body and have a commitment to the traditional community college mission of openness to more diverse populations.

Fries-Britt (2000) also found, as I did, that even if participants felt reluctance to talk to faculty members, feeling free to do so positively influenced their aspirations. She summarized as "compelling" college faculty members' assumption "that students are capable and have something to contribute," and concluded that positive student/faculty interactions

help eliminate some of the barriers that minority students often encounter in the academy. The more a faculty member is able to establish a relationship based on mutual respect and not out of obligation, the greater the likelihood the student will consider the faculty member's interest as genuine and sincere. (p. 63)

As Fries-Britt affirms, students in my study found encouragement in relationships with faculty based on mutual respect and without regard for students' high school status, race, or ethnicity.

My findings regarding faculty assessment of participants' academic work (as seen in the theme of *respect and equity*) are related to these findings. My participants reported that the experience of being held to the same academic standards as their classmates regardless of age, race or ethnicity raised their expectations of themselves and created a sense of accomplishment and belonging when those standards were met. The fair assessment of participants' academic performance, even when their grades were lower than expected, was an encouraging experience because participants believed faculty members viewed them as equal in ability to their college peers and did not alter their expectations due to participants' demographic characteristics.

The assertion I have made in the preceding paragraphs—that non-majority students experienced a feeling of respect when their performance in class was judged on the basis of objective academic standards—is also consistent with the work of Gonzales (2006), Steele (1997, 1999), and Steele and Aronson (1995), who theorized that Black students performed less well on standardized examinations for reasons other than poor academic preparation or lack of ability; instead, the authors asserted differences in performance on these exams resulted from *stereotype threat*, “the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype” (Steele, 1999, p. 46). As Steele explains, “The success of black students may depend less on expectations and motivation—things that are thought to drive academic performance—than on trust that stereotypes about their

group will not have a limiting effect in their school world” (p. 51). To test his theory, Steele and his colleagues designed experiments in which students were given hints that their race may have something to do with their performance on a variety of tasks. Even among White students, when the threat of confirming a racial stereotype was present, students’ performance declined. When the threat was lifted, students’ performance was similar, regardless of race. As Steele explains,

In matters of race we often assume that when a situation is objectively the same for different groups, it is *experienced* in the same way by each group. This assumption might seem especially reasonable in the case of “standardized” cognitive tests. But for black students, difficulty with the test makes the negative stereotype relevant as an interpretation of their performance, and of them. They know that they are especially likely to be seen as having limited ability. Groups not stereotyped in this way don’t experience this extra intimidation. And it is a serious intimidation, implying as it does that they may not belong in walks of life where the tested abilities are important—walks of life in which they are heavily invested. (p. 47)

When students in Steele’s studies were not under stereotype threat, they performed better; similarly, when students in my study found that college faculty judged them on the basis of objective standards, they felt respected and encouraged. Academic performance was not measured in my study, but students’ reports of feeling as if they were the academic equals of their classmates may indicate that faculty members at Diversity Community College lifted the burden of stereotype threat, allowing students the opportunity to perform academically without presumptions.

Similarly, Gonzales et al (2006) analyzed the experience of second generation Mexican-American immigrant middle and high school students to discover whether they perceived their ethnicity as a positive influence on their schooling, and whether positive racial and ethnic interactions were related to academic achievement. The underlying theme of the interviews was that the most positive encounters in which race and ethnicity

were salient were encounters that made interviewees feel their non-majority experience was normal and made them feel that as minorities they were equal in status to their student peers, regardless of race or ethnicity. As the authors summarized,

A major contribution of this study is the examination of ethnic identity through the lens of resilience and positive racial/ethnic encounters. This study underscores the idea that the best mode of adaptation is contingent upon environmental support. Moreover, it suggests that superficial activities will not transform one's identity if they do not foster equal status by deconstructing stereotypes and allowing youth to demonstrate their competence. (p. 28)

Like Gonzales, I found that racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom normalized the experience of college for non-majority students and set aside prior experiences of difference that were perceived negatively. Participants in my study found comfort in an environment in which their former non-majority status was subsumed by an environment of broader diversity; this setting simultaneously allowed them to demonstrate their academic competence without managing the distractions of racial or ethnic difference which typified their high school experiences. Their "different" status was mediated when they discovered they were not alone among majority students, and found student peers with whom they felt significant connections while their non-majority status was de-emphasized. It was the recognition of success, not the recognition of difference that mattered. As Gonzales concludes, "It is critical to note that programs that merely instill pride or celebrate culture are limiting and potentially harmful if they do not foster equal status" (p. 24). And as Gonzales and Steele (1998) suggest, building on non-majority students' potential is more effective than placing them in situations normally associated with academic deficits. Considering that the participants in my study received multiple messages associating academic ambivalence or failure with race or ethnicity, the removal of the recognition of difference as a strategy to promote success appears viable.

