

CAUGHT BETWEEN CONFLICTING WORLDS?:
A DU BOISIAN STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS
WHO ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN ACADEMIA

by

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Caught Between Conflicting Worlds?: A Du Boisian Study of the Experiences of Students

Who Are Underrepresented in Academia

Thesis directed by Professor Joanne Belknap

This thesis investigates the experiences of a group of students who are underrepresented within academia – degree seeking undergraduates that identify as being first generation and/or low income and/or students of color who are enrolled in a predominantly white four year institution of higher education. The mixed-methods research design utilizes an online survey questionnaire that was completed by 62 students who comprise the sample as well as semi-structured interviews with eight (8) of the survey participants. A case study approach is taken in the analysis of the interviews. Through the application of W. E. B. Du Bois’ concepts of the second-sight, double consciousness, the color-line, and the color-bar as well as the metaphor of the Veil, insights into Reiland Rabaka’s lifeworlds and lifestruggles of underrepresented students are attained. Barriers that students encounter as well as factors that impact retention and acculturation are also investigated. Of pertinent interest is that some of the interviewed students appear to be developing early stages of double consciousness. Analysis of some of the case studies indicate that Peggy McIntosh’s “invisible knapsack” can be applied to the lifeworlds of first-generation students. The manifestation of double consciousness becomes relevant when the majority of interviewees recognize the access that they as students lack to privileges and power within academia. The case studies overall provide qualitative insights into the Matrix of Domination and shifts in the collective consciousness since the time that Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* which are not discussed within prior studies. It may now be time, over a

century after Du Bois wrote “for the problem of the Twentieth-Century is the problem of the color-line,” where there needs to be a reconceptualization of the color-line and the emergence of double consciousness. Overall, this study demonstrates how Du Bois’ insights into culture, class, and gender have significant implications for future studies. Listening to and heeding the voices of students who are underrepresented may lead to more unveilings as well as substantive Du Boisian advancements and changes within academia.

In memory of my mother, Beth, who always wanted to be a teacher.

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Caught Between Conflicting Worlds?:

A Du Boisian Study of the Experiences of Students

Who Are Underrepresented in Academia

As a white, first generation, low income college student, academia was shocking. I was keenly aware that academia was another world. Certainly not the world that I had grown-up in. “My Block,”¹ as the late rap artist Tupac Shakur would call it, was located within a world where young girls became gang members just to survive high school. Where gang members were friends and neighbors. Where graffiti was art. Where worries about money were behind my parents’ fights. It was a world where I was living better than my parents had lived. I did not live in the projects. I had enough food every day. We had a mortgaged roof over our heads. Still, you locked the doors; you did not walk alone at night. I learned to respect other people, not to stare them down. To be careful what colors you wore. A world where education, if you could survive it, was a way out.

INTRODUCTION

When I began my first semester at a predominantly white middle- to upper-middle class university I felt lost.² I had no idea how to navigate the bureaucracy that is the signature trait of many institutions of higher education.³ I did not know what college level coursework entailed.⁴ Nor was I prepared academically for the courses that I needed to graduate.⁵ I had trouble balancing the demands of my coursework with a daily hour and a half commute to campus and

¹ “My block” comes from a song titled “My Block remix” on Tupac Shakur’s (2002) album *Better Dayz*.

² Other scholars from backgrounds that are underrepresented within academia have discussed similar experiences (see Rendon 1992, London 1992, Oldfield 2007, hooks 1994 and Beal 2007).

³ Clawson and Leiblum (2008) provide an in-depth evaluation of public institutions of higher education .

⁴ Oldfield, a professor whose background is first-generation and working class, reports not knowing what college coursework would entail noting that “I did not do well during the early part of my first term [in college], and because my parents had never attended college, I couldn’t ask them for advice on how to do better. I had to figure it out on my own” (2007:6).

⁵ Byrd and MacDonald (2005) found that some of the first-generation students in their study reported being under-prepared academically. Beal (2007) provides similar observations in her review of relevant literature.

an off campus job.⁶ While my more privileged peers spoke of their plans for exotic vacations, I thought of the full time job that awaited me. To sum it up, I felt as though I had entered another world, a world in which those around me appeared to innately possess the knowledge and skills that I was lacking.⁷

At the time I was not familiar with the language that is often used to describe students from my background. I did not know that I was lacking “cultural capital” (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1990), nor that my family qualified as the “working poor” (Ehrenreich 2001). I am the oldest child of a custodian who comes home each night with cuts on his hands that never heal. In addition to a full time maintenance job, my father cleans buildings at night and on the weekends with my brother. Not having savings to fall back on, my family survives paycheck to paycheck. I put myself through college aided by scholarships, grants, and student loans. Part way through my undergraduate studies, I came across a text that began to describe what I was experiencing – Du Bois’s ([1903a] 1996) *Souls of Black Folk* which outlines “double consciousness.” As Du Bois observes, “One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideas in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder” ([1903a] 1996:5). While I am white identified, from Irish ancestry, this description resonated with my experiences in higher education.

I felt as though my own psyche was being torn between the world that I came from and the academic world that I currently inhabited. When I spoke to my parents and friends about

⁶ First-generation students may struggle with time-management (Bergerson 2007, Collier and Morgan 2008, Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini 2004, and Byrd and MacDonald 2005). Moreover, in a published presidential address to the Midwest Sociological Society, Farley observes that “Minority and working-class [college] students are more likely to attend part-time, to commute, and to attend campuses where these are common....With respect to time, minority and working-class students have more outside demands on their time (working to support their siblings and/or children) and are less likely to fit the ‘traditional student’ model” (2002:14).

⁷ Other first-generation scholars from class backgrounds akin to my own have provided similar reflections (see hooks 1994; Oldfield 2007; Rendon 1992 and Beal 2007).

what I was learning they told me that they felt lost, that I was way over their heads. I felt guilty sitting at home reading and writing papers while my family was scrubbing toilets, cleaning offices, and picking up trash. I got frustrated when students vehemently contended that people are poor because they want to be, that single mothers deserve what they get, that the American Dream is possible if you work hard enough, and that racism no longer exists. Although I wanted to go onto graduate school, I was not sure if I even belonged in academia.

As I struggled through my courses and learned to navigate the bureaucracy of academia, I came in contact with other students who came from backgrounds that roughly resembled my own. Through these contacts I began to learn about federally funded academic programs that provide support for “under-represented students” – students who are first generation, low income, and/or students of color.⁸ Further, I learned that my experiences in higher education were not isolated experiences. Underrepresented students that I have had contact with during the time that I have spent in the world of academia⁹ – through classes, civic engagement, mentoring, tutoring, and teaching – have expressed frustration with trying to balance the demands of coursework and jobs, disillusionment with regard to “diversity” on campus, struggles with fulfilling remedial courses, as well as awareness of privilege or what might be termed the “politics of identity and difference” (McCorkle and Myers 2003:199). Most of the students reflect upon the differences between their own backgrounds and those of the majority of students at the university¹⁰. Some express an enhanced consciousness of how these differences – especially if they are students of color – become apparent in academic settings such as the

⁸ The programs that I participated in as an undergraduate were Federal TRIO Programs. These programs are “educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds” (U.S. Department of Education 2008).

⁹ First generation and/or low income and/or students of color and/or non-traditional students.

¹⁰ Also see Beal 2007.

classroom¹¹. While a few academics might discount these observations attributing them to over-generalizations, those that possess the sociological imagination – the ability to decipher the connections between what appear to be individual problems and larger public issues – know that “[n]either the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” (Mills [1959] 2000:3).

The Research Problem

This study investigates the experiences of a group of undergraduate students who are underrepresented within academia – degree seeking undergraduates enrolled in a predominantly white four year institution of higher education that identify as being first generation and/or low income and/or students of color. The overall research problem that inspired this study is: Why do low income, first generation, non-traditional, and/or students of color continue to remain “under-represented” within academia? The mixed-methods research design utilizes an online survey questionnaire that was completed by all students who comprise the sample and as well as standardized semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of the participants. Although this study cannot fully address the previous question because it is multi-faceted, it has the potential to provide insight into a component of the problem through an investigation of the nuanced experiences of undergraduates who are first generation and/or low income and/or students of

¹¹ hooks, a distinguished scholar and professor who identifies as black, working class, and first-generation, shares similar experiences - “When I first entered university settings I felt estranged from this new environment. I initially believed those feelings were because of differences in racial and cultural background. However, as time passed it was more evident that this estrangement was in part a reflection of class difference....the constant evocation of materially privileged class experience (usually that of the middle class) as a universal norm that not only set those of us from working-class backgrounds apart but effectively excluded those who were not privileged from discussions, from social activities” (1994:181). Rendon (1992), a professor who identifies as a Latina who is first generation and from a lower income background, also reflects upon experiences of isolation and alienation within a reflexive account of her experiences in academia. Further, Oldfield observes that “I still marvel at how little I understood about the higher-social-class sensibilities of university life when I started college” (2007:2).

color attending a predominantly white Research One university,¹² barriers that students encounter, as well as factors that impact retention and acculturation.

Primary Research Questions

- 1) To what extent do underrepresented students develop double consciousness?
 - a. If it does occur, at what point does this development begin?
 - b. What affect does the development of double consciousness have on students?
- 2) To what extent do underrepresented students feel that they belong in academia?
 - a. What factors influence a student's perception of their ability to acculturate or lack thereof?
- 3) What sustains underrepresented students as they pursue higher education?
- 4) What are some of the obstacles¹³ that students encounter?

Background Information

The autobiographical experiences described above¹⁴ provided the inspiration a mixed-methods study of underrepresented students - first generation¹⁵ and/or low income and/or students of color - that will be described within the pages that follow. I have been honing elements of the preceding chapters of the thesis during the course of my graduate studies. Simply stated, this study investigates the experiences of a group of students who historically have been, and continue to remain, underrepresented within academia. For the purposes of the study, "underrepresented students" are defined as degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled in a four

¹² This has been changed to "doctoral/research universities extensive" by the Carnegie Foundation.

¹³ Specifically academic barriers that underrepresented students may encounter.

¹⁴ Rubin and Rubin note that ideas for "qualitative research topics" come from "life experiences...the researcher's personality; from ethnic, racial, or sexual identity" (1995:49).

¹⁵ Parent(s) or guardian(s) do not possess a four year college degree.

year, predominantly white, research one¹⁶, institution of higher education that identify as: low income, first generation, and/or students of color.¹⁷ Research that evaluates underrepresented students has brought to light some of the varying experiences that students have and has enumerated barriers that are faced (see Orbe 2004; Inman and Mayes 1999; London 1992; Byrd and MacDonald 2005; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini 2004; also see Beal 2007¹⁸) but a number of these articles either focus on students attending community colleges (Inman and Mayes 1999; London 1992) or include students that entered a four year institution after attending a community college (Byrd and MacDonald 2005; Orbe 2004; Rendon 1992). Attaining a degree from a junior college does not provide access to the same career opportunities and earnings potential that a degree from a four year institution of higher education provides, especially a research one institution. Through the extension of Du Bois' concept of "double consciousness" and the metaphor of the "Veil" ([1903a] 1996) this thesis contributes to the growing body of knowledge regarding the experiences of students who are underrepresented by providing insight into barriers that underrepresented students attending a predominantly white research one institution of higher education contend with as well as factors that impact retention, acculturation, and assimilation.

Overview of the Relevant Research

Recent research has evaluated the impact that demographics such as first generation status, socio-economic status, and racial identification may have on the educational goals and

¹⁶ This has been changed to "doctoral/research universities extensive" by the Carnegie Foundation.

¹⁷ Bergerson observes that "as higher education works its way into the twenty-first century, college student retention continues to hold the attention of both scholars and practitioners. Of particular concern is the retention and degree completion of students who come from traditionally marginalized populations; specifically, students of color, first-generation college students and students from working-class backgrounds" (2007:99).

¹⁸ Note that Beal (2007) also included under-represented minority students in her study who may not have been first generation and low income.

attainments of U.S. students. Potential first generation college students represent approximately one-fourth of all graduating high school seniors (Gibbons and Shoffner 2004) and the number of first generation students who are enrolling in college and universities in the United States has been increasing (Orbe 2004). Many of these students do not possess the skills and resources that will enable them to attain a college degree (Myers, Olsen, Seftor, Young, and Tuttle 2004:1). Furthermore, the status of being first generation often intersects with the status of being from a lower income family and/or a racial minority. As the U.S. Department of Education observes, “those who face some of the greatest barriers to pursuing postsecondary education often include young adults from low-income families and families where neither parent has acquired a bachelor’s degree; often, these same students are students of color” (Myers et al. 2004:1). Many underrepresented college students contend with the negotiation of these “multiple identities” (Orbe 2004) as they enter higher education.

Students who are first generation, low income, and/or students of color often experience difficult transitions to higher education as they find that they are under-prepared academically and that they lack family and financial support (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini 2004; Byrd and MacDonald 2005). Further, these underrepresented students may experience culture shock, alienation, and increased racial consciousness when they attend predominantly white institutions (Wallace and Bell 1999; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, Thompson 2004).

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Academically it was a rough transition I did not feel prepared, classes were very difficult very exam oriented as opposed to high school when you have participation and homework. A big part of the grade is the exam. Then take the test and perform well. In that sense it was a rough transition. Also, time management was very difficult. I consider myself a student that has to work hard, put in the time, not cram the night before and do well on a test. And then also perform well in school.

- David¹⁹

[A]cademically - most of the people i met seem more prepared for college than i was, and financially they had the support of their family when i didn't.

- Gloria²⁰

As recent research documents, students who are underrepresented often experience difficult transitions to higher education as they find that they are under-prepared academically and that they lack family and financial support (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini 2004; Byrd and MacDonald 2005). Many of these students are engaged in the negotiation of intersecting identities, or what might be termed “multiple identities” (Orbe 2004). Further, students of color are likely to experience culture shock²¹, alienation²², and increased racial consciousness when they attend predominantly white institutions (Wallace and Bell 1999; Davis Dias-Bowie, Greenburg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, and Thompson 2004), while students who do not come from a Christian background rooted in one of the Protestant sects – such as Jews,

¹⁹ Survey respondent/interviewee.

²⁰ Name changed to protect confidentiality. Survey respondent.

²¹ Culture shock can be defined as, “the disorientation that people feel when they encounter cultures radically different from their own and believe that they cannot depend on their own taken-for granted assumptions about life” (Kendall 2005:95). Within the context of academia, students who are from backgrounds that are historically underrepresented are encountering the culture of the academe which may substantially differ from the student’s own cultural background. See LeCompte (1978) for a discussion of the culture shock that teachers can experience.

²² Alienation “denotes the estrangement of individuals from themselves and others” (Ambercrombie, Hill and Turner ([1984] 2000:11). Seeman provides insight into varieties of alienation which include “powerlessness; meaninglessness; normlessness; isolation; self-estrangement; and social isolation” (1975:93; for insight into the evolution of the varieties also see 1959:783-91 and 1972:467-527).

Muslims, and Catholics – may feel alienated from their classmates in particular classroom settings, during daily interactions, or at events that take place on campus.

So why might students who are underrepresented experience difficult transitions to higher education? Why do some of these students experience culture shock? Essentially, underrepresented students are encountering a world that is immensely different than the worlds in which they grew up. If they are first-generation, low income students, the highest level of education that their parents have attained is high school. It is likely that many of their parents support their families by working blue collar jobs (London 1992:6). Furthermore, students of color who are attending predominantly white institutions may be struck by the lack of racial diversity among the student body, faculty, and staff (Douglas 1998; Davis et al. 2004; Wallace and Bell 1999; also see Beal 2007 for a discussion of cultural differences).

Implications of Being First Generation

Independent all my life challenging at times but advisor walkin me through – waived application fees and whatnot it was fairly easy. Academics were hard. No office hours in high school – only had office hours if you were on detention. Talked with teachers knew them but they were also less intimidating in high school. No, I did not go to office hours my first semester in college. Was not going to do that just too scared. Not doing well - why would teacher want to help you at the end of the semester? So later on you do learn go to office hours early on but I did I would probably be too shy to go in. On top of the intimidation from one who has a PhD. I did not even know someone with a PhD, maybe in high school but I didn't know. No one in my family had gone and completed college so....

- Rachel²³

Potential first generation students represent one-fourth of all graduating high school seniors (Gibbons and Shoffner 2004; Horn and Nunez 2000) and the number of first generation students who are enrolling in colleges and universities in the United States has been increasing

²³ Survey respondent/interviewee

(Orbe 2004). Yet, many of these students do not have the skills and resources that will allow them to attain a college degree (see Beal 2007).

Factors that May Influence the Attainment of a College Degree

In a qualitative study conducted that assessed the college readiness of first generation students, Byrd and MacDonald (2005) interviewed eight participants who were currently enrolled at a small urban university. In regard to college readiness, the participants stressed the importance of the following skills and abilities: time management, having a goal and being willing to apply oneself, self-advocacy, and strong academic skills in reading, writing, and math (Byrd and MacDonald 2005). The findings indicate that what the researchers term ‘family factors’ also appear to contribute to the college readiness of first generation students. While three of the participants talked about how they had previously been unable to enroll in and/or continue in college due to family concerns, six talked about positive parental influences and three spoke about being motivated to attain a higher level of education than their parents had (Byrd and MacDonald 2005). In addition, participants reported that their work experiences and career motivations aided them in deciding to attain a college degree – such as wanting to “do better than their parents had done” and the experience of working at a “dead end job” (Byrd and MacDonald 2005: 7). Of pertinent interest is that all of the participants talked about high school and previous community college experience, and seven reported that they felt unprepared for college (Byrd and MacDonald 2005). Reflecting upon the study, the researchers concluded that, “one distinctive finding of this study is that first-generation students’ life experiences contributed to the development of skills perceived as crucial to success in college. In other words, a student’s

work experience and family motivations gave [them]...the skills that prepared them for college” (Byrd and MacDonald 2005: 9)²⁴.

Pascarella et al. (2004) also sought insight into the experience of first generation students as well as the benefits that they may attain from attending college. Their study did so through an investigation of what net differences may exist between first generation students and non-first generation students in regard to their college experiences – both academic and extracurricular. The sample population was composed of students who participated in the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL) which is a federally funded, longitudinal study.

The study findings regarding academic experience indicate that non-first generation students were more likely than first generation students to enter colleges that employed selective admission criteria (Pascarella et al. 2004). Once enrolled, first generation students completed fewer credit hours, had lower grades after their third year of college, and worked more hours than non-first generation students. In addition, first generation students generally had lower levels of degree plans than non-first generation students (Beal 2007 reports similar findings from prior literature). It is important to note that although these findings were significant the “magnitude of the effects was quite modest” (Pascarella et al. 2004: 270).

In regard to extracurricular experience, the findings indicate that first generation students were less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities²⁵ than non-first generation students. When the first-generation students *were* involved in such activities they gained “stronger positive benefits” from the activities than the non-first generation students did (Pascarella et al. 2004: 273-274). However, when extracurricular activities included work responsibilities,

²⁴ Beal makes a similar observation in the introduction to her study of McNair Scholars noting that for herself “School really was a resource that I had to draw upon to build my skills for a vocation” (2007:12).

²⁵ Such as interactions with peers outside of the classroom.

intercollegiate athletics, or volunteer work, the activities had more of a negative impact on outcomes for first-generation students than non-first generation students. In summary, Pascarella et al. concluded that, “compared to other students, first-generation college students tend to be significantly handicapped in terms of the types of institutions they attend and the kinds of experiences that they have during college” (2004: 275). Moreover, they contend that their findings suggest that the level of postsecondary education that a parent has attained has a “significant unique influence on the academic selectivity of the institution that a student attends, the nature of the academic and nonacademic experiences one has during college, and, to a modest extent, the cognitive and noncognitive outcomes of college” (Pascarella et al. 2004: 275).

Orbe (2004) also explored the implications that being first generation can have in a qualitative study that utilized focus groups and in-depth interviews on six college campuses across three Midwestern States. The sample population consisted of first generation students who were attending or had attended these colleges. Within the focus groups, participants addressed how they experienced the status of being a first-generation college student. The researcher found that many of the participants reported that they were conscious of being a first generation student “every day” which was termed “high saliency” (Orbe 2004: 137). The participants also discussed how the experience of being a first generation college student motivated them, as well as the pressures they felt because of this status – such as knowing that their families and communities were counting on them. Orbe observes that “the centrality of their FGC [first generation college] student identity served as a key motivator for success” (2004: 137). Moreover, participants addressed the hardships they had gone through and expressed awareness that they did not have access to privileges that non-first generation students had. A number of the participants noted that they had put themselves through school (Orbe 2004).