Cole's (2007) work on the effect of diversity on students' educational gains has similar connections to my study. He examined how interracial interactions among students and between students and faculty members affected students' intellectual self-concept as measured by academic ability and intellectual self-confidence. He found that students' intellectual self-concept was enhanced in a socially complex and active learning environment. It is possible to infer from participants' experience as described in my study that interracial interactions among students and with faculty members positively affected their beliefs about themselves. I found that non-majority students were powerfully influenced by a classroom environment in which they found greater diversity (especially race and age) rather than larger numbers of students from their own racial or ethnic groups.

Cole also found that faculty members provide cues in their teaching which signal to students whether they are open to interacting with them outside the classroom setting. He asserts that significant faculty contacts outside of class in a campus environment designed to help non-majority students engage issues of race and ethnicity positively affects academic self concept, and is associated with academic success. My participants reported feeling supported and affirmed by faculty, but not because faculty members were open to interactions outside of class or because campus activities were designed to foster interracial interaction. Rather, these participants were encouraged when student diversity was combined with equitable treatment by faculty members. When faculty members treated non-majority students as indistinguishable from their peers—summarized by participants in my study simply as “respect”—in a diverse environment, the result was a sense of welcome, comfort, and encouragement toward academic



achievement. My participants were positively influenced *because* faculty members did not know them individually but treated them as capable students and adult peers who were expected to perform like all others. The relative anonymity of the college classroom as experienced by these participants was (perhaps ironically) associated with a feeling of respect; students were attended to for no reason other than their academic work. This may be the result of students participating in an environment where racial and ethnic differences were normalized by student diversity combined with racial and ethnic “blindness” by faculty members, and it reflects a difference between participants’ high school and college experience. Participants stated that in high school, teachers made assumptions about them based on race or ethnicity and also stated that high school teachers almost seemed to know them too well (including information about their family circumstances) which influenced their interactions. The result, according to participants, was that this knowledge by teachers influenced their evaluation of students’ academic performance.

*Literature Related to the Theme of Confirmation.* My finding of the positive effects of participants’ discovery of academically successful, racial or ethnic peers in college is consistent with Fries-Britt’s (2000) finding that Black university students benefitted from peer groups that confirmed their racial and their academic identities. As she summarized,

Their confidence and ability to blend their intellectual and racial self was enhanced as they encountered more peers like themselves and environments that supported their interests. The reassurance and ease they experienced in a community of ‘like-type’ peers later in college suggests a developmental change in their sense of identity from earlier experiences with peers in junior high and high school. (p. 57)

Fries-Britt found that college marked the first experience in which participants found peers who reflected their academic identity and their racial identity. Relationships with these peers made real the possibility of being both Black and intellectual.

Several students I interviewed expressed a sense of comfort and a feeling of “fitting in,” similar to Fries-Britt’s participants, when they unexpectedly found themselves in college with others like them in race or ethnicity. The normalizing effect of this discovery allowed them to focus their attention on academic rather than racial or social matters. But my findings differ from Fries-Britt’s regarding racial groups these students might join. In her study, being among Black peers had the powerfully-affirming effect of simultaneously validating students’ racial and academic identities. In my study, students expected they might feel alone in college, or might even discover there were no other minorities on campus, but they did not report positive effects from joining others of the same race and ethnicity; in fact, feeling forced to join such groups in high school was reported as a negative and distracting experience. Students in my study reported that a sense of comfort, fit, or belonging resulted from discovering an array of peers who were different in age, race, ethnicity, nationality, and language. Finding members of their own groups was less important than learning that a large, diverse group of students shared the goals of college attendance and success. The sense of commonality did not result from membership in a smaller, homogeneous group of students, but from a shared sense of purpose the participants found refreshing and motivating.

Recent work on “possible selves” by Oyserman et al (2006) also is related to my theme of *Confirmation*. Possible selves “are positive and negative images of the self already in a future state—the “clever” self who passed the algebra test, the “fat” self who

failed to lose weight, the “fast” self who fell in with the ‘wrong’ crowd” (p. 188).

Oyerman’s assumption is that

youth have difficulty creating and sustaining school-focused PSs [possible selves] when they perceive these PSs to be incongruent with important social identities (e.g., racial-ethnic identities), misinterpret difficulties in working on these PSs as evidence that academic goals are unrealistic PSs, and live in social contexts that fail to cue strategies for attaining their PS goal. Youth will commit sustained self-regulatory effort to a PS when the PS itself is effective and contains behavioral strategies and social context supports working on the PS, when the PS feels congruent with important social identities, and when difficulty working on the PS is construed as normative. (p. 188)