A smaller portion of the participants discussed how their first generation status was not a central component of their identities, often describing it as a component of their identity that was “highly situational” (Orbe 2004: 138). For instance, many of the participants reported that they were more aware of the status of being first generation during their first few days of college and during graduation. Of particular interest is that “students of color, students from a lower socioeconomic status, and nontraditional female students most often described a high saliency regarding their first generation status” while first generation students who were “White, from a middle to high socioeconomic status, and of traditional college age were more likely to experience being a first-generation college student with variable salience” (Orbe 2004: 140). Another pertinent finding from the study was that first generation students “appear to lack any sense of community with other groups of FGC [first generation college] students” even though the students expressed that they were more “likely to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences with other FGC students” (Orbe 2004: 144). Thus, Orbe concludes that when the notion of a collective ‘we’ (i.e., being part of a community of first generation students) is absent, families, roommates, and friends have a substantial influence on how a first generation student’s “identity is enacted” (2004: 144).

Identities

It has made me more rooted in my identity as a Chicano. i've felt that i need something to hold on to, and my identity is the core of who I am, and I am unwilling to let that go, so it has just made me more rooted in myself.

- XicanoDelPueblo²⁶

As Burke observes, identities can be conceptualized as “sets of meanings people hold for themselves that define ‘what it means’ to be who they are as persons, as role occupants, and as group members” (2004:5). Thus, the identities of students who are pursuing higher education can

²⁶ Survey respondent

be understood as a combination of the meanings that they associate with their definition of self, the roles they inhabit, and groups to which they belong. The meanings that individuals possess comprise what Burke terms an “identity standard” that “serves as a reference with which persons compare their perceptions of self-relevant meanings in the interactive situation” (2004:5). Within the context of academia, interactive situations vary and can take a number of forms such as those that occur within dorms, classrooms, academic programs, informal and formal social gatherings, and student groups.

Theoretically the sets of meanings that people hold will remain stable when these meanings are “verified” through the process of social interaction within specific situations; however, when there is a discrepancy between the meanings that an individual holds and the “situational” meanings that they are exposed to “people will act so as to counteract the disturbance and restore the match in meanings between perceptions and [identity] standard” (Burke 2004:5). Presumably, within academia individuals are able to verify the meanings that they hold through social interactions that take place within classrooms, public spaces,²⁷ academic programs, and groups. When an individual is able to do so, the “identity standard” (Burke 2004:5) that he or she holds will be verified. If an individual is not able to do so he or she will need to find a means through which the disturbance can be dealt with. As Hurst (2007) found in a study of working class students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds, students may attempt to assimilate into the academic culture that surrounds them by rejecting the cultural background that they come from, or they may embrace their roots and refuse to assimilate (also see hooks 1994). An individual’s position within the academy enables or constrains his or her ability to verify the identity standard that they hold.

²⁷ Student centers, cafeterias, libraries, etc.

When the experiences of a group are conflated into dichotomous categories such as female/male, working-class/middle-class, low income/middle to upper income, non-white/white, and first-generation/non-first generation, the nuanced differences *among* groups are lost and only those *between* groups are focused on (see Alarcon 2003). Such conflations disregard the richness of individual experiences – how people’s lives are not simply shaped by one identity, but rather are framed by intersecting identities (Hurst 2007:87; also see Collins 2000). Gender, social class, racial identification (Stuber 2006:291), and/or first-generation status, may assume saliency depending on the interactive situation. Thus, while pursuing higher education students may engage in the negotiation of what Orbe (2004) terms “multiple-identities.” Moreover, an individual’s structural position influences the role(s) that he or she inhabits, the groups that he or she is part of, as well as the level of applicable cultural capital that she or he possesses.

Intersecting Identities

Its cliché but I believe that part that with education we can overcome a lot of obstacles for like our communities, our underrepresented communities because we are breaking the cycle that the system puts in us. Like you know your going to do like your parents or things like that. For you it was easy to break that cycle – family support and because of the ideas that you have to go to school. It was really easy to get out of that system because of support of my family. One student at a time, one community at a time take[s us] out of system that oppressing those underrepresented communities.

- Mooky²⁸

I don’t think can hide any aspects of my identity. The biggest aspects of my identity cannot hide – religion and culture. Because I don’t want to that I have a hijab on. My culture. No matter what I tell people will look at me and I am sure will at least say she’s different – she’s not from America she’s from somewhere else. People say where you are from assuming not from here even though I grew up here since 3 years old. And pretty much am American.

- KA²⁹

²⁸ Survey respondent/interviewee.

²⁹ Survey respondent/interviewee.

Many students who are underrepresented are negotiating intersecting identities (Collins 2000). Depending on the social environment, one identity may take precedence over another (Orbe 2004). Students of color often find that their racial identity takes precedence over their other identities because they are not white identified, especially when they attend predominantly white institutions (Davis et al. 2004). Low income students may find that their family's economic status takes precedence during interactions with peers whose family's economic status is higher. Shopping trips to the mall, vacations to popular destinations over break, or participating in recreational activities such as skiing are often out of the question. A student's first-generation status may be salient when he or she is struck with a bureaucracy that he or she has no idea how to navigate. Unlike many of their peers, first generation students cannot seek out advice from their parents regarding how to study for exams and write at the college level, nor seemingly simple things such as what office hours are or what to expect from their academic advisor. In essence, they do not possess same levels of what might be termed applicable "cultural capital" (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 2000) that their more privileged peers possess (Collier and Morgan 2008; Bergerson 2007; and Oldfield 2007; Beal 2007). Because cultural capital is gained from the culture that a student inhabits before academia as well as those that surround them, students from lower income/working-class³⁰ backgrounds (Oldfield 2007) and students of color may also enter the academy with levels of applicable cultural capital³¹ that substantially differ from those of their more privileged peers (Bergerson 2007; see Farley 2002 and Tett 2000

³⁰ The definition of "working-class" and "low income" appears to vary by scholar. For instance Oldfield (2007) differentiates between working class and first-generation students, while Stuber (2006) defined working-class as encompassing first-generation (see note below). Because the TRIO programs distinguish between income level and first-generation status (see the U.S. Department of Education 2008 for further info), this study differentiates between students who are "first-generation" and students who are "low income" (which will encompass students from working-class backgrounds).

³¹ Beal terms this "academic capital" and defines it as "a product of one's experiences in educational institutions throughout one's life and is profoundly impacted by one's family or natal background" (2007:22).

for information regarding students of color and working-class students; also see Beal 2007).

Thus, as Beal observes, “Socioeconomic class differences, family educational background and racial stratification are forces that continue to impede student progress in the educational arena” (2007:22).

Awareness of Privilege or Lack Thereof

My classes that pertain to my major have made me more aware of the fact the individuals like me are under[r]epresented in college. My college experience has instilled a sense of pride in me and has enabled me to embrace my identities.

- Lily³²

I realized that I come from a very privileged background and had a lot of opportunities in my youth that other[s] did not.

- Alex³³

Students who are first generation may not be aware of the implications of the status when they attend a college in which they comprise the majority of students (such as a community college – see Beal 2007), while those that attend a research one institution may be aware of the implications associated with the status.³⁴ Awareness of class privilege appears to be salient. In a study of how gender intersects with class, working–class students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds indicated that they were aware of “who could enter higher education and, more importantly, who could not” demonstrating that “they were positioned as ‘other’ and continued to construct themselves in this way” (Tett 2000: 188). In another recent study regarding how

³² Survey respondent. Name changed to protect confidentiality.

³³ Survey respondent, name changed to protect confidentiality.

³⁴ For an in-depth exploration of the “tiered system” that is arising within higher education see Clawson and Leiblum 2008.

students conceptualize and discuss class privilege, white working-class students³⁵ “described themselves as aware of class differences” from an early age and commented on “how their experiences at college further honed their social class vision” (Stuber 2006:297-298). These students also claimed that “class matters in that it gives one a ‘different’ outlook,’ puts pressure on one[’s] ability to work harder, results in weaker academic preparation, and reduces one’s ability to take advantage of the many opportunities offered in college” (Stuber 2006:303). Conversely, white upper-middle-class students perceived “their privilege as largely normative – particularly within the college context –and develop[ed] little awareness of individuals occupying lower class positions” (Stuber 2006:311; also see Perry 2007). Moreover, racial identification may be salient, for students who are white may not think about the implications of inhabiting an unmarked category when they attend predominantly white institutions because “white people and white culture” are “ubiquitous and unchallenged” (Perry 2007:394).

The Implications of the Culture of Academia

Maybe more respect as in I am a student you know kinda thing. So in class discussions you’re talking and speaking like I am a student; I’m here to get higher education just like everyone else and those kinds of things. More laid back with friends and family. More laid back? More open, not so like upright and ready. It’s informal I guess, not so formal. Does that make sense?

- KA

Presumably, a student’s awareness that he or she occupies a normative or a marginal position in the academy impacts his or her interpretation and performance of the role of student. This is pertinent because “[c]ulture makes available the categories that name the various roles and groups...that make up the social structure” (Burke 2004:6). The culture of academia ascribes the roles and groups that are present within the institutional structure.

³⁵ Within the study, working-class students were defined as students whose “parents or guardians have not completed a four-year degree and if they hold jobs in lower-skilled, lower-paying manual or service occupations” (Stuber 2006:292).

The primary role available to individuals who are seeking a college degree is the role of student. With the role comes expectations regarding how students should interact within classroom settings, academic preparation, individual responsibility, and independence. As Collier and Morgan observe, “university success requires mastery of the ‘college student’ role. Mastering the college student role enables young people to understand their instructor’s expectations and to apply their existing skills to meet those expectations successfully” (2008:425-426). Thus, the role of student implies a counter-role (Burke 2004) – that of teacher – which is imbued with expectations such as high levels of competence of the academic material at hand, the ability to convey knowledge, and responsibility for what goes on within classroom settings.

The counter-role of teacher determines the role expectations³⁶ for students enrolled in a given course and these expectations may vary. However, in a study of first-generation³⁷ and traditional³⁸ student interpretations of faculty expectations, Collier and Morgan (2008) found that faculty members stipulate similar role expectations for students via syllabi. The expectations include: the amount of time that needs to be devoted to coursework, strict standards for written assignments, and the utilization of office hours for questions and concerns (Collier and Morgan 2008:432-434). The students who participated in the study appeared to share the “same general perspective” regarding faculty expectations, at times disregarding or down-playing what professors said or re-interpreting the messages that faculty conveyed which lead to

³⁶ Role expectations for students can be defined as the behaviors that teachers expect the students enrolled in their course will engage in.

³⁷ It is likely that many of the first-generation students in this study were also from a low income background. Collier and Morgan note that at Portland State University (where the study was completed) “18 percent of PSU students are first-generation students, and of that group 12% qualify as both low income and first-generation students” (2008:430).

³⁸ In Collier and Morgan’s study “traditional” was defined as “those from more traditional, highly educated backgrounds (students with at least one college graduate parent)” (2008:431).

misunderstandings (Collier and Morgan 2008:434). Yet, there were substantial differences between how traditional and first-generation students interpreted the role expectations that faculty members put forth.

Although both groups of students agreed that the faculty were not realistic about how much time students had to devote to their coursework, students who were first-generation “reported markedly more problems related to time management and placing priority on the time they devoted to their classes” observing that “additional commitments” (such as jobs) and the possession of “fewer outside resources” than traditional students contributed to their time management difficulties (Collier and Morgan 2008:436; also see Bergerson 2007:106-107). While both groups of students felt that faculty members needed to be clearer regarding “their expectations in general, and assignments in particular, first generation students’ [sic.] wanted even more detail than their traditional counterparts” in areas such as “how to take notes, descriptions of assignments... specifics about tests...the costs [sic.] of books and the value of class participation” (Collier and Morgan 2008:437). Further, first generation students expressed a concern that traditional students did not – contact with faculty members. The students reported that “how a professor spoke to the class during lecture directly influenced how willing they were to approach the professor with a question” (Collier and Morgan 2008:438). Two barriers to approaching a professor included the use of jargon and higher levels of vocabulary during lectures. Moreover, some of the students reported that they did not understand that what office hours were intended for (Collier and Morgan 2008:438-439). Other studies that address barriers that students who are underrepresented within academia may grapple with report similar findings (see Oldfield 2007; Farley 2002; Bergerson 2007; also see Beal 2007).

Thus, there appears to be a disjunction between faculty role expectations for students and a student's ability to interpret and successfully fulfill the expectations, especially if the student comes from a background that is underrepresented within academia (see Beal for a discussion of "academic self" 2007:104). When a student from a more privileged background is able to master the role of college student (Collier and Morgan 2008), this not only assists the individual as they pursue their own academic ambitions but re-affirms the role expectations for students that are put forth by professors. Thus, professors come to expect that the role expectations that they put forth are reasonable and often fail to understand why students may be unable to meet the expectations, which has significant implications for first generation students (see Collier and Morgan 2008), working-class students (see Oldfield 2007), and students of color (see Farley 2002). The ability, or inability, to meet the role expectations for students that are set forth by institutions as well as individual teachers combined with the possession, or lack of, applicable cultural capital has significant implications for the successful navigation of academia.

The Significance of Cultural Capital.

Applicable cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1990) is comprised of³⁹ the "knowledge, skills, education, and other advantages a person has that make the educational system a comfortable, familiar environment in which he or she can succeed easily" (Oldfield 2007:2). Stryker observes that people "learn the categories, as well as the meanings and expectations associated with the categories, from others around us and from the culture in which we are embedded" (Stryker 1980; Burke 2004:7). If students enter academia with varying degrees of applicable cultural capital that are gained from the culture that they inhabited before academia as well as those that surround them, students whose parents do not possess a college

³⁹ Various scholars conceptualize "cultural capital" (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 2000) differently (for examples see Collier and Morgan 2008:428 and Bergerson 2007:113). The definition of cultural capital provided by Oldfield (2007:2) was selected because it best represents how I conceptualize cultural capital.

degree – first generation students – do not enter academia with the same levels of applicable cultural capital that students whose parent(s) possess a college degree enter with (Collier and Morgan 2008; Bergerson 2007; and Oldfield 2007). Moreover, students from lower income/working-class⁴⁰ backgrounds (Oldfield 2007) and students of color may also enter with the academy with degrees of cultural capital that substantially differ from those of their more privileged peers (Bergerson 2007; also see Farley 2002 and Tett 2000 for information regarding students of color and working-class students). Applicable cultural capital has significant implications for the successful navigation of academia, including the ability to meet the role expectations of students that are set forth by institutions as well as individual teachers. Thus, students who come from privileged backgrounds (i.e. white, middle- to upper-class, and non-first generation) are in position in which they are better situated for academic success (Clawson and Leiblum 2008; Collier and Morgan 2008).

Structural Reproduction

Well the world is complex, but it is driven by forces of racism, sexism, homophobia and so on. I can see this by looking at the patterns of who is better off, has more access to resources and so on. I also know that not everyone knows this so we don't act against it but we make it part of our life. Our institutions are set that way as well. I have learned that success is not a matter of how hard you try it is a matter of who you are and that is a problem.

- Mooky⁴¹

Burke and others (see Serpe and Stryker 1987) have observed that social structure is “produced and reproduced” through the verification of an individual identity (2004:13). Thus,

⁴⁰ The definition of “working-class” and “low income” appears to vary by scholar. For instance Oldfield (2007) differentiates between working class and first-generation students, while Stuber (2006) defined working-class as encompassing first-generation (see note below). Because the TRIO programs distinguish between income level and first-generation status (see the Department of Education 2008 for further info), the study that I undertook differentiated between students who are “first-generation” and students who are “low income” (which will encompass students from working-class backgrounds).

⁴¹ Survey respondent/interviewee

the structure of academia is maintained through the verification of the identities of those engaged within it. Moreover, when a role identity is verified this “helps sustain the role and the counter-roles to which it is attached” and when a group identity is verified not only does this aid in the sustenance of the group, but also “maintain[s] the division between in-group and out-group” (Burke 2004:13). When a student from a more privileged background is able to master the role of college student (see Collier and Morgan 2008), this not only assists the individual as they pursue their own academic ambitions but re-affirms the role expectations for students that are put forth by professors. Professors come to expect that the role expectations that they put forth are reasonable and often fail to understand why students may be unable to meet the expectations, which has significant implications for first generation students (see Collier and Morgan 2008), working-class students (see Oldfield 2007), and students of color (see Farley 2002). Thus, students who come from privileged backgrounds⁴² appear to be in a position in which they are better situated for academic success (Clawson and Leiblum 2008; Collier and Morgan 2008; Beal 2007). The repercussions of the possession or lack of applicable cultural capital extends beyond individual students⁴³, for the ability, or inability, to master the role of college student primarily depends upon “family background” which provides “children of the dominant class [with] a set of advantages that contribute to the reproduction of the existing social order” (Collier and Morgan 2008:443). Beal provides a similar insight observing that the TRIO program that she studied “seeks to interrupt the process of social reproduction [such as that described above] by

⁴² i.e. white, middle- to upper-class, and non-first generation.

⁴³ While a few academics might discount these observations attributing them to over-generalizations, those that possess the sociological imagination – the ability to decipher the connections between what appear to be individual problems and larger public issues – know that “[n]either the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” (Mills [1959] 2000:3).

helping its students construct and identity contrary to what might have been predicted for them and an alternative to the white, Western European model” (2007:53).

Implications of the In-Group and Out-Group Dichotomy.

I saw no faces that resembled mine, no people who reminded me of home, I saw people with more money than I could comprehend.

- XicanoDelPueblo⁴⁴

To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body.

- bell hooks⁴⁵

The maintenance of the in-group/out-group dichotomy is pertinent to the study of students who are “under-represented” within academia, for the term under-represented implies that a difference exists between under-represented students and unmarked “generic” students⁴⁶. As Alarcon asserts, when groups that wield greater social power are able to use “generic terms” to speak about themselves, those who have less social power are forced to use marked terms. Just as many women have been forced to call themselves “women of color” (Alarcon 2003:409), underrepresented students may also contend with marked categories.

Within academia a binary is set up wherein the marked implies the unmarked such as underrepresented/represented, non-traditional/traditional, student of color/white student, faculty of color/white faculty, female engineer/male engineer, first generation/ 2nd, 3rd, 4thgeneration, low income/middle to upper income. Those that inhabit unmarked positions are privileged with not having to think about the implications of inhabiting a marked category on a daily basis (see hooks [1984] 2000). As Harlow observed within a study that illustrated the effect that a professor’s racial identification has on her or his experiences within the classroom, “[w]hite

⁴⁴ Survey respondent

⁴⁵ [1984] 2000:xvi

⁴⁶ Collier and Morgan (2008) defined these students as “traditional students.”

professors operate in a space where whiteness is crediting and privileged, but is invisible and thus taken for granted” (2003:362). Further, white upper-middle-class students who participated in a recent study of how students conceptualize and discuss social class perceived “their privilege as largely normative – particularly within the college context –and develop[ed] little awareness of individuals occupying lower class positions” (Stuber 2006:311; also see Perry 2007).

Conversely, those who inhabit marked positions are often keenly aware of their marginal position (hooks [1984] 2000; Alarcon 2003). White working-class students⁴⁷ who participated in the study above “described themselves as aware of class differences” from an early age and commented on “how their experiences at college further honed their social class vision” (Stuber 2006:297-298). These students also claimed that “class matters in that it gives one a ‘different’ outlook,’ puts pressure on one[’s] ability to work harder, results in weaker academic preparation, and reduces one’s ability to take advantage of the many opportunities offered in college” (Stuber 2006:303). Working-class students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds who participated in another study, indicated that they were aware of “who could enter higher education and, more importantly, who could not” demonstrating that “they were positioned as ‘other’ and continued to construct themselves in this way” (Tett 2000: 188). Presumably, a student’s awareness that she or he occupies a marginal position can impact his or her interpretation and performance of the role of student. Moreover, in contrast to the privileged space that white professors inhabit, Harlow found that “African American professors function in a space where blackness is discrediting and disvalued” (2003:362). Potentially this influences how black professors perform and interpret the counter-role of teacher, because the “reality for many African American

⁴⁷ Within the study, working-class students were defined as students whose “parents or guardians have not completed a four-year degree and if they hold jobs in lower-skilled, lower-paying manual or service occupations” (Stuber 2006:292).

professors is that there will...be students who question their competency, credentials, and ability to teach and assess students' work" (Harlow 2003:362).

Categories Related to Group Membership.

When the category "under-represented" is used within academic discourse the reference group for this category, "represented," is not mentioned. Rather the generic (Alarcon 2003:409) category of "student" connotes hegemonic assumptions (Alarcon 2003; Riley 1988) about what it means to be a student. Thus, when the category "under-represented students" is used without question, it allows for the perpetuation of ideological systems (Scott 1992:25) and the maintenance of the existing social structure that define who (generic) "students" are. Moreover, when categories related to group membership such as "first generation students," "low income students," and "students of color" are used these categories imply that those who inhabit these groups are members of an "out-group" whilst students who are not given these markers inhabit an "in-group." Theoretically this distinction aids in the maintenance and reinforcement of the identities of "unmarked" students. The distinction also appears to be applicable to faculty. As discussed above, Harlow (2003) found that black faculty members are often keenly aware of their position as "faculty of color." Furthermore, female professors, whether white, black or of "other" races, also appear to be cognizant of the limitations associated with inhabiting a marked category (for an example see Harlow 2003).

The categories related to group membership have complex gradations. For some students (or faculty) who are underrepresented, simply being present within academia is enough to mark them. Yet others are able to "pass" through academia unmarked if they so desire. For example, an African American who attends or teaches at a predominantly white institution of higher education usually inhabits a category that is marked while a White American who is/was the

first-generation in their family to attend college may never have to reveal (or even be aware) that they inhabit a marked category. Further, the marking (or un-marking) of individuals can shift, depending on the institutional context. First-generation students who attend a college in which they comprise the majority of students (such as a community college) may not be aware of the implications of being first-generation, while those who attend research one institutions may be aware of the implications associated with this status⁴⁸. Moreover, students who are white may not think about the implications of inhabiting an unmarked category when they attend predominantly white institutions because “white people and white culture” are “ubiquitous and unchallenged” (Perry 2007:394). When white students attend racially diverse institutions they may become aware of inhabiting a category that is marked. For example, in Perry’s study of how white youth at two high schools perceived whiteness, when students who attended the predominantly white school were asked “what ‘white’ meant to them, culturally and/or personally, their responses tended to be, in one form or another, ‘normal’” (2007:382). Conversely, those that attended a racially diverse school “were not dumbfounded when asked to define white culture, and most students could tell you what was white about the clothes they wore or the music to which they listened” (Perry 2007:383).

Bases for Identity Construction

When the “nature of the ties between identities in different positions within the social structure” is investigated three bases for identity may be relevant – role identity, group identity, and person identities (Burke 2004:9). According to Burke, two of these – role and group – “serve the culture’s purposes” because they are “defined in the culture” (2004:9). Thus, presumably within higher education role identities and group identities serve to maintain the culture of

⁴⁸ For an in-depth exploration of the “tiered system” that is arising within higher education see Clawson and Leiblum 2008.

academia. As previously discussed, the role identities of students are primarily determined by faculty, and the group identities of students are influenced by “in-group” and “out-group” dichotomies (see Burke 2004) which place individuals into marked or unmarked categories. Further, as Harlow (2003) discussed the ability of individual faculty members to fulfill the role expectations associated with being a teacher is at least partially determined by whether or not the faculty member inhabits a marked or unmarked category⁴⁹. The third basis for identity as identified by Burke – personal identities – are “based upon culturally recognized qualities, traits, and expectations for an individual that are internalized, become part of the individual’s identity, and serve as standards guiding the verification process” (2004:9). Personal identities are verified and controlled through social interaction. Moreover, because “high salience and strong commitment characterize personal identity” Burke asserts that this basis for identity “may operate like a master identity” (2004:10). Is this relevant for students who inhabit categories that are defined as “underrepresented”? Theoretically, individuals who inhabit marked categories (such as first generation, low income, and/or student of color) would be more likely than individuals who inhabit unmarked categories to experience their group identification as a master identity that operates within the various interactive situations that occur within the academy. Thus, one might query: Are the personal identities of underrepresented students verified through social interaction within academia, or are their identities contested? Moreover, what role does power have in terms of the ability to verify one’s identity?

Power and the Ability to Verify Identity

Cast contends that those who possess greater power should be “more able to behave in ways consistent with their identities...more able to impose an identity...and [are] more resistant

⁴⁹ In Harlow’s (2003) study the unmarked categories were white and male, while the marked categories were black and female.

to identities...[that others] seek to impose on them” (2003:186).⁵⁰ Cast asserts that individuals work to verify their identity by defining the situation (Goffman 1959), controlling “meanings in the situation so that they match identity meanings” (2002:186). There are a number of ways that this can be accomplished. Individuals may seek to “create consistency between their identity and situation meanings through their own behavior by simply acting in keeping with their own identity” or they may do so by “influencing the behavior of others” who inhabit “counter roles” (Cast 2003:186). Because of the hierarchal structure of academia, faculty members, through their counter-role of teacher, are better positioned to dictate how the role of student should be preformed and subsequently influence the behavior of students enrolled in their courses. Teachers provide a “definition of the situation” (Goffman 1959) within their classrooms, albeit some are better able to maintain the definition than others (see Harlow 2003 for a discussion of how race and gender identification can affect faculty). Collier and Morgan observe that traditional students possess higher levels of cultural capital that enable them to not only master the role of student, but to develop “a fine tuned understanding of each professor’s expectations” (2008:430). In doing so, these students are able to conform to the definition of the situation that a teacher puts forth. First generation students may struggle with simply mastering the role of student and if they are not able to do so this can result in a failure to conform to the definition of the situation.

Individuals may seek to “control the definition of the situation” by resisting the imposition of identities by other people engaged in the interaction (Cast 2003:187). When individuals structure their behavior according to the “identities that others hold” the “meanings in the situation [are altered] so that they are potentially inconsistent with the individual’s

⁵⁰ Although these assertions are based upon a study of newly married couples (see Cast 2003), they also appear to be relevant to academia.

identities” (Cast 2003:187). Thus, because individuals work to verify their own identities by controlling the definition of the situation, individuals may “resist the identities that others seek to impose by discounting such identities....[or] may work to discredit or discard the credibility” of those imposing identities (Cast 2003:187). However, when an individual does not have as much power as the person seeking to impose an identity such acts of resistance may be futile. When these insights are applied to interactions within academia, those who possess more structural and relational power in the culture of academia are in a better position to impose identities on others. When the category of “under-represented” students is compared with the generic (Alarcon 2003) category of “student” this power is evident.

Moreover, some of the markers related to the imposition of the identity of “under-represented” student are more visible than others. Students who are “first generation,” “low income,” or “working class” may not have these identities imposed on them, and may not incorporate these into their personal identities, since these identities may not be as salient because they may not be visible to others during the course of interaction (see Orbe 2004:134 for a discussion of how first-generation identification may vary). However, students who are bi-racial, African-American, Asian-American, Latina/o, Native American or from other non-white identified racial/ethnic groups, may not be able to resist the imposition of the identity “student of color,” especially on predominantly white campuses.

Imposition and Agency.

What are the implications of the inability to resist the imposition of an identity? How do individuals respond when identities are imposed on them or they are unable to verify their own identities? Anderson and Snow contend that when individuals are faced with “status affronts and subordination, especially when they are likely to be particularly demeaning, social actors tend to

respond in ways that allow them to salvage some dignity, a sense of autonomy, and even self-importance” (2001b:401-402). This is not meant to imply that students who identify as “underrepresented,” or who have that identity imposed on them, feel that they do not possess “dignity” or a “sense of autonomy,” however this does bring up the question of agency.

Scott discerns that “subjects [do] have agency”, but although they possess agency they should not be viewed as “unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather [as] subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them” (1992:34). Thus, it could be argued that the varying degrees of agency that “under-represented” students possess are framed by institutional contexts as well as the intersections of race, class, gender, and first generation status⁵¹.

When the identity of being an “underrepresented” student is conferred on an individual, or is adopted by an individual, agency is created in that this identity provides a position from which to speak. Students who are classified as “underrepresented” are able to draw-upon their experiences and thereby become the authorities regarding their own experiences. Yet, the position from which students identified as “underrepresented” speak is also a position that is constrained by the institutional contexts and ideologies that govern academic discourses. Therefore, students who are classified and/or identify as “underrepresented” can only speak certain things, and what they talk about may be read through the marked category that they inhabit (depending on whether or not the category is visible within a given situation). When a student who is identified as under-represented speaks about general issues she or he may be perceived as having a limited view, while a “generic” (Alarcon 2003) student may be seen as coming from a more encompassing viewpoint. As Anderson and Snow assert, “symbolic

⁵¹ The same argument could be made for faculty – see Harlow’s (2003) study for insights into how race and gender intersect.

expressions of social power often produce stratification in ways that diminish individual's potential participation in actions that bear directly on their well-being" (2001b:397). For example, when "racial incidents" occur on a campus, a student of color may be perceived as complaining if she or he is vocal, while a white student may not be dismissed as easily because she or he is seen as not having a personal stake in the issue. Further, depending on the political climate of the school, underrepresented students may be provided with an established platform, may experience tokenization, or they may be expected to speak for an entire group⁵².

Torn Between Two Worlds?

Anzaldua (2003) provides insight into the implications of being marked by the dominant culture, the experience of trapped between conflicting worlds, and how a new consciousness that defines itself rather than being defined might be constructed within an essay titled "La Conciencia de La Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness." La Mestiza, an Aztec term that means "torn between ways," possesses an "alien consciousness," a consciousness of the "borderlands" (p. 179). The borderlands are the spaces between/within cultures wherein *la mestiza* is "[c]radled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, [and] straddling all three cultures and their value systems" (p.180).

While Anzaldua's (2003) essay primarily concerned the experiences of Chicana/os, the notion of a consciousness of the Borderlands may be applicable to the experiences of underrepresented students in that a lot of underrepresented students in prior studies have reported experiences which indicate that they feel as though they occupy what might be termed the "Borderlands" of academia. As will be addressed later, London contended that underrepresented

⁵²Farley observes that "behaviors by white professors" including: "seeing individual black students as spokespersons for all blacks," "making assumptions about students because they are black," having "lowing expectations and assumptions about lack of ability," and "disinterest in minority research and issues" contribute to experiences of alienation and discrimination when black students attend predominantly white campuses (2002:8).

students “live and share in the life and traditions of two distinct cultures, never quite wanting or willing to break with their past, even if permitted to do so, and never fully accepted, because of prejudice, into the culture in which they seek a place” (1992:7).

As will be discussed in further detail later, it is possible that under-represented students may feel torn between two worlds – the world that they came from and the world of academia. Within the academy underrepresented students are confronted with a culture that is often different than that in which they grew-up. The demands of academic institutions often mean that their presentation of self has to be altered. Further, the very ways in which under-represented students use language – how they write and speak – usually have to be amended (Rendon 1992) so as to conform to the language of academia that demands the use of an “objective” voice (Collins 2000; also see Beal 2007), a working knowledge of jargon, and the silencing of “subjective experiences” (Collins 2000; also see Beal 2007).

Anzaldua observes that living on the borderlands creates “a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, and inner war” (2003:180). The process of grappling with this “inner war” can be a painful experience, especially in terms of the institutional framework of the academy. Often “struggle[s] of flesh” (Anzaldua 2003:180) entail the “shedding of one identity and the acquisition of another” (London 1992:8). This process is often slow and the intensity of the process can vary from student to student.

The “internal strife” that those living on the borderlands experience “results in insecurity and indecisiveness” (Anzaldua 2003:179). Underrepresented students may question if they even belong in academia. Further, they may feel more self conscious in the classroom, especially if they are a student of color at a predominantly white institution. Moreover, as Anzaldua observes, “[w]e perceive the version of reality our culture communicates” (p. 180). While the version of

reality that underrepresented students previously possessed was that of the world that they came from, once underrepresented students who have entered the academe they may find that their cultural traditions and life experiences are not valued. Thus there is discord between these two realities as they receive “multiple, often opposing messages” (Anzaldua 2003:180).

Anzaldua contends that when Chicanas/os sense “an attack on ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with a counterstance” (2003:180). This stance “refutes the dominant culture’s views and beliefs, and, for this, is profoundly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against” (Anzaldua 2003:180). Within the context of academia the counterstance that students who are underrepresented may develop is limited by rules and regulations regarding appropriate classroom behavior and what qualifies as academic work (for examples see Collier and Morgan 2008). Further, the “counterstance locks one into a dual of the oppressor and the oppressed” (Anzaldua 2003:180). Because underrepresented students may feel between the world they came from and the academic world they are currently part of, their very sense of self may be split between these two worlds. Thus, like La Mestiza, they may develop “a plural personality” and learn how to operate in “a pluralistic mode” (Anzaldua 2003:181). Orbe (2004) calls this mode the negotiation of “multiple identities.” Often these identities overlap and at times one identity may become more salient than the others.

Anzaldua tells us that La Mestiza’s self “has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its several parts. That third element is a new consciousness – a mestiza consciousness... its energy comes from continual creative motion” (2003:181). In a sense, to be able to negotiate the world of academia successfully, under-represented students have to find a way to deal with the inner war (as La Mestiza has) – essentially they need to form a new

consciousness. This new consciousness is not the same consciousness that they entered higher education with, yet it also differs from the consciousness of many of their classmates who do not come from underrepresented backgrounds. As a *student* observes, “I do not hunger for the past; it is always with me” (Rendon 1992:63).

Reflection on the Review of Relevant Literature

The institutional context of higher education appears to exert a substantial influence on the identities of students who are pursuing a college degree. Some students, particularly those who come from privileged backgrounds, are able maintain the “identity standard” (Burke 2004) that they enter the academy with, while others are not. An individual’s structural position not only enables or constrains their ability to verify the identity standard that they enter with, it also influences the role(s) that they inhabit, the groups that they are part of, and the level of applicable cultural capital that they possess. Students who come from more privileged backgrounds possess higher levels of applicable cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1990) that enable mastery of the role of student (Collier and Morgan 2008) as put forth by faculty members. Mastery of this role facilitates academic success. For students who come from backgrounds that are underrepresented within academia the ability, or inability, to master the role of student has substantial implications for individuals because “graduating from college has a major impact on life opportunities including employment, income, and asset accumulation” (Farley 2002:2). Furthermore, there are structural implications. As Clawson and Leiblum observe, a “tiered system is emerging nationally in higher education both within and between colleges and universities. Within these institutions, students who already have significant economic means and the social capital of whiteness are increasingly being rewarded and

supported, while working class students and students of color are increasingly being left to fend for themselves –with fewer and fewer services and supports” (2008:22).

Grappling With Conflicting Worlds?

I always fit in at home, but not here at [Mountain State University]. I feel i do have split personalities and live two completely different lives in different worlds.

- Breedie⁵³

Thus in light of the previously discussed research, students who are underrepresented “live and share in the life and tradition of two distinct cultures” (London 1992:6) – or what could be conceptualized as “worlds.” Students who are underrepresented within academia may find that their cultural traditions and life experiences are not valued in academia. Students may be told that their writing is not “acceptable” (Wallace and Bell 1999:322); that they need to be more “objective” (Collins 2000) and “rational” (Rendon 1992:58). The curricula rarely reflect the worlds that underrepresented students come from. Much of what is presented deals with abstract, theoretical concepts that are not readily applicable to the life experiences of underrepresented students. Moreover, much of the curriculum is based upon a Eurocentric worldview in which “objectivity” is valued over “subjectivity” (Collins 2000; also see Beal 2007). Further, underrepresented students, especially students of color, often do not see people from their backgrounds in prominent positions on campus – such as among the faculty and administration. Underrepresented students may simultaneously grapple with intersecting multiple identities and mastery of the role of student. Therefore, although the pressure to assimilate⁵⁴ into the dominant culture of higher education may be strong, many underrepresented students are not “quite willing

⁵³ Survey respondent

⁵⁴ Although London (1992) uses the term “assimilate” the term “acculturate” may be better suited. While assimilation “means totally losing your original self....Acculturate means to be able to cope within the new setting while remaining one’s self” (Lecompte 2008).

or wanting to break with their past, even if permitted to do so, and never fully accepted, because of prejudice, in the culture in which they seek a place” (London 1992:6).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is primarily based upon “double consciousness” and the metaphor of the “Veil” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996), as well as assumptions and expectations about why these may be applicable to the study of the experiences of students who are first generation and/or low income and/or students of color. This study examines the experiences of underrepresented college students through the application of Du Bois’ concept of “double consciousness” ([1903a] 1996) as outlined within *The Souls of Black Folk*. This is of particular importance since as distinguished sociologist Elijah Anderson ruefully observes, W.E.B. Du Bois is the “founding father of American sociology” yet not much of his work “has been given proper recognition; in fact it is possible to advance through a graduate program in this country without ever hearing about Du Bois” (1996:ix; Rabaka 2010:9; also see Rabaka’s 2010 discussion of the epistemic apartheid that is present within Sociology). The study will also examine the “social selves” (James [1890] 1981) with which underrepresented students contend. Such application has the potential to provide insight into how the experience of possibly developing something akin to “double consciousness” and the negotiation of multiple “social selves” may impact the degree to which underrepresented students are able to acculturate and/or assimilate into academia.

TWO CONFLICTING WORLDS

So why might students who are underrepresented experience difficult transitions to higher education? Why do many of these students experience alienation and culture shock? Essentially, underrepresented students are encountering a world that is immensely different than the world that they grew-up. If they are first-generation, low income students, the highest level of education that their parents have is high school. It is likely that many of their parents support

their families by working blue collar jobs (London 1992:6). Furthermore, students of color who are attending predominantly white institutions may be struck by the lack of racial diversity among the student body, faculty, and staff.

Moreover, many of these students are negotiating “multiple identities” (Orbe 2004) or what William James ([1890] 1981) might term “social selves” (see the section titled “Social Selves and Double Consciousness”). Depending on the social environment, one identity may take precedence over another (Orbe 2004). For instance, low income students may find that their family income status takes precedence when they are interacting with peers whose family income is much higher. Shopping trips to the mall, vacations to popular destinations over break, or participating in recreation activities such as skiing are often out of the question. A student’s first generation status may become salient when they are struck with a bureaucracy that they have no idea how to navigate. Unlike many of their peers, first generation students cannot seek out advice from their parents regarding how to study and write at the college level, and seemingly simple things such as what office hours are or what to expect from your academic advisor. In essence, they do not possess the cultural competency that their more privileged peers possess. Furthermore, students of color often find that their racial identity takes precedence over their other identities because they are not white identified, especially when they attend predominantly white institutions (Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenburg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, and Thompson 2004).

Regardless of the saliency of their multiple identities, “these students live and share in the life and traditions of two distinct cultures” (London 1992:6) – or what could be conceptualized as “worlds” (see Beal 2007 for illustrations). Underrepresented students may find that their cultural traditions and life experiences are not valued in academia. They may be told that the way

that they write is not “acceptable” (Wallace and Bell 1999:322); that they need to be more “objective” (Collins 2000) and “rational” (Rendon 1992:58; also see Rabaka 2010).

The curricula rarely reflect the world that underrepresented students come from. Much of what is presented deals with abstract, theoretical concepts that are not readily applicable to the life experiences of underrepresented students. Moreover, much of the curriculum is based upon a Eurocentric worldview in which “objectivity” is valued over “subjectivity” (Collins 2000; also see Rabaka 2010). Further, underrepresented students, especially students of color, often do not see people from their world in prominent positions on campus – such as among the faculty and administration. The people closest to the world that many underrepresented students come from often occupy the least prestigious positions, positions in which they are afforded little respect; such as maintenance, housekeeping, and other positions of service. Thus, although the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture of higher education may be strong, many underrepresented students may not be “quite wanting or willing to break with their past, even if permitted to do so, and never fully accepted, because of prejudice, in the culture in which they seek a place” (London 1992:6).

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

The Second Sight

“Intellectual activist” W.E.B. Du Bois (Rabaka 2006:732) has proposed the concept of “double consciousness” which has the potential to provide insight into why students who are underrepresented experience such difficult transitions and why these students may never be fully accepted within the academic world. Du Bois theorized that African Americans possessed a “second sight” which can be defined as the ability to perceive two worlds (Rabaka 2010: 143)

and see through the Veil that separates them. The first world was the world of Black America; the other was White America. The latter was a world in which African Americans were seen as inferior and were denied the benefits accorded to white citizens – including academic recognition, jobs that they were qualified for, and the right to vote. A clearly defined color-line separated the two worlds for as Manning Marable observes, “legal racial segregation was hegemonic throughout the United States....” ([1986] 2005: vii). Especially in the South, African Americans were denied the equal rights such as to sit where they wanted on public transportation, to patronize theaters, restaurants, and parks, and to attend the schools of their choice. As Rabaka observes the “[s]econd-sight symbolizes blacks’ ability, even in the face of adversity (i.e. holocaust, enslavement, colonization, segregation, and neo-apartheid) to see both Africa (the black world) and America’s (the white world’s) strengths and weaknesses, and the ways in which these two worlds could and should learn from and, even more, aid each other” (2010: 142).

Double Consciousness

The result of perceiving oneself through the lens of this racially colonized, apartheid world is the development of “double consciousness” which can be defined as “the particular sensation...of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on with contempt and jealousy” ([1903a] 1996: 5). The possession of “double consciousness” does not allow for “true self consciousness” but only lets one perceive oneself “through the revelation of the other world” ([1903a] 1996: 5). Thus, the concept of double consciousness elucidates the impact that racism and internalized oppression has upon the psyches and, more deeply, the souls of African Americans. Essentially there is a splitting – African Americans are forced not only to know the Black world of that they inhabit; the

development of double consciousness necessitates simultaneously knowing the White world. Therefore, the possession double consciousness means that African Americans not only know the White world, they see themselves through the lens of that world.