My participants were aware of the perceived incongruence between their membership in a racial or ethnic group and their identity as successful students. For example, some clearly received the message from high school personnel that Hispanics were not interested in school, and others experienced temporary rejection from friends who said participants seemed “too good” for their group after beginning dual enrollment. Participants felt compelled to disprove high school teachers’ assumptions about them, and/or to prove to their high school peers that college attendance was an accomplishment of which they were justifiably proud. These findings confirm Oyerman’s theory because these participants did not perceive their role as college students as incongruent with their race or ethnicity, but they were well aware of that incongruence in others. Interestingly, they willingly responded to the incongruence by consciously trying to make themselves into *role models* who could show their racial and ethnic peers, and their high school teachers, that their non-majority status was not inconsistent with college attendance or academic success. Participants moved beyond rectifying incongruence to a desire to assist others in the same process. Oyerman also asserts that students of lower socioeconomic status live in environments which do not provide cues that prompt them

toward the goal of college attendance and success. She points out that young people who grow up in lower socioeconomic settings have numerous models of adults who failed to reach their potential, making it difficult for younger generations to recognize that difficulties in achieving possible selves is a normal experience.

My participants certainly lived in environments with fewer success cues, as shown by the theme of *mixed messages* about education which came primarily from family members who had not experienced college success or were ambivalent about its value. But participants did not interpret these cues (as one might expect) as signs of certain academic failure. Rather, they found encouragement and inspiration in the stories of family members' academic failures when the stories were combined with messages of support from close family members. They also believed that success could be achieved with persistence through challenging academic work. When that belief was *confirmed* by their college experience, it became the basis for *success realized*. The experience of non-majority students in my study, who felt *confirmed* in their college aspirations by discovering other students who were diverse in race and ethnicity, but like-mindedness about college, also has clear similarities to Fries-Britt's (2000) work.

### *Implications of the Findings*

The implications of the findings from this study are applicable to several constituencies in a community college setting. They include non-majority students and families, community college faculty, and community college administrators.

*Implications for Students and Families.* As my study and those shown in the review of related literature show, families have significant influence on students' college aspirations and success. The influences range from discouragement and ambivalence to

supportive encouragement and demands for achievement. Generations of success or failure in school can create expectations of failure for succeeding generations. But even in families in which economic circumstances have forced children to drop out of school to help support their families, or families in which high school dropout and occasional GED completion are the norm, even negative or ambivalent messages can be ameliorated by regular contact with a significant family member who contradicts the earlier messages. A family member can have significant influence by talking with students regularly about college. Repeated statements of the importance of college, especially when combined with stories of the limitations which result from not completing a college degree, can influence students to plan for and attend college. Family members who have not experienced college or believe they can not advise their children on how to attend college can keep alive the hope of attending, and affirm the value of an education beyond high school. Naturally, this requires consistent attention and effort to maintain ongoing conversations about college, but such conversations appear to reduce the influence of negative social contexts.

*Implications for Community College Faculty Members.* Community college faculty members who teach non-majority students have significant influence over their success. They influence them in many ways, from their teaching methods to their involvement in campus activities and their availability for interpersonal interactions with students outside of class. While much has been written about the relationships between faculty and non-majority students, especially their personal accessibility, faculty members' regard for non-majority students in day-to-day class interactions is just as significant. In my study, faculty members' availability outside of class was not as

important as faculty members' equitable treatment of students. Participants in my study never referred to whether faculty members were available to them in settings other than the classroom. But they consistently talked about the feeling of respect they received from faculty members which encouraged better performance, and created a sense of reciprocity: faculty members gave respect to non-majority students, and the students responded in kind. The effect for participants was a feeling of encouragement, and a confirmation that they had a rightful place in a college classroom. Further, when respect—defined by participants as equity in personal treatment and consistency in the application of academic standards—was accompanied by high standards and equitable grading, academically-minded non-majority students were encouraged to rise to higher academic standards because they believed the standards were established and measured without regard for demographic characteristics. Being released from their prior negative experiences with high school teachers made it possible for students to pursue college success with the belief that their successes would be “real” (not dependent upon being liked or disliked, or upon prejudgments about their ethnic group's level of academic commitment), and resulted in students' best efforts. Community college faculty members should understand that when they conduct their classes as described here, the stereotype threat that Steele (1992, 1997, 1999) has identified is reduced or eliminated, and students are free to pursue their studies without the distractions of racial and ethnic inequities which may have been part of their prior school experiences. The implication is that faculty members in diverse institutions can have a significant impact on non-majority student performance simply by interacting with and evaluating them in the same ways they interact with and evaluate all other students. It is logical that being accessible to

students outside of class is helpful, and makes students feel valued, and it is also logical that faculty members provide cues in class indicating how accessible they will be outside of class. But importantly, when faculty members are focused on the delivery and content of their courses and on the evaluation of students' performance rather than giving particular attention to students because of their race or ethnicity, non-majority students' college experience is normalized and the students' focus turns from their status to their studies, with a positive effect.