As experiences reported in other studies (Byrd and McDonald 2005; Collier and Morgan 2008; Bergerson 2007; also see Oldfield's [2007] reflections) indicate, underrepresented students appear to possess a similar consciousness in that they are often self-consciously aware that they are lacking the cultural competency that their more privileged peers possess. For instance, Rendon observes within an essay that reflects upon her experiences as a first generation, low income, Latina scholar, that "often we enter academia consumed with self-doubt, we question whether we really belong in the academy..." (1992: 61)⁵⁵. Further, when many underrepresented students "measure" themselves using the "tape" of the academic world "we hear loud and clear that only white men can do science and math, that only the best and the brightest deserve to be educated, that white students are inherently smarter than nonwhites, and that allowing people of color to enter a college diminishes its academic quality" (Rendon 1992:61; Beal provides a similar observation 2007:38; also see Rabaka 2010).

"Always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:5) facilitates the formation of a dual identity, in which one's very sense of self is divided into two selves. According to Du Bois, "double consciousness" can be described as the experience of "two souls, two thoughts, [and] two unreconciled strivings" within "one dark body" ([1903a] 1996:5). Note that Du Bois is conceptualizing two distinct *souls* trapped within one black body; although he could have used the term "selves" in this description as other scholars of the day

⁵⁵ Beal makes a similar observation regarding her experiences as a low income, first generation, African American scholar noting that there "was a fundamental difference between these two personas [Malcolm X and Martin Luther King], the organic intellectual and the academic intellectual, and neither matched my abilities or resources. How was it possible to become a worldly scholar-like they were given my circumstances [?]" (2007:11).

frequently did, he appears to have strategically chosen to use the concept of “souls.” The soul is that which animates the very being of a human. Thus, Du Bois’ use of the concept of “soul” appears serve two purposes: a) the concept refers to a deeper part of a person than simply their “self”; b) it has religious connotations and within many religious systems the soul is that which separates people from animals. Thus, the use of “soul” is reaffirmation of the humanity of African Americans that slavery, segregation, and systematic racism attempted to deny. Later, within “The Souls of White Folk,” Du Bois ([1920] 1999:17-29) would again return to this concept, exploring it from a position above the Veil of Race⁵⁶.

Given that underrepresented students often view themselves “through the eyes of the others,” it is possible that they may also develop something akin to “double consciousness.” Theoretically the formation of something akin to a double consciousness is tied into the ability to code-switch. Elijah Anderson’s ethnography *The Code of the Street* (1999), which explores the relations between the code of the street, violence, and the identity formation of black youth growing up within an inner-city community, provides insight into what this ability entails. Code-switching means that a person is familiar with, and able to successfully navigate, two distinct cultural orientations: “street” and “decent” (see Anderson 1999:35-65). For the purposes of this study “decent” will be conceived of as an “academic orientation.”

Anderson devotes an entire chapter to the differences between ‘decent’ and ‘street’ families. Within what Anderson terms “decent families” there “is almost always a real concern with and a certain amount of hope for the future....Decent families tend to accept mainstream values more fully than street families, and they attempt to instill them in their children”

⁵⁶ Du Bois appears to contend, similar to the observations that Frantz Fanon would later make, that systematic racial apartheid not only has negative effects on the psyches of people of African descent but also on people who are white identified. Within “The Souls of White Folk” Du Bois asserts that he sees the souls of white folk “undressed and from the back and the side. I see the working of their entrails....I see them ever stripped, --ugly, human” ([1920] 1999:17).

(1999:37-38). Conversely, “[s]o-called street parents, unlike decent ones, often show a lack of consideration for other people and have a rather superficial sense of family and community....The lives of the street-oriented are often marked by disorganization. In the most desperate circumstances, people frequently have a limited understanding of priorities and consequences....” (Anderson 1999:45).

This ability to code-switch between orientations, enables the person to structure their interactions within two cultures by mentally switching from an orientation toward one culture into an orientation toward the other culture (also see Beal 2007:22). Anderson observes that young people who are invested in the goals put forth by the dominant culture (also see Merton 1938) “often put a premium on the ability to code-switch. They share many of the middle-class values of the wider white society but know that the open display of such values carries little weight on the street: it doesn’t provide an emblem that says “I can take care of myself”” (p. 36). The ability to code-switch may influence the feeling of being neither here nor there, meaning that because the person is aware of both of cultures they may not be fully present in either culture. When a person is physically present in one culture a portion of their consciousness may be on the other culture⁵⁷ (Anderson 1999).

The Color-Line

In 1903, Du Bois wrote that “[t]he problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” ([1903a] 1996:13). Moreover, it was “a phase of this problem that

⁵⁷ Anderson observes that code-switching can be occur within educational institutions, “[o]ften students perceive (more or less accurately) that the institution and its staff are utterly unreceptive to their street presentations...the teachers’ efforts to combat the street may caused [sic.] them to lump the good students with the bad...In response, the decent children place even greater stock in their ability to code-switch, adopting one set of behaviors for inside the building and one set for outside” (1999:96). It should be noted that the preceding observations refer to middle- and high-schools.

caused the Civil War...all nevertheless knew, as we know, that the question of Negro slavery was the real cause of the conflict” ([1903a] 1996:13) even though others might attribute different causes. The formerly enslaved emerged out of a system in which men and women of African descent were classified as animals of toil. Rather than turning toward the master as the men and women of African descent do in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 2008), black men and women “shrank” from the master who wanted to keep hold of the “chains” which increased the existing division between blacks and whites ([1903a] 1996:25-26).

The color-line embodies the intangible, and at times tangible, boundary that separates people who are identified as of color and people who are identified as white; this is why Du Bois describes the color-line as the “relation of the darker to the lighter races of men” ([1903a] 1996). This description of the color-line implies that there is a spectrum, yet as Du Bois would later revisit within *Darkwater: Voices From within the Veil* ([1920] 1999) being of a lighter skin tone did not mean that a person became white identified. Rather, the color-line was retained separating those who were white identified, of European descent, from other groups that became classified as separate races – such as people from China and Japan⁵⁸.

The color-line within America is based upon the one-drop rule from the time of slavery (see Hunter 2005) wherein one drop of African blood, especially from the mother, meant that the child was considered black. The color-line is intangible in that it is socially constructed yet it takes on tangible forms in terms of the signs that said that people of African descent need not apply, that one drinking fountain was for whites and another for African Americans, and that African Americans needed to ride at the back of the bus. It also took on tangible forms in terms

⁵⁸ See pp. 17-29.

of unequal educational access and employment opportunities, as Du Bois experienced while studying at Harvard (Marable [1986] 2005; Levering Lewis 1993).

Du Bois was prophetic in his belief that the color-line would present the twentieth century with its most pressing problems. As he stated, the Civil War was just one of the phases of the color-line. It would be followed by other phases such as the continuance of lynching of African Americans – primarily men, the denial of the full benefits of the GI Bill for African American servicemen and women, segregation within the military, continued unequal access to educational and employment opportunities, and would cumulate with Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat at the front of the bus. America vividly saw the color-line manifesting itself on television screens as African Americans and other civil rights activists were brutally hosed, beaten, and at times killed. Other phases included the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X. trials of members of the Black Panther party, the race riots following the Rodney King trial and the murders of Tupac and Biggie. The color-line with its one drop rule still permeates American society. It can be seen when people refer to Barack Obama as “America’s first black president” rather than recognizing that he is America’s “first biracial president” or that he is truly America’s “first African American president.”

Thus, the color-line and racism presented the 20th century with its most pressing problems and continues to into the 21st century. There is a deepening racial apartheid in America’s public schools (Kozol 2005), the “employment picture for most of African-America is very bleak” (Jefferson 2005:210), and African Americans continue to remain over-represented in the criminal justice system (Feagin ([2000] 2001). Du Bois explored the psychological implications and dimensions of the color-line in both *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903a] 1996) and *Darkwater: Voices From within the Veil* ([1920] 1999). Within both of these texts through a

double conscious language, Du Bois sought to lift the Veil of Race for his audiences; to peer into and critically examine both the souls of black folk and the souls of white folk.

The Veil

I have sketched in swift outline the two worlds within and without the Veil....

- W.E.B. Du Bois⁵⁹

As mentioned, Du Bois also theorized that an intangible boundary – a ‘Veil’ – separates the world of African Americans from that of White Americans ([1903a] 1996). The Veil (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) is socially constructed (Blau and Brown 2001:219) and sustained through social stratification. Thus, children are “born within the Veil” (Du Bois [1903] 1996:170) and placed in one world or the other based upon their perceived racial identification.

As Du Bois contended within *The Souls of Black Folk*, especially within the South there were “two separate worlds; and separate not just in the higher realms of social intercourse but also in church and school....” ([1903] 1996: 80). As African Americans become conscious of the existence of the two worlds, they are able to see through this Veil and, at times, even rise above it⁶⁰. People who are privileged with whiteness rarely have to neither even think about the existence of the Veil of Race nor know the world on the other side of the Veil. Conversely, those who are African American not only have to know the world that they come from but also the white world. Yet, at times the privileged are able to perceive the Veil. As Du Bois notes, when at Fisk he “studied eagerly under teachers who bent in subtle sympathy, feeling themselves some shadow of the Veil and lifting it gently that we darker souls might peer through to other worlds” ([1920] 1999:8).

⁵⁹ *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1996:1).

⁶⁰ See Du Bois’ parable titled “Of the Coming of John” in *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1996:186-203).

The Veil of Race conceptually differs from, yet is related to the concept of the color-line. The existence of the color-line precipitates that of the Veil of Race. If the color-line did not separate the two worlds, the Veil of Race within America would likely not exist. Du Bois asserts that there is a “frightful chasm at the color-line across which men pass at their peril” ([1903] 1996: 80). The Veil is the psychological manifestation of the color-line. Thus, the Veil is truly intangible whilst the color-line takes on tangible forms, hence passing at one’s peril – if a person crossed the color-line and whistled at a white woman as allegedly Emit Till did, he might be lynched. Moreover, the Veil is located within the psyche and the color-line takes on the psychical manifestations such as signs telling people what fountain to drink out of. The shadow of the Veil of Race – for there are many Veils⁶¹ – can be felt when a person experiences racial discrimination or the effects of racial prejudice.⁶² Children are born within the racially Veiled world yet they do not innately possess knowledge of the Veil of Race, rather they learn about its existence through social interaction. As Du Bois observes within *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, “I saw the race problem was not as I conceived, a matter of clear, fair competition, for which I was ready and eager. It was rather a matter of segregation, of hindrance and inhibitions....” ([1920] 1999:649).

The Veil permeates what Sociologist Emile Durkheim terms the “collective consciousness” which is formed by a body of beliefs and collective sentiments that are commonly held by each member of a society. As Durkheim observes, the “totality of [the] beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own” (2003:60); the collective consciousness does not change with each

⁶¹ Such as the Veil of Gender, the Veil of Class, and the Veil of Culture (lecture notes).

⁶² As observed above, Du Bois’ own son died because of the existence of the color-line and the psychological effects of the Veil. Neither an African American doctor nor a white doctor would come to his house to provide medical care for the child (lecture notes).

subsequent generation, rather it links successive generations to one another. Thus, the collective consciousness is a sui generis reality that constrains individuals, as well as embodying social facts and collective representations.⁶³ The presence of physical and geographic boundaries does not prevent the collective consciousness from being diffused throughout a society. This is how the Veil of Race spread throughout the United States even though there were physical and geographic boundaries. The collective sentiments, discriminatory practices, and racist beliefs that were found in the prevailing collective consciousness at the time that Du Bois was writing *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1996) and *Darkwater: Voices From within the Veil* ([1920] 1999) did not contradict the existing system of racial stratification which was embodied in the perpetuation of the color-line, rather they reaffirmed it sustaining both the color-line and the Veil of Race.

Application of the Metaphor of the Veil.

I sometimes feel that when I go home, people look at me differently. I made the decision to go away to college, leave my community, and try to find a better life for myself. And sometimes, I feel that decision isn't respected.

- Ginny⁶⁴

What the white world was doing, its goals and its ideals I had not doubted were quite right. What was wrong was that I and people like me and thousands of others who might have my ability and aspiration, were refused permission to be part of this world.

- W.E.B. Du Bois⁶⁵

The metaphor of the Veil may be applicable to higher education given the vast differences between the worlds that underrepresented students come from and the world that they

⁶³ The collective consciousness is “diffused over society as a whole, but nonetheless possesses specific characteristics that make it a distinctive reality. In fact it is independent of the particular conditions in which individuals find themselves. Individuals pass on, but it abides...” (Durkheim 2003: 60).

⁶⁴ Name changed to protect confidentiality. Survey respondent.

⁶⁵ (1986)1996:573-574.

encounter within academia (see Rendon 1992; London 1992; Byrd and MacDonald 2005; Inman and Mayes 1999; Orbe 2004; and Pascarella et al. 2004; also see Beal 2007:37 for a discussion of the “worlds” that multiracial and biracial students navigate). When underrepresented students enter the ivory towers of academia they are encountering a world that is immensely different than the world that they grew-up within. If they are first generation, their parents do not possess a college degree and therefore are unable to pass on the type of applicable cultural capital that facilitates the successful navigation of academia. Some underrepresented students may have access to mentors and/or academic advising in high school and/or college that mediates this lack of cultural capital, particularly if they attended a college-prep high school or have access to the federally funded TRIO programs.⁶⁶ It is likely that many of their parents support their families by working blue collar jobs (London 1992:6). Moreover, as previously addressed, many underrepresented students are engaged in the negotiation of intersecting identities (see Beal 2007), or what might be termed “multiple identities” (Orbe 2004). Thus, students of color who attend predominantly white institutions may be struck by the lack of racial diversity among the student body, faculty, and staff (Douglas 1998; Wallace and Bell 1999; Davis et al. 2004).

Thus, a contention can be made for the existence of a Veil within higher education which separates the academic world from the worlds that underrepresented students come from. This Veil, which will be termed the “Veil of Academia,” includes not only the Veil of Race (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) but also the Veil of Class, the Veil of Gender and the Veil of Religion. Students may feel torn between academia and the world they came from; their very sense of self may be split between these two worlds. If the metaphor of the Veil of Academia is applicable

⁶⁶ As the U.S. Department of Education notes, “The Federal TRIO Programs are educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes six outreach and support programs targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs” (2008).

underrepresented students would perceive the existence of the Veil of Academia, even if they could not name what it is. As the students develop something akin to double consciousness they would simultaneously develop the ability to see through the Veil of Academia. Theoretically, as students become more fully aware of the Veil of Academia, they may be “riddled with the guilt, pain, and confusion that arise from daring to live simultaneously in two vastly different worlds while being fully accepted in neither” (Rendon 1992:56).

Social Selves and Double Consciousness

Psychologist William James brought forth the notion of the self is a “social entity.” (Irvine 2006). According to James, the self is “interactive,” meaning that it is constantly engaged in the construction of what he terms the “social self” (Irvine 2006). The social self is that which we present when we interact with other people. Individuals possess more than one social self – they possess multiple social selves. As James observes, “*a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind*” (James [1890] 1981:159). These social selves align with the groups that this individual falls into so that “we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct *groups* of persons about whose opinion he cares” (James [1890] 1981:159). This can result in “what practically is a division of the man into several selves; and this may be a discordant splitting, as where one is afraid to let one set of his acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere” (James [1890] 1981:159). Thus, one social self may be in discord with another.

Du Bois takes this notion a step further, providing insight into the reality of such discord for African Americans when he writes that “[o]ne ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideas in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder” ([1903a] 1996:5). As the previous quote

demonstrates, Du Bois pivotally differs from James in terms of how they are conceptualizing discord. While James describes the discord between two social selves, Du Bois is conceptualizing two *souls* – two distinct selves – trapped within one black body. The “unreconciled strivings” and “warring ideas” of these two souls are the root of Du Bois’ [1903a] 1996) theoretical conception regarding “double consciousness.”

The Historical Roots of Double Consciousness

The notion of double consciousness has roots that extend beyond Du Bois. The two primary historical sources of double consciousness, as identified by literary theorist Bruce Dickenson, are as follow: 1) an “essentially figurative” usage which was rooted in American Transcendentalism and Romanticism (1992:299) and 2) a medical term, which was adopted by the developing field of psychology where the term was used to describe cases of split personality (1992:300).

Within the Transcendentalism Movement, Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the earliest writers to use the term “double consciousness” to describe the conflict which arises when a person who is attempting to take a Transcendentalist perspective is “pulled back from the divine by the demands of daily life” (Dickson 1992:300). This tension leads to “two lives, of the understanding and of the soul...which show very little relation to one another” and are thus are unable to “reconcile themselves” (Emerson 1940:100; Dickson 1992:300). This is similar to Du Bois’ statement within *The Souls of Black Folk* concerning the “two souls, two thoughts, [and] two unreconciled strivings” trapped within “one black body” ([1903a] 1996:5).

As far as the medical use of the term “double consciousness”, it appeared early in the 19th century. In 1817, a New York Journal article used the term to describe a case of split personality

in which a young woman awoke after a deep sleep exhibiting a personality that was not her own. After some time passed, she went into another deep sleep and awoke with her former personality. Later in her life, she entered a state in which these two personalities lived separate lives and “while in one [life], she had no memory of the other” (Dickson 1982:303).

The medical use of the term was brought over into what was then the developing field of psychology. James was one of the earliest psychologists to use this term in to describe what he termed “alternating selves” or “primary and secondary consciousness” (Dickson 1982:304). James theorizes in *Psychology: The Briefer Course* ([1892] 2001) that people who exhibit an “alternating personality” pass into a “secondary state”, or what could be termed “secondary consciousness”, in which they exhibit a personality which is unlike their primary personality (James [1892] 2001:77-80). This could be due either to a break in memory, or possession. Often following a “possession” a person who has returned to their “primary consciousness” [i.e. personality] has no memory of what happened while they were exhibited the “secondary consciousness” [i.e. second personality] (James [1892] 2001:79-80). It is likely that Du Bois was aware of the psychological application of the term “double consciousness” given that James was one of his professors (Dickson 1992:304). Du Bois drew-upon such an application of the term when he discussed how the experiences of African Americans were distinctly different than those of whites.

DU BOIS’ CONCEPT OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

As previously mentioned, Du Bois theorized that African Americans possess a “second-sight” which does not allow for “true self-consciousness” but only lets one perceive oneself “through the revelation of the other world” ([1903a] 1996:5). This “other world” was the world of White America. A world in which blacks were seen as inferior and were denied the benefits

accorded to white citizens – including academic recognition, jobs that they were qualified for, and the right to vote. Further, in the South, African Americans were also denied the right to sit where they wanted on public transportation, to patronize theaters, restaurants, and parks, and to attend the schools of their choice. The result of perceiving oneself through the lens of the White world is the development of “double consciousness”. Essentially, a person’s very sense of self is divided into two – “the subjective and agential Self” and “objectified and excluded Other” (Blau and Brown 2001:221). These selves, also referred to as *souls* within Du Bois’ (1903a] 1996) work, are trapped within one body.

The Un-Veiling

Du Bois envisioned a world in which the Veil of Race no longer separated the world of African Americans from the world of White Americans. A world in which all people would have “the space to stretch their arms and their souls; the right to breathe and the right to vote...uncursed by color, thinking, dreaming, [and] working as they will” (Du Bois 1995a:106). Within this unveiled world, the strife caused by double consciousness would be reconciled. People would no longer have to view themselves “through the eyes of others” rather their “double self” would merge into “a better and truer self” without the loss of either former self (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:5). This liberated self would be able to enjoy the freedom to pursue education, employment, and full democratic participation. Education and the reform of “social surroundings, social opportunities, and social heritage” (Du Bois 2002:121; also see Rabaka 2003 and 2010) are some of the first steps that will lead us toward this unveiled world.

DU BOIS AND EDUCATION

I realize that i come from a socially low background and i should be inspired by that to work hard and help my people.

- ηath⁶⁷

My attention from the first was focused on democracy and democratic development and upon the problem of the admission of my people into the freedom of democracy.

- W.E.B. Du Bois⁶⁸

Du Bois believed that education was one of the “most pressing problems confronting persons of African origin and descent and humanity as a whole” (Rabaka 2003:400). He contended that education is enacted “by derivation and [is] in fact a drawing out of human powers” ([1906]1973:9; Rabaka 2003:400). As such, it was imperative that education involve the following: 1) “a critical knowledge of the past”; 2) “questions of culture”; as well as 3) “an understanding of present and future vital needs of not only continental and diaspora Africans but also of humanity as a whole” (Du Bois [1906]1973:9-11; Rabaka 2003:400).

These three things were not present in education that segregated Southern schools were affording African American students. Nor were they present in the industrial schools that were being promoted by Booker T. Washington, a leading African American of his time. Du Bois was critical of industrial schools, such as Tuskegee Institute, that provided manual training because he felt such schools did not provide the skills and knowledge of machinery that black youth would need when they sought jobs (Du Bois 1995b:264). Further, while Du Bois advocated “manual training for black boys, and for white boys too” he insisted that young women and men needed to be taught “what life means” and needed to be given the “sufficient intelligence and technical skills” that would mold them into “efficient” workmen ([1903b]1996:855).

⁶⁷Dinka for hope. Name unknown – no code name given. Survey respondent.

⁶⁸ (1986c) 1996: 574.

Given the value that Du Bois placed on education, when he remarked that youth must be taught “what life means” he was likely envisioning a pedagogy which would draw forth the development of critical engagement, values the cultures that students come from, and raises social consciousness (also see Rabaka 2003 and 2010). If we are going to work toward an unveiled world, all students have to be given the opportunity to pursue education that incorporates this type of pedagogy. Further, this education needs to begin at the level of elementary school and continue throughout higher education.

The Impact of the Veil of Academia

I never realized how difficult a goal like graduating from college would be when I was at home. It wasn't until I arrived at [Mountain State University] that I became aware of just how different I am as a first generation college student. While at home, I was in the same boat as my peers, whereas here at [Mountain State University] I know I am one of few.

- E⁶⁹

As mentioned within the introduction, this study is intended to provide insight into the ways in which the experience of having a dual identity, or something akin to what Du Bois ([1903a] 1996) terms “double consciousness,” may impact the degree to which underrepresented students are assimilate into academia. *The Souls of Black Folk* contains a poignant parable, “Of the Coming of John” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:186-203) that provides insight into the experience of developing something akin to “double consciousness” within the context of higher education. It also illustrates how those who are able to lift the Veil of Academia and glimpse the other world are forever changed.

Within the parable, John Jones, a young African American from Georgia struggled to adapt to the world of formal education. “He did not know how to study; he had no idea of thoroughness; and [in combination] with his tardiness, careless, and appallingly good humor”

⁶⁹ Survey respondent

(Du Bois [1903a] 1996:189). As a result, the faculty suspended him for one term. With the weight of his family's hopes and dreams, he promised to prove himself upon his return if his mother and sister were not told of the suspension. Upon his return, John proved himself by working "with all his rugged strength. It was a hard struggle, for things did not come easily to him..." (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:190). As other students pursued social lives, John spent his time trying to make sense out of what he was learning.

When John went on to college his consciousness was transformed. "He looked now for the first time sharply about him, and wondered he had seen so little before [sic.]. He grew slowly to feel almost for the first time the Veil that lay between him and the white world; he first noticed the oppression that had not seemed oppression before" (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:191). This altered consciousness, the awareness of the Veil, had changed him so that "daily he found himself shrinking from the choked and narrow world of his native town..." (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:191). Conversely, a childhood companion from his town also named John, who is white identified and upper class, does not appear to undergo an alteration in consciousness. Rather, his experiences at Princeton appear to have affirmed his adherence to the prevailing collective consciousness of the time.

When John Jones finally returned home, he attempted to share his knowledge of the Veil with his community and found that they could not relate. Further, he was discouraged by one of the prominent white men of his town, who sensed that John Jones' consciousness had been altered, from disrupting the social order. The man told him that "the Negro must remain subordinate, and can never expect to be the equal of white men...when they want to reverse nature, and rule white men, and marry white women...we'll hold them under [even] if we have to lynch..." (Du Bois [1903] 1996: 198). When John Jones refused to comply with the sexual

exploitation of his sister, who was a black woman, by the white John who went along with the “social order” he was lynched. John Jones did simply object to the social order, he “said not a word, but seizing a fallen limb, struck him with all the pent-up hatred of his great black arm; the body lay white and still beneath the pines, all bathed in sunshine and in blood” ([1993] 1996: 202) which implies that he killed the white John. In a sense John Jones and the white identified John were doppelgangers – two men who were from the same town yet textually comprised opposites of each other. In the context of double consciousness, by killing the white John, John Jones was essentially killing his other self and in doing so sought freedom from the strife caused by double consciousness, from always having to see himself through the eyes of the other world. For as Du Bois observes, John looked at the white body “dreamily and then walked back to the house briskly, and said in a soft voice, ‘Mammy, I’m going away, --I’m going to be free....I’m going North.’” ([1903] 1996:202). But John would not reach the North physically ever again, for he was lynched – presumably by the white men of his town who were angered by his disruption of the social order.

Yet even though John Jones was lynched Du Bois entails that his soul lived on noting that John “leaned back and smiled toward the sea, whence rose the strange melody, away from the dark shadows where in lay the noise of horses galloping, galloping on....Then as the burst round him, he rose slowly to his feet and turned his closed eyes toward the Sea. And the world whistled in his ears” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996: 202-203). The Sea was comprised of the vast waters that separated him from the homeland of his ancestors. For as Du Bois observes within *The Sorrow Songs*, “Of death the Negro showed little fear, but talked of it familiarly and even fondly as a crossing of the waters....” ([1903a] 1996:212). Thus, even though his corporal body may have died, his soul – his humanity – would live on.

This parable serves as an allegory for underrepresented students who feel torn between two worlds – not feeling as though they belong in college but also not feeling that they belong when they return home. Just as John Jones became conscious of the Veil separating the two worlds, underrepresented students may become aware of a Veil of Academia, if the metaphor is applicable, that separates the world they came from and the world of the academe.

Underrepresented students who have entered academia and attained an alteration of consciousness similar to that described within “Of the Coming of John” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:186-203) may be forever changed by their knowledge of the Veil of Academia. Students such as John Jones who have pursued higher education and retained a grasp on the world that they came from, cannot forget what they have learned and thus their consciousnesses could be perpetually altered. Moreover, if they are grappling with something akin to “double consciousness” these students will never be able to assimilate into academia, nor will they be able to return to their former worldview when they return home. Just as John became conscious of the Veil that separated the two worlds, underrepresented students may become aware of a similar Veil within academia which could lead to this alteration in consciousness. In the parable the lynching lead to a physical death of self. For many students, this physical death is not likely⁷⁰, for Du Bois’ parable was metaphorical intended for readers that occupied positions within the Veiled world⁷¹. Thus, it is likely that underrepresented students who experience an alteration in consciousness like John Jones’ will struggle to varying degrees with the experience

⁷⁰ However, it is possible for as one student remarked on the survey, he developed a drinking problem as a result of feeling as though he did not fit in at Mountain State University – which could have lead to an alcohol overdose and possibly death. Moreover, in the interviews David and Johnston talked about feelings resembling a depression at some point during their college experiences which could have lead in other students to thoughts of suicide (neither of these students mentioned ever having such thoughts).

⁷¹ The destruction of John’s body may symbolize the deconstruction of the promise of Reconstruction and the hopes and dreams of a generation. It also illustrates the use of racial violence the was used to maintain the color-line and punish those who transgress the “social order.”

of being outsiders within both worlds – the world that they came from and the academic world that they currently inhabit.

CONCEPTS

Double Consciousness (Du Bois [1903a] 1996)

Veil (Du Bois [1903a] 1996)

Alienation

Intersecting Identities (Collins 2000; also see Beal 2007)

Applicable Cultural Capital (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1990)

Barriers

Factors Related to Retention

Factors Related to Acculturation

Code Switching (Anderson 1999)

Definition of Concepts

Something Akin to Double Consciousness: having a dual identity; having the reflexive ability to see one's self as others see one's self (Du Bois [1903a] 1996); having the ability to code-switch (Anderson 1999) between the culture the one comes from and the culture of academia.

Behaviors:

The ability to code-switch (see Anderson 1999)

Changing the way one speaks and acts in a given situation

Switching cultural orientation

The ability to switch from speaking jargon to an informal language

Attitudes:

Ability to see one's self through the eyes of others (Du Bois [1903a] 1996)

Visibility on campus

Feeling expected to “represent” people from one’s background

Change in perception of where one comes from

Alteration of Consciousness and awareness of differences

Shifting of identities

Veil of Academia: an intangible boundary that separates the world of academia from the worlds that students who are underrepresented come from; it encompasses the Veils of Race, Class, Gender and Religion. It is applicable to interactions within academe, especially those in which students who are underrepresented not only have to know the world that they come from but also the world of academia. Conversely, those who are not underrepresented do not have to know, and are often oblivious to, the worlds that students who are first generation and/or low income and/or students of color come from.

Attitudes:

Awareness of two worlds (Du Bois [1903a] 1996)

Awareness of differences

Feeling torn between two worlds (Du Bois [1903a] 1996)

Feeling that one does not completely fit into either world

Alienation: not feeling comfortable, feeling distanced from others when engaged in interactions.

Attitudes:

Level of feeling of comfort or lack thereof

Interacting with instructors/professors

In the classroom (speaking during class; interacting with groups)

Level of feeling accepted or lack thereof

Feeling de-voiced

Feeling de-valued

Level of perceived agency

Intersecting Identities: the overlap of one's first generation status, income, class identification, racial/ethnic identification, gender identification, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual background (if applicable), and ability or disability (see Collins 2000 and Beal 2007).

Applicable cultural capital: possessing the type of skills, knowledge, and resources (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1990) that enable successful navigation of academia. These are related to abilities such as understanding, successfully mastering, and feeling comfortable in the role of college student (see Collier and Morgan 2008); feeling confident in the classroom and during interactions with peers and faculty (both inside and outside of the classroom); having the monetary resources to pay for tuition, books, fees, and tutoring if needed; and possessing a skill set that enables academic success (such as knowing how to take tests, how to dress, what type of demeanor to present, and how to write college level papers).

Barriers: a tangible or intangible item that impedes a student's ability to pursue and attain a college degree. Potential barriers include: financial, cultural, academic (deficiencies, lack of knowledge and/or applicable skills), as well as a student's level of comfort.

Retention: a student staying at and completing their degree at the institution of higher education. Factors that may be related to retention are: looking around and seeing people from one's background present as students in the classroom, among the staff (and the prestige of the positions they hold), and among the faculty (how many of the classes that one takes do they teach and do they serve as mentors); does a student feel like they can be themselves?; does a student feel like they have to constantly defend themselves?.

Acculturation: feeling like one has adapted to the culture of the institution of higher education through adopting the cultural practices and beliefs of the institution while maintaining their sense of self. This may include feeling as though one belongs to and is fully a part of the institution of higher education; do not perceive themselves as distinct from “typical” students that attend the university. Factors related to acculturation may include: Does a student feel fully accepted and valued?; Is a student able to “pass” as a “typical” (i.e. not underrepresented) student⁷²?; Does a student feel like they have to hide parts of their identity to be accepted at the university?; the student’s perception of their mastery of the role of student.

Realistic idea of the amount of time that needs to be devoted to coursework

Understanding of proper writing techniques and standards

Utilization of office hours for questions and concerns

Code Switching: mentally switching in orientation toward one culture into an orientation toward the other culture. The person may feel as though they are not fully present in either culture (see Anderson 1999). And they also adjust their behavior and way of speaking to coordinate with whichever culture that the student currently inhabits.

⁷² For some students (or faculty) who are under-represented, simply being present within academia is enough to mark them. Yet others are able to “pass” through academia unmarked if they so desire. For example, an African American who attends or teaches at a predominantly white institution of higher education usually inhabits a category that is marked while a White American who is/was the first-generation in their family to attend college may never have to reveal (or even be aware) that they inhabit a marked category.

METHODS

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.

- Audre Lorde⁷³

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Among other areas, W.E.B. Du Bois pioneered urban sociology⁷⁴ and rural sociology⁷⁵ making substantial contributions to sociology (see Rabaka 2010), political economy, education, and providing a basis for critical race theory. Even though he was marginalized within the academy, as he referenced with the statement “I was in Harvard but not of it” ([1920] 1999), Du Bois sought to document the realities of the world around him using methods that had not yet been undertaken within Sociology. Moreover, he is not rightfully recognized as one of the founders of American Sociology (see Rabaka 2010; Anderson 1996). Rather than replicating the master's tools, he used tools forged of difference – which Lorde defines as “that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged” ([1984] 2007:112). His tools included surveying, ethnography, historiography, literary analysis, political economy, autobiography, and theory (lecture notes from Dr. Reiland Rabaka's W.E.B. Du Bois Seminar).

In *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* ([1899] 1999) utilizing his “Sociological Imagination” (Mills [1959] 2000) Du Bois personally, ethnographically documented the link between what appear to be personal troubles and the larger social issues, elucidating the effects that systemic, systematic racism within the context of a racially apartheid America had on the life-world and life-struggles of African Americans within Philadelphia. In *The Souls of Black Folk* Du Bois ([1903] 1996) provided insight into the experiences African Americans, the

⁷³ From “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House” ([1984] 2007: 112).

⁷⁴ See *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* ([1899] 1996); also see Rabaka 2010 pp. 47-106.

⁷⁵ See “Of the Black Belt” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois[1903] 1996) and his survey of Farmville, Virginia (Marable ([1986] 2005:29); also see Rabaka 2010 pp. 47-106.

development of “double consciousness,” the contrast between what could be conceptualized as the “black world” separated by a Veil from the “white world,” the implications of the color-line, and the impact that the discrepancies between these two worlds had on the perception of self for African Americans. He also provided a case study of the life of John Jones who as a first-generation, low income, African American from the South who received his college education in the North and experienced an alteration of consciousness whilst in academia. Later, within *Darkwater: Voices From within the Veil* ([1920] 1999) Du Bois sought to lift the Veil of Race ([1903] 1996:67) and peer into, whilst critically examining, both the souls of white folk and the souls of black folk. Within this text, he also explores the political economy of race and democracy, history, making contributions to fields such as Africana Studies, Feminist Studies, and Sociology.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Harkening from Du Bois, this study incorporates a mixed-methods research design in an investigation of the experiences of a group of undergraduate students who are underrepresented within academia – degree seeking undergraduates enrolled in a predominantly white four year institution of higher education who identify as being first generation and/or low income and/or students of color. For comparison purposes, represented undergraduates (i.e. non-first generation, middle to upper income, white identified students) have been included in the sample⁷⁶. This mixed-methods study utilized an online survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Rather than having completely open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews “help ensure the comparability of data across individuals, times, [and] settings...and are thus useful in

⁷⁶ The ages of potential participants will vary. The ages of participants vary from eighteen to over forty-five, although given that the majority of undergraduates at the university enter directly after high school the median age of participants was expected to be twenty-one. Women and men were included in the sample. The total number of participants in the online survey will be up to 100 and in the interviews will be up to 10.

answering variance questions, questions that deal with *differences* between things” (Maxwell 2005:80). This is important because I was interested in obtaining insight into the nuanced experiences and perceptions of students who are underrepresented and how the students who were included within this study make sense of academia. Qualitative research is well suited for studies that seek thick descriptions (Emerson 2001: 33) that yield rich data. If done well, semi-structured interviews have the potential to provide thick descriptions. These descriptions provide insight into how the first generation/low income students included within this study make sense of academia. Through analysis of the interviews and survey data I hoped to gain insight into patterns such as factors that affect retention and assimilation, the formation of something akin to double consciousness (if applicable), and how academic contexts influence the experiences of the students included within the sample.

Evolution of the Research Design

Initially, when contemplating a study of underrepresented students, I considered a strictly quantitative research design which would have only incorporated the use of a survey questionnaire, random sampling techniques, and statistical analysis. I was tempted to pursue this design because I have had experience with constructing and implementing surveys, as well as analysis of statistical data.⁷⁷ After further reflection, I realized that this type of design would not provide the in-depth insight into the nuanced experiences of underrepresented students that a mixed-methods design would. Rather than providing the rich data that is needed for exploration of the research questions, using only a survey instrument would have provided data that was quantifiable, yet lacking in terms of providing detailed descriptions of “lived experiences”

⁷⁷ During my undergraduate studies I received training in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods through the McNair Program. As part of a research project that I undertook while in the McNair program, I surveyed faculty, instructors, and graduate students at three mid-western institutions of higher education regarding the utilization of hip-hop pedagogy. During my senior year I took a class that focused upon survey methods.

(Tierney 9/17/07). Furthermore, given that the designation “under-represented students” implies that there are fewer “under-represented students” than “represented students”⁷⁸, and that demographic information such as family income, first generation status, and racial/ethnic identification are protected by Federal privacy guidelines (FERPA⁷⁹), random samples of underrepresented students would be difficult to attain.

After reviewing literature concerning the experiences of underrepresented students and beginning to conceptualize a theoretical basis for the study, I realized that a mixed methods design that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods was best suited to provide insight into the nuanced experiences of underrepresented students. Moreover, utilizing the training that I have received during graduate courses such as Feminist Methods, Feminist Theory, and Qualitative Methods, I began to interrogate my own standpoint as a researcher in relationship to the students that I intended to include in my study. I have also begun to grapple with some of the questions and dilemmas that arise during research – such as the position of the researcher (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2006:105-122; McCorkle and Myers 2003; DeVault 2002; Tierney 10/1/07), the role that ideological systems have in terms of the construction of knowledge (Scott 1992; DeVault 2002:91-93), reflexivity (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2006; Alarcon 2003; Haraway 2003; McCorkle and Myers 2003; Emerson 2001:20), and the use of “generic terms” verses marked terms (Alarcon 2003).

ADOPTING A STANDPOINT

As McCorkle and Myers observe, the practice of sociological research “routinely” obscures the “assumptions, motivations, narratives, and relations which are part of the

⁷⁸ Under-represented students” may actually constitute a distinctive sub-culture (Tierney 9/17/07) within academia.

⁷⁹ The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (University of Colorado at Boulder, Office of the Registrar: 2007).

researcher's backstage" (2003:200) or what could be termed "standpoint." A researcher's standpoint influences how a given phenomena is approached⁸⁰ – what questions are asked, who is included within the study, what method is utilized, and the format in which the findings are presented⁸¹ (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002:107). A reflexive researcher is cognizant of the power that he or she possesses as a researcher. Thus, the passage that follows provides my own "thorough, reflexive examination of the context of discovery and the ways in which identity politics are implicated in the knower's relationship to the known" (McCorkle and Myers 2003:200).

Interrogation of My Own Standpoint

As previously mentioned, as a first generation, low income college student, academia was shocking.... When I began my first semester at a predominantly white middle- to upper-middle class university I felt lost.... I felt as though I had entered another world, a world in which those around me appeared to innately possess the knowledge and skills that I was lacking.... As I struggled through my courses and learned to navigate the bureaucracy of academia, I came in contact with other students who came from backgrounds that roughly resembled my own. As an under-graduate I met other underrepresented students through classes and civic engagement.

My own position in relationship to other underrepresented students shifted as I began my first year in graduate school. Where I had formerly been seen as a "leader," a "classmate," and a "peer," I was suddenly seen as a "graduate student," a "mentor," or a "teaching assistant." I had pulled away from the civic engagement that I was involved in as an undergraduate because I was not sure of what to expect in graduate school. Many of my friends who were underrepresented

⁸⁰ As Maxwell observes "*Any view is a view from some perspective*, and therefore is shaped by the location (social and theoretical) and "lens" of the observer" (2005:39).

⁸¹ Naples contends that "How one presents the research, who should be the initial contact, what form of dress and address...and where to live and work while conducting fieldwork are all aspects of reflective practice" (2003:38).

students had graduated, or were busy preparing for graduation. Thus, I felt lonely and isolated – I was on the same campus but had entered into a space that was further divorced from the world that I came from. I felt as though I had been dressed-up, handed a script, and pushed out on stage. I engaged in a performance – mimicking what I thought a graduate student should look like, act like, and in essence “be.”

I have become more comfortable in my role as a graduate student. I developed working relationships with underrepresented graduate students and faculty members, regained contact with staff members from the federally funded academic programs that I participated in as an undergraduate, and began mentoring underrepresented students who are preparing for graduate school. This year, I began tutoring underrepresented students and am the Vice Chair of the Underrepresented Student Group Council. I have also begun to gain further insight into the negotiation of the politics of academia through interactions with staff members and faculty who do not typically share this information with “undergraduates.”

What does this mean for the study that I undertook? I will never again inhabit the role of an undergraduate “peer” or “classmate” and this may have meant that students may not share the same level of insight that they shared while I inhabited those roles. I also am aware that being a graduate student who is interviewing undergraduates implies a power difference. I now inhabit a role in which I teach undergraduate recitations, assign grades, tutor, and have taught my own courses as a graduate part-time instructor. I am also engaged in coursework that is very different from undergraduate coursework in terms of the level of rigor, abstraction, and the depth to which topics are discussed. Moreover, I have access to forms of applicable cultural capital that are not typically shared with undergraduates. Thus, not only did I survey and interview students who may already feel marginalized within academia, I inhabit a space that is higher up in terms of the

hierarchy of the university. I am still not sure what this new role means for “under-represented” undergraduate students – but gathered from the interviews that I am seen as inhabiting a position with more access to privileges such as the ability to put forth concerns that are expressed by the students.