*Implications for Community College Administrators.* There are implications of the findings of this study for community college administrators in the areas of campus climate, student recruitment, oversight of academic programs, and faculty evaluation. I found that a diverse student population provides a sense of fit and belonging for non-majority students. My participants felt comfortable in class when they had expected discomfort at being the only non-majority, and they also felt there was someone like them with whom they could talk and ask for help. A campus climate in which student diversity is recognized and valued naturally provides an environment attractive to non-majority students, especially those with no family history of participation in higher education. In this context, participants should be recognized for the courage to enter a foreign environment especially considering all their negative perceptions of what they will find. When participants arrived at DCC and found smaller classes, and larger numbers of non-majority students they expected, they were truly relieved. The discovery that they were not alone led to the feeling that the odds were in their favor, perhaps for the first time. In recruitment, admissions, registration, financial aid, academic support and instructional programs, community college leaders should communicate to current and prospective

non-majority students that their presence is valued, and they should act swiftly upon their first interactions with students to dispel misperceptions of the college environment. Students less-courageous or more pessimistic than those in this study would especially benefit from the assurance that they are not alone, that they have a rightful place in college, and that their success is unrelated to their race or ethnicity. Because faculty members have the most consistent contact with non-majority students (as with all students), campuses that desire to promote these students' success should measure the quality of student/faculty contact, especially faculty behaviors which contribute to feelings of respect and encouragement for students. These measures should become part of faculty evaluation procedures to create a consistent, encouraging classroom climate for non-majority students.

Community college academic leaders should also assure that measures of students' performance are unrelated to race or ethnicity, and that students do not perceive them as measuring their capacity to learn. Virtually all college students have experienced the feeling (and may even have been told) that they do or do not "get it," that mathematics, or English, or biology "isn't their subject," and so on. When the assessment of student performance is based on ideas like these, stereotype threat can gain a foothold and damage the performance of students who would otherwise perform well, especially non-majority students. A "color blind" environment reduces stereotype threat, and promotes success. The mere "celebration" of diversity or recognition of difference is not sufficient to promote the success of non-majority students who already know they are "diverse;" once the recognition and celebrations have past, equitable and respectful interactions in all phases of student and academic affairs must follow. The implication is



not that students' cultures should be ignored or marginalized, but that the recognition of difference in race or ethnicity by itself may not be enough to foster success. This recognition, accompanied by color-blindness in the classroom, may be a fuller approach to encouraging non-majority students' success. While it is widely-asserted on college campuses that celebrating non-majority groups is essential in making non-majority students feel welcomed, a sense of welcome and community membership can also result from the discovery of equalizing factors, such as finding others with the same hopes and motivations. Being made a part of a racial or ethnic sub-group of students is valuable to some students' success, but feeling kinship regardless of subgroup membership may be just as powerful. When everyone seems like a minority, no one seems like a minority, and students can set aside their former frustrations or preoccupations with socio-cultural matters to focus on academic tasks and goals.

*Implications for Community College Academic Support Personnel.* The conclusion that supportive home environments can have a positive influence on non-majority students' performance is accompanied by the finding that home environments for non-majority students may not be ideal as college support structures, due to income limitations and multiple familial responsibilities in addition to the common demands of home and family life. As one participant in this study pointed out, the college physical environment itself can become a form of support, providing a time, place and environmental cues that foster academic work. Environments which are welcoming, comfortable, and suited to study can provide critical support for students who may not possess such settings themselves.

*Implications for Future Research.* Further research related to my theme of *Racism and Bias* should be conducted. A possible focus would be the strategies successful non-majority students use to advocate for themselves in college, especially strategies to counteract the negative expectations of school personnel in positions of power. Students in my study did not report advocating for better grades on assignments or in classes; instead, they reported the desire to disprove unfair or inaccurate assumptions about their academic ability or commitment. This could be a fruitful area of study with implications for long-term impacts on non-majority students' success. Additionally, research related to my theme of *Mixed Messages* should be pursued, especially the strategy of some of my participants who intentionally did not think about home while at high school or college, and vice versa. This strategy appeared effective for keeping the participants from feeling overwhelmed by the multiple demands of school and family life, but it also carries the risk of creating intra- and interpersonal conflict which could damage students' chances for academic success. Lastly, research should be conducted on strategies to help non-majority students change their dispositions about college including strategies involving parental support and expectations before college and the influence of classroom experiences after college has begun.

### *Conclusion*

The non-majority students in this study attended college for the first time through a dual enrollment program after a journey from discouraging and ambiguous messages and inaccurate assumptions to full participation in the higher education community. In the dual enrollment experience, they were welcomed, respected, treated as peers among their college counterparts and held to the same academic standards. Dual enrollment

clarified their identities as college students rather than racial or ethnic minorities and assured them that their hoped-for success could be realized.

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