Furthermore, although I still identify as first-generation and working class I am already engaged in upward mobility. Given this upward mobility, it was likely that there would not only be a power-differential in terms of my status at the university but also in terms of economic status in that I have increased access to monetary resources that many low income and/or working class students lack. I have also accomplished a goal that many first-generation students are currently striving for – I possess a college degree. Moreover, I am white identified and my racial identification influenced interviews with students who identify as students of color.⁸² Thus aspects of my “embodied self” – my gender, my racial identification, my first generation status, my class identification, and my status at the university – became very important in terms of the fieldwork that I engaged in (Tierney 10/1/07).

Site and Participant Selection

The site for the study was Mountain State University; the name is a self created pseudonym for the actual site. This university is a research one, public institution of higher education that is primarily comprised of white middle to upper-middle class undergraduate students. This institution offers both undergraduate as well as graduate degrees and is comprised of approximately 30,000 students. The sample for the study was comprised of undergraduates who are first generation (meaning that neither of a student’s parents/or guardian(s) have a college degree) and/or low income and/or identify as students of color.

⁸² During the course of a fieldnote exercise, I became keenly aware of the saliency of my white identification while observing a group of students who primarily identified as Latino/a or African American.

The sample was attained through the use of “purposeful selection” (Maxwell 2005:88). This form of sampling is typically employed within qualitative research because it is a “strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell 2005:88). In this case, the utilization of purposeful selection provided access to underrepresented students who attend Mountain State University. Over sixty students completed the online survey and nine completed interviews. The online survey was set to include at a minimum fifty participants and at a maximum one hundred. Potential interview participants were identified through emails from the students indicating their interest in being interviewed. Eight students were interview participants.

Programs/centers that specifically work with and provide resources/support for underrepresented students at Mountain State University were contacted. These programs/centers include the following: two academic programs that serve students who are underrepresented within academia and a multi-cultural center on campus. I met with staff members from each of these programs/centers to provide a brief overview of the proposed study and ascertained whether an email recruiting students for the study could be sent out via list serves. The emails were sent out over the list-serves.

In order to contact underrepresented students that may not be accessing resources that the programs/centers previously discussed provide, I recruited students through a variety of students groups that serve students who are underrepresented on campus as well as a student government funded student fund supported entity that focuses upon outreach to, and retention of, students who are have historically been underrepresented within higher education. I contacted representatives of the student groups as well as the student fund supported entity, provided a brief overview of the proposed study, and ascertained whether an email recruiting students for

the study could be sent out via list serves. Emails were sent out over the list serves. I also recruited students through student groups that serve students who are underrepresented on the Mountain State University campus as well as a student fund supported entity. In order to access students who may fit either component of the sample, I printed flyers advertising the study and posted the flyers in high traffic areas on the campus (such as at the student center, the library, the academic programs/centers listed above, and student group offices). I have attempted to include students from a range of backgrounds in the sample.

IRB Approval

I requested a full review from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The request for review included a completed request for review, the informed consent form, the interview guide, the flyers and wording for the emails that will be used to recruit participants for the study, and a list of places on and off campus where participants will be observed. For the purposes of the IRB application the name of the university where the study was undertaken was disclosed, in addition to the names of the academic programs, the student fund supported entity on campus, as well as the student groups.

Assessment of Risks and Benefits

There were no direct tangible benefits to participants who took part in the study, although the study can provide a space for participants to talk about their experiences in academia. Interview participants could request a copy of their interview transcript and the participants will have an opportunity to provide feedback regarding what will be included in the thesis pertaining to their own life during member-checking. The foreseeable risks to participants may have included feelings of discomfort related to life experiences or discrimination encountered in academia. All participants were provided with referrals to campus resources such as an office

that serves community members who have experienced trauma and/or psychological counseling incase these feeling arise during or after completing the online survey and/or interview.

Means for Ensuring the Privacy of Participants

The interviews were recorded and notes were taken during the interviews. Directly after the interview and until returned to my place of residence, the data obtained from the interviews were kept in a bag that accompanied me. At the primary my residence the recorded data was downloaded onto a password protected computer that has up-to date firewalls and virus protection. It was also backed-up on a password protected thumb-drive that will remain at the primary investigator's place of residence. Unless being used for analysis, the interview transcripts and notes were kept in a locked file cabinet in my residence. When used for analysis the notes and transcripts remained in a bag that accompanies me. Because the study has been completed, and the Master's thesis successfully defended, the transcripts, notes, and survey data are being kept in a locked file cabinet at my residence. To maintain confidentiality, self-selected pseudonyms were used in all of the notes (including notes taken during interviews) and transcripts. The pseudonyms were also used in any typed documents related to the study. Only I had access to the recorder and the password for the computer that was used during the study. I was diligent, and will continue to remain diligent, about logging out of the computer when it is not being used. The notes and transcripts will be kept for six years to provide time to write the thesis, possibly later a dissertation, and to publish related articles and/or a book. After six years, the tapes will be erased and the transcripts and questionnaire data will be destroyed - both through erasing files and shredding any applicable printed material.

DATA COLLECTION

The primary sources of data come from the open ended questions on the online survey questionnaire and from transcripts of the standardized semi-structured interviews which provided a space for informants to share their experiences with, and knowledge of, the world of academia. Rather than having completely open-ended questions, the utilization of standardized semi-structured interviews “help[s] ensure the comparability of data across individuals, times, [and] settings... and are thus useful in answering variance questions, questions that deal with *differences* between things” (Maxwell 2005:80). This is important because I was interested in obtaining insight into the nuanced experiences and perceptions of the students – thus I needed to assess commonalities as well as differences. Also, because structure can help ensure comparability, these interviews provided a space for assessing whether Du Bois’ ([1903a] 1996) insights are applicable. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half depending on the participant.

Data Collection Instruments

As previously mentioned an online survey questionnaire and standardized semi-structured interview guide were utilized. The interview guide contains some short answers however the majority of the questions were open-ended. Pseudonyms were chosen by the participants during the course of completing the online questionnaire and were carried over during the interviews.

Recruitment of Participants

As previously mentioned, participants were recruited through campus list serves and flyers posted in high traffic areas on the campus. It is also possible that participants heard about the study through “word of mouth.” The ages of the potential participants vary. Those who are

not over the age of eighteen were not included in the study because the inclusion of those who are under the age of eighteen could potentially complicate the study and it may be difficult to attain consent from the parent(s) if the student is from out of state. The ages of participants vary from eighteen to forty-five, although given that the majority of undergraduates at the university enter directly after high school the median age of participants was about twenty-one. Women and men were included within the sample. Any undergraduate who was currently enrolled at Mountain State University, with the exception of those enrolled in classes that I was teaching and tutoring,⁸³ had a valid opportunity to participate.

ANALYSIS

When I moved into the analysis phase of the study, I began by reading through transcripts obtained from interviews. I wrote memos (as described by Emerson 2001) during the analysis – the memos not only “capture” my analytic thinking but “also *facilitate* such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (Emerson 2001:96). I also coded the data using *organizational categories* which are comprised of “broad areas or issues” that are established prior to data collection (Emerson 2001:97)⁸⁴, *substantive categories* that include “descriptions of participants’ conceptions and beliefs” (Emerson 2001:97), and *theoretical categories* that “place the coded data into a more general or abstract framework” (Emerson 2001:97)⁸⁵.

When I began coding the interviews according to themes, aside from what is already in the literature (transitions to higher education, culture shock, etc.), the search for patterns and themes was not fruitful. Thus, a case study approach which included typing up the interviews

⁸³ Potential participants that are enrolled in classes that the primary investigator is teaching were not be included within the sample because of the possibility of students feeling coerced to be part of the study due to the unequal power relationship between students and teachers.

⁸⁴ Such as “retention,” “assimilation,” “academic contexts,” and “identities.”

⁸⁵ Such as a theoretical framework that is based upon Du Bois ([1903a] 1996), if applicable.

without including identifiable information proved more useful. It revealed concepts such as the Veil of Academia and the color-line (Du Bois [1903a] 1996). It also parallels the overall Du Boisian framework for Du Bois used a case study approach in the parable “Of the Coming of John” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:186-203) which comprises a key component of the conceptual framework for this study. As defined by Orum, Feagin, and Sjoberg, a case study is “an in-depth, multifaceted investigation using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon” (1991:2). In this study the qualitative methods were the semi-structured interviews. A case study allows “the investigator to ground the observations and concepts with which he or she works....[and] can permit the researcher to examine not only the complex life in which people are implicated but also the impact on beliefs and decisions of the complex web of interactions” such as those comprised of various “actors, actions, and motives.” (Orum et al.: 7-9).

During analysis of the interview data, keen attention was also paid to barriers that the grappled with in higher education as well as factors related to retention and assimilation. Kvale contends that the “outcome of an interview depends upon the knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy of the interviewer” (1996:105). Furthermore, what feminist scholar Bloom terms “critical self-reflection” became important during analysis because as she asserts “we must engage in a critical analysis of our roles as researchers (and human beings) with regard to our social identities or positioning” (1998:149). Although my own position has shifted from an undergraduate to that of a graduate student, I have retained the knowledge that I gained through my own experiences as well as interactions with other students who are underrepresented within academia. Further, because of the experiences that I have had in relationship to academia I am sensitive to some of the barriers that underrepresented students at Mountain State University may

grapple with and thus have empathy for the nuanced standpoints that participants may adopt when talking about their experiences within academia.

Anticipated Results and Significance of the Study

In light of the findings from prior research regarding the experiences of students who are first generation and low income (for insights see Oldfield 2007; Rendon 1992; London 1992; for research see Bergerson 2007; Myers et al. 2004; Inman and Mayes 1999; Orbe 2004; and Beal 2007) students who participated in this study may have lack the type of applicable cultural capital that enables the successful completion of a degree (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 2000; also see Beal 2007; Collier and Morgan 2008; Clawson and Leiblum 2008; Bergerson 2007; and Oldfield 2007). Students may have also initially experienced alienation and culture shock when they entered Mountain State University which might continue as they pursue their degree (see Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenburg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, and Thompson 2004). Students may also struggle to define and master the role of college student that faculty at Mountain State University expect (see Collier and Morgan 2008; also see Oldfield 2007, Farley 2002, and Bergerson 2007). Moreover, they may contend with the negotiation of “multiple identities” (Orbe 2004) which can influence both their academic and social experiences as they pursue higher education (see Beal 2007). This study has the potential to contribute to the growing body of knowledge regarding the experiences of underrepresented students by providing insight into barriers that the students contend with while pursuing higher education as well as factors that impact retention, acculturation, and assimilation.

FINDINGS

WHERE ARE YOU FROM, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?: SURVEY

Demographics

A third of the sample was first-generation to college the other portion of the sample was not first-generation to college. Just under-half of the sample identified as white, while the other half identified as being a person of color. The racial backgrounds of students included: being of African descent, African American, Latino/a, Hispanic, Chicana/o, Mexican-American, Asian American, bi-racial, multi-racial, and Native American. A third of the sample identified as being from a working class or lower income background. Almost half of the sample identified as being from a middle class background and a small subset from an upper-class background. Over half of the sample was identified as female, a smaller subset male, and the other forth were unknown. The majority of students classified as in-state students.

Descriptive Statistics

Invisibility.

Over half of the sample sometimes felt invisible at Mountain State University. A very small portion never felt invisible, while a slightly larger portion rarely felt invisible. A small portion felt invisible most of the time.

Visibility.

Over half of the sample felt visible sometimes. A small portion rarely felt visible and another portion felt visible most of the time. A small portion always felt visible.

Perception of One's Opinions Being Heard.

Over half of the sample felt that their opinions are heard at Mountain State University. A smaller portion felt that their opinions are not heard.

Questioning One's Ability to Succeed in College.

A very small portion never questions their ability to succeed. Almost half rarely question their ability. Another portion sometimes questions their ability. And a very small portion often or most of the time question their ability to succeed in college.

The Background of Friends.

A small portion did not have friends from similar backgrounds while in college. Over a third had friends from similar backgrounds. Almost half had friends from somewhat similar backgrounds.

Mentors.

Almost forty participants identified having mentors in college. Just over twenty did not identify having mentors.

Participation in Academic Programs.

Over forty participants had/or currently were participating in academic programs. Just under twenty had not participated in an academic program.

Involvement with Student Groups.

Almost all of the participants were involved with groups on campus. Only a very small portion of the participants were not involved with groups on campus.

Involvement Part of Their Success.

A small portion felt that involvement with was not part of their success at Mountain State University. Just over a third felt that it was somewhat part of their success. Almost half felt that involvement was part of their success.

Type of High School Curriculum.

Half of the participants had a general education curriculum. A smaller portion had a college prep curriculum in high school. And very small numbers had an arts focused or other type of curriculum.

College as an Opportunity for Peers.

Over half of the sample felt that college was an opportunity for their peers when they were growing-up. A small portion felt that it was never an opportunity, and another that it sometimes was an opportunity.

Fitting in When One Returns Home.

A very small portion felt that they did fit in very often when they return home. A fifth of the sample felt that they sometimes fit in. Another fifth felt that most of the time they fit in at home. Almost half felt that they always fit in when they return home.

College Made More Conscious of Background?

A very small portion felt that college did not make them more conscious of their background. A small portion of participants felt that college made them somewhat more conscious of their background. Most participants felt that college definitely made them more conscious of their background.

Family Shared Their Experiences with College.

Over half of the participants indicated that someone in their family shared their college experiences with them – be it a parent, sibling, aunt or uncle, or cousin. A sixth of the sample did not have someone to share their experiences with them.

Expected to Represent People from One's Background?

A small portion of participants felt that they are never expected to represent people from their background. An even smaller portion felt that they are rarely expected to represent. A slightly larger portion felt that they are sometimes expected to represent. Almost a third felt that most of the time they are expected to represent people from their background and a smaller portion felt that they are always expected to represent.

Feeling that the Community Does or Does Not Accept People from One's Background.

A small portion felt that Mountain State University and the surrounding community rarely accepted people from their background. Almost a third felt that people from their background are sometimes accepted. Over a third felt that people from their background are accepted. And a smaller portion felt that people from their background are always accepted.

Feeling That One Does or Does Not Fit In.

A small portion of participants felt that they do not fit in at Mountain State University. Almost half felt that they sometimes fit in. A small portion felt like they always do fit in at Mountain State University.

Perception of Diversity at the University.

A third of participants felt the Mountain State University was not diverse at all. Half felt that it was a little bit diverse. A very, very small portions felt that it was somewhat to extremely diverse.

Multiple Regression Findings

First Generation Students.

Students of color were significantly ($p < 0.001$) more likely to be first-generation than students who were white identified. Interestingly, working class and poor students were not significantly likely to be first-generation than middle to upper-middle class students. First-generation students were significantly ($p < 0.05$) more likely than non-first generation students to feel invisible on campus, even when students of color and working-class students were included in the regression model. Neither students of color nor working class students were statistically significant in this model.

Interestingly, out of these three groups – first-generation, working-class, and students of color – only first generation students positively affirmed that they felt that Mountain State University accepts them ($p < 0.01$). Students of color ($p < 0.000$) and working class students ($p < 0.001$) did not feel that Mountain State University accepts them. First generation students were less likely ($p < 0.000$) than non-first generation students to indicate that their family shared college experiences with them.

Working Class Students.

Working class students were less likely ($p < 0.005$) than first generation or students of color to feel that they would fit in when they returned home. Students who were first generation were more likely than students who were not first generation to be working class ($p < 0.05$). Students of color were more likely than white identified students to be working class ($p < 0.01$). However, then both first-generation and students of color were included in the regression model, they became statically insignificant. Working class students were more likely ($p < 0.05$) to question their ability while in college than students who were middle or upper class and less

likely ($p < 0.01$) to feel that they fit in at Mountain State University. Working class students were more likely to indicate that college was not an opportunity for their peers ($p < 0.005$), even when the type of high school curriculum was accounted for. They were also less likely ($p < 0.05$) than middle or upper class students to indicate that their family shared college experiences with them.

Students of Color.

Students of color were less likely ($p < 0.01$) than white identified students to feel that they fit in at Mountain State University. They were also more likely ($p < 0.05$) to have mentors that students who were white identified, which accounts for an interesting finding regarding fitting in and mentors – students who had mentors were more likely to feel that they did not fit in at the university ($p < 0.05$). Students of color were less likely to feel that Mountain State University was diverse ($p < 0.005$).

Diversity

If we examine critically the traditional role of the university in the pursuit of truth and the sharing of knowledge and information, it is painfully clear that biases that uphold and maintain white supremacy, imperialism, sexism, and racism have distorted education so that it is no longer about the practice of freedom. The call for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing, a deconstruction of old epistemologies, and the concomitant demand that they be a transformation in our classrooms, in how we teach and what we teach, has been a necessary revolution—one that seeks to restore life to a corrupt and dying academy.

- bell hooks⁸⁶

On the survey I asked students how diverse they felt Mountain State University was. The majority replied that they felt that it was a little bit diverse. Students who identified as being students of color were more likely to indicate that they felt that Mountain State University was

⁸⁶ 1994:29-30

not diverse. I also inquired about how students thought that Mountain State University could increase diversity. The following are the responses of all participants who chose to elaborate:

~ By recruiting students from the surrounding areas that are underrepresented, looking outside the box of what diversity is supposed to look like or be and educate themselves on and about communities that they are not part of.

~ It's a little hard because almost all of [Mountain State] is pretty white or comes from very similar backgrounds, maybe more scholarships and better out of state prices.

~ I think [Mountain State University] could possibly increase diversity by offering more scholarships to the minority communities, and reaching out to students of ethnic diversity.

~ Lower tuition or increase scholarships.

~ Keep doing what it is doing; providing programs for minority students before and after being admitted.

~ Reach out to [Mountain State] students. There are an array of hard working students in the [metro-area public] school system who would contribute greatly to this campus. The campus can promote the student organizations that represent the under[r]epresented.

~ By recognizing the fact that there are students from other backgrounds and appreciating on where they come from, like language wise e.g, for my major i need a second language but in reality English is my second language and my advisor told me that i have to take a language or prove to her that i actually speak Swahili! or otherwise i should go abroad and bring credits from there. Really frustrating considering that Swahili is not taught at the campus.

~By enrolling more minorities...

~ Admitting more racially/ethnically different people

~ By in some ways making higher education programs more affordable

~The people to accept students (admissions office-?) should pay greater attention to the schools students come from, and look to increase the number of students who come from lower-income high schools or schools with a greater percentage of minority students.

~ Going to a school is a personal choice and [Mountain State University] has already established a college culture that doesn't attract people like myself. I think we're stuck in a rut as far as diversity goes.

~ Make living cheaper.

- ~ Draw more non-traditional students.
- ~ Encourage H.S. students to apply.
- ~ With more cultural understanding programs.
- ~ Recruit more aggressively [sic].
- ~ Make strides to attract different groups from the United States as well as internationally. Inspire currently underrepresented students to change that status of representation by assisting their group in high school if not middle school as well.
- ~ Go global in advertising the school. ie: mail and emails.
- ~ Lowering their tuition.
- ~ Uncertain - Since [Mountain State] is predominately a white state.
- ~ Support the DREAM Act.
- ~ Connect the minorities in campus with minorities in [the city], attract more kids to [the city], add activities that different minority groups are accustomed to, and more familiar with by understanding who is actually on campus.
- ~ Start accepting people from different background that [sic] accepting 20000 people with the same back ground, and accept some here and there in the name of diversity its deceiving.
- ~ Putting more effort to represent US or [Mountain State] diversity in terms of population.
- ~ Equal Opportunity Programs similar to the ones active in the late 60s and early 70s.
- ~ Yes, if we encourage students to come and participate in our community. If we continue to outreach students in highschools at a early age. Of course if tuition cost was lower we would see an increase in students of color because race and economic status (for some weird reason haha) seem to go together.
- ~ Educate the campus on diversity.
- ~ Get more diversity porgrams [sic.] on campus and get student government to reflect its commitment to diversity.
- ~ Allowing more people of color, different incomes, [Mountain State] students/international students.

~ By holding more cultural events to raise awareness. Having a core req of culture & gender helps some, but I'd like to see more culture courses relating to more contemporary times and/or local demographics.

~ Meaningful programs to promote diversity and increase the amount of diverse applicants. not be so slated to out of state students.

~ By funding more money for underrepresented HS students.

~ Make taking a course on diversity and cultural competency a requirement during the first year of college for students and faculty.

~ Promote diversity through reaching out to underrepresented communities, providing extensive resources for those communities, and increasing campus wide education programs related to diversity and social justice.

~ Stop cutting funding for minority programs and accept more minority students

~ Increase grants and scholarships for diverse ethnic backgrounds.

~ I think we need to be more specific about diversity-- if we are talking about diversity broadly-- we have alot of diversity [sic]. Let's get specific-- we need greater racial diversity, class diversity, gender identity diversity etc., etc. Lower tuition costs.

~ Accepting more students of color.

~ I honestly have no idea.

~ Yes, definitely.

~ Accepting more minorities. Having more things in the community that minorities could relate to and then want to or feel welcome to come here.

[sic.]

Themes Related to Diversity.

The comments above cover a broad range of ideas but these primary themes emerge:

- 1) The cost of tuition
- 2) Needing to admit more students who identify as students of color
- 3) How to define diversity
- 4) Recruiting underrepresented students
- 5) Scholarships
- 6) The curriculum
- 7) Funding for scholarships and programs

Further Reflections on Diversity.

Moreover, in the additional comments section some of the students reflected more on diversity. Below are their responses:

~ I think more diversity is needed to increase people's ability to accept someone different from them and let them see that there are many different kinds of people within each cultural group that are not stereotypical. Also that diverse groups need to have some form of intercultural connection between them so they can branch out of their individual groups and make connections and have group activities with other ethnicities.

~ Compared to where I am from, the [Mountain State University] campus is very diverse. It's all relative.

~ Though this appears to be all negative, I have found community with other underrepresented students. Though we do not share the same background, all of our struggles are intertwined and we share a common desire to be represented more fully here.

~ I think everyone should take a diversity class to lessen some of the ignorance about other races/genders, and hire professors who are aware of the same.

[sic.]

WHERE ARE YOU FROM, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?: INTERVIEWS

A Brief Reflection on the Method of Analysis for the Interviews

A case study approach was taken because it relates back to the conceptual framework. Within “Of the Coming of John” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:186-203) provides us with a case study of the life of John Jones who is first generation, low income, and African American. It is a parable that illustrates double consciousness, awareness of the Veil of not only race, but what could be termed the Veil of Academia. Thus, the case study provides a schema for understanding something that we would not otherwise be able to. While from the interview and survey data, it cannot be said that the underrepresented students who participated in this study developed “double consciousness” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) per say – some appear to have developed something akin to double consciousness, enduring an alteration in consciousness similar to the alteration that John Jones underwent.

Are there parallels between the survey data and the interview data – how do the numbers help us to understand more about what the students are saying? For one, the case study approach provides a brief look into the lives of students who are part of a larger sample of students; thus, it is not simply eight people talking about their experiences – the study encompasses over sixty students who provide qualitative reflections about their experiences. Within the sample, there were a number of students who identified as African American and Latino/a – to some degree Mexican-American. There were also students who are white identified, some who indicated that they were first generation and/or working class or poor.

Everyone’s experience is unique but the students who were interviewed provided a snapshot into the lives of some of the students who participated in the study. Presumably if I had been able to interview each student they would have their own unique story of how they got to

higher education and how it has influenced their experiences. In “Of the Coming of John,” Du Bois ([1903a] 1996:186-203) sought to provide greater insights into what might be about alternation in consciousness and the impact that higher education has on consciousness. Just as he provided a snapshot into the life of John Jones, so I have set out to provide insight into the lives of a fairly diverse group of students to see what impact higher education has had on their consciousness. To see what something akin to double consciousness (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) looks like as it is being lived today. Second, analysis of the findings also brought forth the concept of the Veil of Academia which integrates the different Veils that the students, to varying degrees, are or are not acknowledging and grappling with; this concept had not yet been elucidated within the prior literature. Whereas on a theoretical level, scholars such as Reiland Rabaka (2007 [2008]; [2008] 2009; 2009 [2010]; 2010) have explored the application of Du Bois and possible expansions of his original insights – I am expanding and applying his insights, to use the words of Professor Rabaka, to the “lifeworlds and life-struggles” (2010:62) of students.

Interviewees⁸⁷

Rachel – identified as a first-generation, low income, African American student. She was from Mountain State and participated in an academic program.

Ann – identified as a non-first-generation, Mexican-American student from a low income background. She was from Mountain State and participated in an academic program.

KA – identified as a first-generation, low income, African American student. She spent most of her life in Mountain State. She immigrated to Mountain State at a young age. She participated in an academic program.

Rainbow – identified as a first-generation, working class, White student. She was not from Mountain State.

Mooky – identified as a non-first-generation, working class, Chicana student. She immigrated to Mountain State at a young age. She participated in an academic program.

Johnston – identified as a non-first generation, lower income, African American student. He was from Mountain State and participated in an academic program.

David – identified as a first-generation, lower middle class, Mexican-American student. He was from Mountain State and participated in an academic program.

Todd – identified as a non-first generation, middle class, White student. He was from Mountain State.

Chart of the Interviewees

<u>First Generation</u>	<u>Identifies as a Student of Color</u>	<u>Identifies as working class or below</u>
Rachel	Rachel	Rachel
	Ann	
KA	KA	
Rainbow		Rainbow
	Mooky	Mooky
David	David	
	Johnston	

⁸⁷ The interviewees chose their own pseudonyms with the exception of Rachel whose pseudonym was changed to protect her confidentiality.

Rachel

Rachel came to the interview in between her work at an on-campus job. She identified as a first-generation, low income, African American student from Mountain State. She had participated in an academic program. When I asked Rachel if she felt like she would fit in at Mountain State University, she remarked that, initially she felt like she would fit in academically. Socially she knew that a lot of her friends were not coming so she felt like that would be a problem. She observed that “trying to maintain academic life and social life is way too difficult, just had a hard time socializing but there were a whole bunch of other factors playing into that as well...” including family that relied upon her care before she came to college in addition to a boyfriend. She asserted that “Once I got into the school year... Homesickness – going home every weekend. Not getting homework done. Not understanding homework, not doing office hours” and dealing with events in her personal life were stressful. Getting involved with an academic program during her first year in college helped her – she noted that the program “gave me a job where there were students [which] helped me build up my social status of being more social.”

She reflected on how things might have turned out during her first year if she had elected to participate in a summer program that the academic program offers. “Just looking at how tremendously they help freshmen get so much stuff together would have been so much better for me. Especially in terms of academics and choosing classes that were fit for you.” She was “very conscious of the differences between the two” – the community that she came from and Mountain State University reflecting that coming from “a low income area with lots of black or African American whatever you choose to call it people. Violence. Just your typical...I wouldn’t say it’s a slum, not ashamed of where I live, or lived. There was violence, and of course there’s drugs and alcohol. I wouldn’t want to be walking my streets in the dark even though I’ve done it

and nothing's happened to me but most people would assume it's dangerous don't walk at night blab blab. Whereas in [Mountain State University city], if you didn't know it you would assume it's safe and clean. Upper class, mostly white. For the most part you would feel safe walking around." When I asked her about what made the perception of the city safe she replied "You would think [it] is a safe place. Old people, young people just walk around. [The reality is there are] parties and drinking, people suffer from sexual abuse and drug abuse. But you don't know that unless the officials want to stop it or stuff like that. I *wish* we had couch burning instead of gang shootings. Couch burning is 'not okay', it's 'violent' or 'illegal' or 'dangerous'. Whereas if we saw that [where I'm from] it would be like 'just grab a hose.' Stuff like that."

She "sometimes" felt torn between where she came from and the academic community that she is now part of noting that "sometimes if I meet new people who aren't educated...I get teased or made fun of because I am educated and don't speak like an uneducated person, like slang all the time. I sometimes try to speak slang which doesn't work because according to them I sound too white." She became aware of race, class, and gender at a young age and when asked how often she was aware of her racial background she replied "usually always specially being on this campus. Whenever I start school I'm like 'wow I'm the only black person.' Or I'll say 'wow there's only two of us' or 'there's a group of us.' That's usually when I'm aware of the difference. Even though you know no one is pure white – maybe they got some Indian in them or maybe they've got some black in them..."

She noted that she had a heightened consciousness of class due to sociology courses but that with race she does not "think about [it] unless something happens that like majorly affects any kind background, anyone's background. If they're black, Latino/a, Jewish anything that you know if anyone is targeted then I feel it for everyone. It's not like oh the blacks are being

targeted so *I'm going to feel something, it's like everybody.*" She noted that she had somewhat developed a new consciousness since she began college. "That's due to those sociology classes. It just makes you more aware of your surroundings. It does not necessarily make me more aware of it all the time, something comes in my head...[I] start theorizing 'oh this probably happened because of this'." She feels like she can be herself because "I'm not gonna change for anyone" noting that her "educated self comes in with slang and I can't do anything about that...I don't think [Mountain State University] has changed me in terms of attitudes and stuff. I've just changed in terms of my opinions and new knowledge." She does not feel like she has to hide aspects of her identity in order to be accepted, but noted that she is "not that involved." With regard to if she shifts the way that she talks or behaves while in a privileged setting, she said "Yes, you have to. You can't sound ignorant. For instance, I'm in class and there's some students who are super opinionated and that intimidates me because I feel like I don't have the right vocabulary to speak in class... You have to be in the loop and educated about the topic....I need to sound educated being in a school that's in the United States, being a person who's first language is English."

She felt that she code-switches (Anderson 1999) from an academic orientation when she is "with uneducated friends, that's who I change for" providing an example of a friend from another city who "is attempting to get higher education but is unwilling to change who he is which is fine but in my opinion he needs to change because you can't go into any kind of area or job speaking the way he speaks." Here Rachel's friend appears to be refusing to code-switch from what Anderson (1999) terms a "street" orientation to a "decent" orientation⁸⁸ or what in this

⁸⁸ See Anderson (1999:35-65) for a discussion of "decent" and "street"; as he observes, the "decent family and the street family in a real sense represent two poles of value orientation, two contrasting conceptual categories. The labels 'decent' and 'street,' which the residents themselves use, amount to evaluative judgments that confer status on local residents" (Anderson 1999:35).

study is termed an “academic orientation.” Because they speak differently, her friend “sees that as weird, that I’m white. I’m whitewashed.” Conversely, she has a friend who goes to another university in Mountain State and “he speaks the way I speak and I’m not talked about.” (Both friends are from her racial background). She observed that she is able to talk about what she is learning about with her family, but “they might not necessarily accept it...[they] like to hear that I’m learning something. And their proud you know, so [it’s] not a problem.” She observed something interesting regarding her family, noting that “We’re all smart, it’s just that we didn’t take classes and there’s no theories behind this reason why this family is poor....I have theories behind why this is happening in the neighborhood” and they say “well...this is happening because of this” so “there is no conflict theory.” Rachel could talk to her friends back home about what she is learning about if she wanted to, but does not usually talk about it. She wanted to leave Mountain State University after the first semester “but that was about it.” Because she will graduate soon she is “ready to leave now because I’m tired of school. But I know I have to finish....There’s no way I would drop out. That would be so stupid.” When asked about what sustains her as she is completing her college degree she observed that it is “knowing that I’ll get to a better place. Don’t know what the heck I’m going to do with this degree but I’ll figure that out. [It’s] not about money, it’s about helping people”

Ann

Ann met me at the location for the interview a little nervous. I had not provided her with a description of what I looked like so at first she was not sure if it was me. She approached me hesitantly, which would later come out in the interview as being part of her shy nature. She identified as a non-first-generation, Mexican-American student from a low income background. She was from Mountain State and had participated in an academic program. Initially Ann did

“not even think of it” regarding if she felt like she would fit in at Mountain State University. Then, she realized that although she would fit in academically she would not fit in financially noting that “now I realize that finically I get a lot more money from financial aid, I don’t really pay for anything. It’s an eye opener to realize that your financial situation isn’t as good as a lot of other people’s...Culturally [I] did not think it would be a problem...” It was an “interesting” transition and then she described it as “typical.” She thought that “freshman year was definitely, it was everything that I had expected but still it was an eye opener.” She is now part of a program that provides support for underrepresented students in her major. She is the student representative to an advisory board and she observed that recently “they were pleasantly surprised at my response and my insight being a minority student and being a student who has an opinion about you know whether we wanted peer mentors or faculty mentors that a lot of people being Caucasian didn’t know or weren’t really aware; kind of ‘out of sight out of mind.’” During the interview she reflected that “sometimes I feel like a minority and sometimes I don’t. My Dad is from Mexico...My mom is Swedish- Norwegian descent...I think when my mom met him and married him he had really big dreams to go back to Mexico and make a lot of money to have a ranch...As time has gone on she has had to take on the responsibility of holding up the house herself as the literate person, as the white person....Growing up me and my sister are very much more American than Hispanic or Mexican.” She noted that she was pretty familiar with Mexican culture but that she did not speak the language, and observed that she has “an understanding verses actually being a minority.”

She tutored kids who are low income and typically Latino/a, observing that “they don’t know how to read and it’s hard because they don’t have parents who can help them with school...Because I have like a little foot in the door of this world I feel like I have a

responsibility to do something to help. But at the same time, I'm more American than Mexican...I feel like I should help my fellow Mexicans, friends family, etc. It would be a lot easier if I looked Hispanic, spoke Spanish...but because I am more American I can't do that as much." Here Ann appears to be referencing the existence of two worlds – the white world that she primarily grew-up within contrasted with the Mexican-American world of her father and the students that she tutors.

A turning point in her experience was going on study abroad to Mexico. "I went down to Mexico to understand [my] dad's culture better. Through high school always thought American. And because I do understand my culture I am a Mexican-American with a hyphen. Not Chicana – utterly different things." She "realized [that I have] very traditional values inherited from my father I am kind of surprised that I did. Being as a girl, being proper. Waiting to have sex until you get married. Do not date around down there – it's like you find a boyfriend and you stick with them. Want to be with family a lot more like most Hispanics....[I have] traditional roots not typical American for this time." By the time she was entering middle school, she had "passed him academically." When she tried "talking to him about classes" her dad "thought Africa was a country and did not understand that it is a continent with countries on it; he just has no clue. Kinda shocking, but he comes from a background where it doesn't matter." She was conscious of differences between the university and the community that she came from. She noted that "through classes people are very like optimistic and very like think about the world in an ideal mindset and think that everything is possible. As soon as they walk out the door all the problems are invisible to them," providing an example of students majoring in the social sciences who walk out the door and do not see "the construction workers...standing right in front of them but they don't see them...People that clean the wealthy people's house in [city are] very invisible.

My fellow students think that these people are invisible but because I am part of the invisible it is hurtful.” She contended that “I wish that people would just embrace and accept instead of feeling like these invisible people, when they want to be invisible, are coming in and taking over.” She “sometimes” felt torn between where she came from and the academic community that she is now part of. She noted that when she took a class “about physical health and the environment and we were talking about people in impoverished areas and the conditions that they live in and my father really did live in those conditions. The class made it seem like it was the most terrible conditions, like impossible to live through; the class do not give enough credit to the rural lifestyle.” There is “a lot more respect and understanding in the [rural] community that I think that impoverished people understand that we don’t understand.” Her father’s family “lived in the actual like farm kind of area or very close to it. Always has crazy stories about things that happened to him.” She asserted that these comprised “two very different worlds – the good is not always highlighted in... ‘impoverished’ areas....It’s a totally different lifestyle and it’s really nice and I don’t think people realize that.”

She became aware of social class at a very early age. Her family has a story that they tell about her telling her aunt regarding that “‘I really wish we could have gotten a Christmas tree but my parents can’t afford it’ and I said this when I was like three apparently. Somehow I’ve always been aware that we weren’t in the same financial area that a lot of people are.” She noted that “I was immediately aware” of race and that when she was little and her father tried to speak to her in Spanish she told him “I did not want to speak that ‘stupid language.’ And I did not know where I picked that up.” As far as gender, she knew about that from an early age as well. When asked about the effects that her gender identification, racial identification, and class identification had on her she observed that “I guess a lot of those things play into how I think I should act...As

a girl and some of the things that my dad has ingrained in my head are very Hispanic. I play hard to get very well which is very Hispanic for a girl to do.” She felt like she had developed a new consciousness since she started college “through classes and being on my own. Putting myself in situations like study abroad and tutoring...kids.”

Ann felt like she can be herself “most of the time” while at Mountain State University. When asked if she felt like she had to ‘hide’ aspects of her identity in order to be accepted at the university she replied: “Not so much hide as keep to myself....there’s just some things people don’t need to know....being part of [an academic program] helped me figure out my place because it’s a group of minority students so that has been nice.” She does not feel like she shifts the way she talks or acts while in a privileged setting nor while she is at home. She is able to talk about what she was learning about with her mom noting that “I don’t know what I would do without her” whereas with her dad she has to “simplify it for him cuz I know it’s really confusing.” She is not comfortable talking about her academic pursuits with her dad’s side of the family but she is with her mom’s side who are college educated. Sometimes other students appear to innately know things that she did not. She observed that “a lot of friends who just see me have not idea that I am Hispanic.” She said that her confidence level in the classroom “depends on the classroom” because she is “uncomfortable, shy and reserved...[I] don’t like getting called on.” In the past she has gone to the office hours of professors that she likes and it was “always enjoyable.” She has never thought about leaving the university and is “very, very, very, likely” to complete her degree there. When asked about what sustains her as she pursues a college degree, she replied that her “mom’s side always expressed ‘make [the] world a better place.’” And she felt like she “had an in and a responsibility to do that.” In closing she noted that “College is kind of [an] introduction to everything that will come after...kind of a training.”

KA

KA and I had to laugh when we met up and I was pulling a rolling backpack and she was pulling a small suitcase. She was on her way to the bus to visit her family for the weekend after the interview with me. KA identified as a first-generation, low income, African American student. She spent most of her life in Mountain State, having immigrated there at a young age. She participated in an academic program. When asked if she felt like she would fit in at Mountain State University, KA replied “initially I did. I was really excited to go to college actually.” She had “worked really hard in high school in the IB program and felt hard work would pay off.” She described her transition from high school to college as “very hard although [there was] a rigorous program in high school. I just did not have the study skills or test taking skills and things like that as far as academia goes.” She was “not so prepared to move away from the family because I’m a very family person. Really had to transition and be away from my family.” And reflecting what Rachel mentioned in her interview, KA observed that she was “homesick a lot, still do [feel] but not as much as my freshman year. [It was] just a really big change between learning how to be independent and balance social life and academia.” She noted that due to her involvement in an academic program that she was able to learn “study skills over the years, there is a workshop that you can take on study skills but that is not enough...People try to warn us [about] balancing social life and academia and stuff. Did not realize, was not expecting social life to play [such a big part of] success in college.” Her dream is to become a doctor and after high school she felt that her “next step was to go to college and be successful, be a role model for my brothers and sisters” which was important because “when you go to college you become aware of so many other opportunities.”

KA is conscious of differences between Mountain State University and the community that she came from – “definitely, there was more diversity in the community I came from... With diversity [it is] easier to connect with people, even if they just know about diversity.” When I asked if she felt torn between the academic community at the university and the community that she came from she said: “No, I still practice my culture, my religion, share my traditions with other people.” Participating in an academic program was significant for her because it “made it so [that we] lived and took class with [a] group” and she was “also interested in like multicultural leadership and whatnot. [It] opened an atmosphere for people to share thoughts, cultures and similarities. Made a small community which to grow with, which is needed during freshman year.” She “chose not to think about [the differences] so much, there are differences I can see. Choose not to have it affect me, at least not in a negative way if anything [in a] positive way because [I] get to share [a] different perspective.”

She has been aware of social class since elementary school noting that she was “always” aware of it. “I mean I know I’m low income and in financial need and things like that so. Did not hurt me in a negative way, but I’m aware of it.” She began defining the difference between race and ethnicity in the academic program that she was part of her freshman year. She becomes aware of her racial identification “anytime when you fill out something whether it be for scholarships or for school or for health... When you fill out papers or even surveys and they ask where you fit.” She has always been aware of gender and felt that “maybe elementary/middle school is when you start thinking about and defining roles and things like that – advantages and disadvantages and things like that.” She noted that the combination of her racial identification, gender identification, and class identification, had “big effects... defines pretty much who I am because there are rules culturally and religiously that define me. And even with class it’s not

limiting to do too much but it's always like 'where am I going to find funding?' Worry about that I have to keep on top of." She also noted that "as a black, Muslim, woman sometimes I end up representing or give my voice a lot about how gender plays a role. Have to give my perspective a lot. [It] affects a lot of things."

When asked if she had developed a new consciousness since she began college, KA replied: "Yeah...[I] definitely, definitely, grew – I had a lot of personal development in college. Defining my gender role, my cultural roles, setting expectations for self....A lot that plays a role in how you mind works and matures and what not." She feels like she can be herself "most" of the time, noting something similar, but not the same, as the code-switching that Rachel discussed. "Yeah, yeah I am myself. Of course there are times when you have professional meetings, *then* you have to be professional. Other than that of course, because I get to be me I get to show people a different perspective, which a lot of people just do not have." Here KA is embracing an academic orientation by asserting her "professional" presentation of self (Goffman 1959) within this academic context. When asked if she can hide aspects of her identity, unlike Ann whose identity is hidden, KA asserted, "I don't think I can hide any aspects of my identity. The biggest aspects of my identity [I] cannot hide – religion and culture. [It is] because I don't want to that I have the hijab on....No matter what I tell people, [they] will look at me and I am sure will at least say 'she's different' – 'she's not from America, she's from somewhere else.'" Which was ironic because, "people say 'where you are from?' assuming [that I am] not from here even though I grew-up here since [I was] three years old. And pretty much am American."

When I asked if she shifts the way that she talks and behaves in higher education, KA said that she does "somewhat." She does not when she is at home or when she is with her friends from home. When asked about the impact of the shifting she replied, "maybe more in respect as

in ‘I am a student’ you know, kinda thing. So in class discussions you’re talking and speaking like ‘I am a student’; ‘I’m here to get higher education just like everyone else’ and those kinda things. More laid back with friends and family...More open, not so upright and ready. It’s informal I guess, not so formal.”

She “sometimes” talks about what she’s learning when she is at home observing that “once in a while I try to put it in” but most of “the time [my] parents are not going to understand what I am talking about.” She is able to talk with her friends that are going to college too so they are able to understand what she is talking about. With regard to the ones that are not going to college, “I do sometimes. Maybe they will not understand everything if I go into detail...but you know why you should do da da da or why you should do da da da. I still talk to them. If anything they still have a high school education, so they have a reference for what I’m talking about.” She still feels comfortable talking with her family about her academic pursuits when she returns home.

KA feels confident in the classroom “often” now, but when she had first started college “sometimes I would walk into class and be like oh my God this is so hard and feel extremely overwhelmed...Then I realized that everyone is in the same boat, definitely gained more confidence.” She “used to not go to office hours that much or not feel too comfortable talking with [the] teacher and stuff...*Now* office hours is where it’s at! I’m always there because I know it’s how to be successful for me.” She has thought about “taking a break like for a semester because it felt overwhelming, too much, burnt out. But not leaving ...just taking a break.” She was very likely to complete her degree at Mountain State University. What keeps her at Mountain State University is the “fact that I want to be a doctor, my family – knowing that my family is here to support me and I need to be a role model for my brothers and sisters...” as well

as involvement with students groups and academic programs. She has encountered “academic barriers. I always feel like I have to have a co-sem or tutor for all of my science class. Sometimes money but I have really good scholarships that help me pay for pretty much everything – rent and so on.” When asked about how college will help her obtain her goals in life, she replied that “critical thinking is one thing that I definitely developed in college more than high school or anything like that so that definitely is going to be helpful in general, even in life....There are a lot of opportunities in college that will help me with my future career; prepare for medical school and research and make me a better applicant in the real world whether it be attaining a job or internship or something.”

Rainbow

Rainbow came with a peace bandana tied around her neck. Like me she is soft spoken at times but that did not affect the interview. She identified as a first-generation, working class, White student. She was not from Mountain State. When I asked if she felt like she would fit in at Mountain State University, Rainbow noted that “I didn’t really know, I had no expectations...The campus was beautiful. I had only seen pictures before.” She came from a small town and had attended a community college prior to attending Mountain State University. “I was expecting a culture shock; that’s what I got...I didn’t really understand the bus system, I was afraid to get on the bus when I got here. I didn’t know if they were going to take me.” Noting the difference between her town and the city that the university is located in, she observed, “I’m so conscious of what people are doing here, people smiling when they walk by you. That was a shock. People just look down when they walk by you in my town. The landscape is a shock; I’m used to the ocean. This a place I really WANT to be.” Rainbow described the transition from high school to college as “a little challenging. Going from high school to

community college wasn't that bad because the classes were relatively small. That's what I was used to....From high school to community college was easy, but from community college to here – it just wasn't working for me. Like, I would do much better in smaller classes, for some reason. That was the way I could learn.” As far as skills or resources that would have made her transition easier, she remarked that “probably knowing a few more people here. I knew a few friends out here from my hometown, but none of them are going to school here....I didn't expect such a great bus system, but when I first moved here I lived here a few months. I couldn't do it. I had to move up to the mountains....It was a little too much city for me.” She is pursuing a college degree because “it's something to do. I wanted to be able to do what I want, I guess.” She described her background as “I'm a student. Ever since I was little I've always wanted to be a college student, I guess.” As far as differences between Mountain State University and the community that she came from, she noted that “people are a lot friendlier, willing to help you out, if you ask them. I guess the consciousness about how people live – people seem to be more aware of what they're doing and how they're affecting each other. I mean it's a very diverse college town. It's not everywhere that you get that same thought process” Here she is referencing a perception of diversity, similar to what Todd will later reference, which does not appear to be a conception of racial or economic diversity, but rather a perception of ideological or possibly cultural diversity. Both Rainbow and Todd are white. Their conception of diversity substantially differs from how the students who identified as being students of color define diversity – which appears to be based upon perceptions of the lack of racial and economic diversity⁸⁹.

When asked if she felt torn between where she come from and the academic community she is now part of, Rainbow said, “I miss my family. That's about it. I try to get me friends to

⁸⁹ One exception to this might be RA who appeared to integrate the lack of racial and economic diversity, with a focus on cultural diversity.

come out here...I don't think I'd ever go back there." She wishes that "they were here. I never really wish that I was there, I wish they were here." She first became aware of social class while in high school but said that "around here not so much, because it's hard to tell. A couple of semesters ago, we took a poll on where your parents were in social class and surprisingly I came out in the lowest twenty percent. It made me realize that there's a lot of rich kids who come here." It was "hard to say" when she first became aware of race. "The town I'm from is predominantly white. All through high elementary school and high school, there were like two kids from different ethnicity, which is surprising." She noted that her parents "grew up being slightly racist. They never actually put that on me, but they made me aware that they were racist, but they never want me to be....It's just strange. But I'm actually glad that they never really pushed that on me." Similar to what Todd would observe, she noted that she is "not too often" aware of her racial identification. Rainbow has been aware of her gender since "well, when I got into kindergarten, I guess, five years old. Who knows...who knows when kids are actually aware? Everybody is aware, since they came out of the womb." When asked how often she was aware of her gender identification she remarked that she is aware "most of the time." As far as the effects that the combination of her class identification, racial identification, and gender identification had on her, she remarked that, "I feel out of place a little bit because I'm not from an area like this, so I feel a little different. It's easy for me to adapt."

Rainbow feels like she has developed a new consciousness since she started college. "I understand a sense of a larger community. I never knew that where I came from....It's a different sense of place." She feels like she can be herself "most of the time" but sometimes "I definitely have to change the way I talk...so I'm a little better understood. Some people say 'what did you just say?'" She does not feel like she has to hide aspects of her identity to be accepted at

Mountain State University. Yet, Rainbow does feel like she needs to shift the way she talks in a privileged setting, such as higher education. “Sometimes I talk really quietly. I think if I can hear myself, others can hear me, but it’s usually not the case. I usually either have to say things twice or I really have to be conscious of how I’m speaking to speak loud enough.” She noted that she shifts the way she talks and behaves in higher education because, “It’s more that I want to be here for a specific reason. It would affect my grade sometimes, it requires participation. SPEAK UP! ‘Okay, I’m trying.’ Sometimes that’s just not the way I work. Sometimes I seem quiet, but I’m just observing. I’m taking it all in. It’s hard for me to be on demand for people, teachers especially.” She does not feel like she has to shift the way she talks and behaves when at home because “it’s more comfortable.”

“Sometimes” Rainbow is able to talk with her family about what she is learning but “I don’t go into too much detail with them. My sister, she’s studying science as well, so we’re kind of on the same level. When I start talking to my parents about something, they don’t understand” which reflects what David and Rachel would also talk about in their interviews. Her friends from home “sometimes” appear to understand what she is talking about. When her friends do not have higher education they do not understand but “a lot of my friends do have a lot more advanced knowledge because they went to college, so that helps.” She feels “somewhat comfortable” talking about her academic pursuits with her parents, but waited until she was at home to tell her mom that she had switched her major rather than telling her over the phone.

When asked if there were things that other students appeared to innately know that she did not, she replied “Medical things. Some things in math that just doesn’t click with me; can’t retain it, I don’t know why....I think that other students are more readily able to think of questions, more than I am.” She feels comfortable in the classroom “ninety percent of the time”

but during office hours it depends on the professor, “I’d say I’m confident if I’m going to them.” She has thought about leaving Mountain State University because “I was confused on whether I wanted to be doing what I was doing. I thought about a million other places and thought this is the best place for me. Sometimes I doubt, but this place is too beautiful.” Rainbow is “likely” to complete her degree at Mountain State University. Her motivation to finish college is the “community” in the city that Mountain State University is located in. “It’s a very encouraging place. I really like the outlook it gives me – that I can do something good in this world.” When asked how a college degree will help her attain her goals in life, she replied, “I don’t know. It should give me more opportunities in whatever field I find myself in.”

Mooky

Mooky’s interview was the longest – and the only – interview where we did not fully cover all of the questions on the schedule because she had a meeting that she had to go to. She identified as a non-first generation, working class, Chicana student. She immigrated to Mountain State at a young age. She participated in an academic program. When asked if she felt like she would fit in, Mooky replied “I mean at first I never thought about it so before coming here it was never a thought of ‘am I going to fit in [Mountain State University]?’” Her first semester in college she struggled with paying her bill and extended family had to lend her money. She reflected that it was “just a wake-up. How people were not reacting to money issues.” She got along with her roommates but there was girl that thought that she was a part of the staff. She thought “I was a worker there in like in the dorms like cleaning...it was just weird. She was telling me thank you for cleaning stuff. I was like ‘I don’t clean,’ she was like apologizing. Did not take offense to look like people who clean here, I am Latina so I see a lot of people working here in the dining halls. Got really close to the people [at the dorm] cuz I felt like I could relate to them a lot more

than I could relate to the students.” Moreover, Mooky experienced tokenization, noting that “There were a lot of comments about how I was the only Mexican. Oh, you’re my ‘Mexican friend’ it was kinda cool for them. It just felt like ‘oh its cool to be friends with this Mexican girl.’ It just felt weird.” Jokes were made about Mexican immigrants and “a lot of jokes about people cleaning. Those things really hit home. [They were] something silly, never would have guessed that my family is in that situation....It’s just like the values like dehumanizing a person because they are trying to work and do their job.” A lot of the people that she was surrounded by “assumed cuz I was in college...that that was not my background at all, that I had not gone through that, that I was okay and that...I don’t know....They did not understand there is a *BIG problem* thereIt would piss me off because it was looking at them like someone not that I could serve but at one point had been serving. ‘Oh I could be cleaning your houses’ kind of thing.” The problem was “that no one knew that but I wasn’t going to tell them.” Like Ann, Mooky expressed a consciousness of the “invisible people” that surrounded her and the other students asserting that her mother had worked at a fast food chain. “It doesn’t make sense that I had to solidify like who she was – had a degree but then came here and had to start working at place like cleaning bathrooms and things like that. You kinda start appreciating. When you go to a restroom don’t want to leave a mess because your family could be cleaning after you. It’s hard work and I guess a lot of people don’t understand that.” During her first semester these things were “creating doubts in academic life cuz I was going to drop out of school, cuz I couldn’t pay for the money. [My] parents were going through financial issues so I was going to work to help them out because they were gonna lose the house. You know there’s all the stuff you feel disconnected from the other students. Felt like other students did not have to worry about those things.”

Like Rachel and KA, even though she was technically not far from home, Mooky noted that “I was definitely homesick a lot.” The summer before college was “really exciting, really full of things I knew had to happen in my life. So it was a good transition in first month or so, but when seeing difference I wanted to be home back in high school having my community and the people I feel comfortable being who I was.” She described it as a “culture shock...Like me going, like it was a different world. Kuz to me it was a different world.” Here Mooky appears to be referring to what Du Bois ([1903a] 1996) might have termed the not only the separation of the two worlds but is also hinting at what conceptually could be termed the “Veil of Academia” – an intangible boundary that separates the worlds that underrepresented students from and the world of academia.

During the transition her “family was really supportive and would come and visit me if I said I was homesick. My family’s really close so they would just get in a car and drive over here. They made it fairly smooth.” Thus, by being physically present, Mooky’s family appears to have initially helped her during her transition between the two worlds – the world that she came from and the world of academia. She noted that even though her mother and aunt had gotten college in Mexico, she was the first in her family to go to college in the United States. They “all wanted to experience what it was like for me to come to college so that made it really go smoothly. It was the thing for all of us to do I guess.” She was not able to be part of some of the academic programs that serve first generation students because her mother was educated in Mexico, and she noted that “there is a gap there in the system that is not reaching out to all of them” and that “I think financial aid would have made my experience better, I guess.”

Mooky is pursuing a college degree because “my family has always instilled in me that education is the way to go....I believe that with education we can overcome a lot of obstacles for

like our communities, our underrepresented communities because we are breaking the cycle that the system puts us in...It was really easy to get out of that system because of the support of my family.” She poignantly asserted “one student at a time, one community at a time, take [us] out of the system that is oppressing those underrepresented communities.” She does not know what “I want to do with my life yet. I used to want to work for the UN, but now I have no idea, I don’t know how I feel about the UN. I guess my degree is just to say, solidify – it’s an easy way...it’s a common way to start reaching for those goals that you have in life.” When asked about how she defined her background she observed, “We’re immigrants first. I guess...yeah working class...I guess we have a rich culture at home. I identify as Chicana I guess from being in [a student group] but my family doesn’t cuz it’s a different culture of stuff being Mexican American and I identify as Chicana so there’s differences there.”

Mooky is “very” conscious of differences between the city that Mountain State University is located in and the community that she came from. An example was, “just the way people dress. To me that is really different.” Rather than experiencing a culture on study abroad as many students do “in my hometown you really see those culture[s], you really see like...you go like to a Mexican store and no one is pretending to embrace the culture, it’s just the culture.” She observed that when “I was going through the transition of feeling like ‘I belong here’ I was really aware [of the differences] just because of just stage of ‘I don’t belong here’ and the brain picks up everything as to why you wouldn’t. It was a problem. I don’t find that to be the case anymore.” When I asked if she could describe any differences that exist she asserted, “how you see the color...I guess of color of people here at the university....Just kind of notice racial differences....I guess the mindset of a lot of people is to have this idea of we’re in college and we should party every day, do homework. They’re supposed to be the best times of our lives.”

Mooky has found solace in “being in a community of underrepresented [students] there is more consciousness of why here. See clashes of cultures of [Mountain State University] as a party school verses people really active, wanting to make a changes in our university and the world.”

When I asked if she felt torn between where she came from and the academic community that she is now part of she observed, “I used to because a lot of my friends went to community colleges or a lot of them went to like a school like massage school to start working right away.” Even in high school she had a similar feeling, noting that teachers “call me the ‘exception’ [which is] a big disconnect – because I was educated I was white-washed.” Thus, the term “white-washed” surfaced again, as it had during Rachel’s interview. When I asked her what it meant she told me that people were “assuming that I am becoming white because I am becoming more educated. Idea that education comes with color...Like this thing – you’re becoming part of American culture.” She noted that because of this there was a “big disconnect with that community. Because of family and their support I really believe there’s connection between my community and academics because my family had instilled that in me.” Thus, she found a way to reconcile the disconnection, or what might be termed an alteration in consciousness by becoming part of a student group. “A lot of community that is part of the community now part of the academic world...First semester and beginning of second, I definitely believed that I belonged working and therefore did not belong in the academic world. Being surrounded by that community that can both embrace [the] community as well as go and be in academic world.” Hence, similar to Ann she is referring to the existence of two worlds, yet because she was fully part of the Mexican-American world, and does not “pass” as white, Mooky appears to possess the second-sight (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) in that she sees herself through the eyes of others as she described during the interactions with her peers earlier in the interview.

Through a student fund supported entity that provides efforts to support and retain students from underrepresented backgrounds, Mooky was able to find a “support group...I would just sit there see all of those people of color in one room, felt like a space for me [it is] what kept me here.” Yet when she left the student fund supported entity or went to a “community meeting and then see a lot of people for social justice get out of [that] environment and really feel like at [Mountain State University]...whole different environment of what you were just in.” She expressed that she “felt like a number [which] comes from we are such a big school...being just a number to school need so many that id this way and they let so many people that identify this way. It was hard because I just don’t wanna let go of the idea that made way through here because better GPA....I don’t get why they can’t ask for your name and type it. For anything you identify self with your nine digit number.” The feeling of being torn impacted her in more than one way. “I think this feeling of doubt a lot like the work I was doing here and if I was supposed to be here. It really affected academic life....had to check self because I had never been that student that had never turned in an assignment.”

She became aware of social class at a young age through an interaction between her family and a little girl: “Her face was really dirty; had like really old old rags. Looked really skinny.” The little girl asked her mom for money and was given food and her brother let her choose a toy. After that her mother told her, “There’s people that have less than us and we can, we have to give. It was just like then I understood why she was a little dirtier.” She “never knew struggle with money because mom never allowed us to see that.” She became more aware of race once she got to the United States. Playing sports in high school she that we “would go to a school and all people would be white, and then we would go to another school that was and all the people were of color.” She thinks about her racial identification “most of the time” noting

that “there was time when...we were in class and talking about borders and how they’re arbitrary. And then we were talking about modern slavery and someone said something like ‘they’re illegal so it doesn’t matter.’ Then...like everyone just looked at me, people starting at me like ‘what are you going to say?’ I don’t know...[I] guess a lot to do with being an immigrant but also who they think an immigrant is.” She first became aware of gender at a young age, noting as Hochschild ([1989] 2003) did the unequal gendered division of labor in the home that women have often undertaken. Most recently she became more aware through interactions with the LGBTQ community that we “always see through eyes of the male perspective, [yet] that there are some people who do not identify with those genders.” In regard the effects that the combination that her racial identification, gender identification, and class identification had on her, she observed that “my background has just made me really lucky, really rich culture and appreciation of life that is a lot different. That I am not going to school to make money because that is not the priority. Helped me understand why I am doing the things I am doing, why I want to continue social justice work.”

When I asked if she felt like she had developed a new consciousness since she had started college, Mooky replied “yes, again its all the understanding of system, of power dynamics...Being around underrepresented communities, [student group] ‘decolonize’ the mind and tell you why you should not say that thing.” Then she observed that, “our books are so Eurocentric...learning other histories being here in college. How come no one ever told us about the indigenous people here? Expanded mind a lot to think crucially.” She feels like she can be herself because “[I] do surround self with underrepresented communities so I never feel ashamed for who I am....In communities I am with I can be myself because there are resources and those people providing those resources.” With regard to the ability to hide aspects of her identity, she

was not sure. “I don’t know. I think that identities are not seen, like my class and things like that. I don’t hide them, I just don’t want to express them. Just because it’s like ‘I’m not hiding it for you’, it’s just ‘if you can’t see it maybe that would be better.’” Other students appear to innately know things that she did not, such as “I remember the first year here so many people had life plan for like for years. And there was sheet of paper they had and they said their parents had told them they had to plan classes so they could graduate. And I was like ‘what?’ Things culturally that I figure out over the years.” Mooky appears to engage, to a less degree, in a form of the code-switching (Anderson 1999) that Rachel described. She remarked that she was not sure about shifting the way that she talks and behaves observing that, “I guess I’m more laid back when it’s not academic settings but I speak, it’s probably not high talk, but if I am not with a people who speak English would rather prefer and speak Spanish and I guess that’s a shift.” She also noted that when she is at home there is shifting because “there’s a vocabulary that we use to talk about the underrepresented community...that I don’t use at home at all.” When she tried to talk to her mom about transgender people “she didn’t understand.” Yet, she does feel comfortable talking about her academic pursuits while at home, noting that “with family just because...it is instilled in me that should not be problem to tell them what I want to do with my life.”

Johnston

Johnston was very patient with me. I had an appointment that ran over so I was unable to meet him at the designated time. After a phone call, he came back to do the interview. Throughout the interview I noticed that he hummed softly between answering the questions. He identified as a non-first-generation, lower income, African American Student. He was from Mountain State and participated in an academic program. When I asked about the first time that he visited the

Mountain State University campus, Johnston remarked “honestly I didn’t put any thought into it. I was told directly that there weren’t many black students on campus and that would something that I would have to deal with if I came here but I didn’t really care about it – it was just as field trip to me at the time.” He noted that it “wasn’t really hard to leave my parent’s house or anything. Wasn’t really hard to figure out classes, talk to my professors, do college papers. The only difficulty really came from the education system and [a] different culture up here than I was used to....” When asked about skills or resources that might have been helpful, he replied, “I suppose the biggest thing that could have helped me would have been if I had the opportunity to change my curriculum. Like to drop certain courses or subjects that I don’t really consider necessary for a degree.”

He was pursuing a college degree because “I did not want to work after graduating [from high school] particularly because I did not want to work at some job I had to work at, that I had to work at which is what could have happened. Now the reason keep doing it is family expects me to get, so might as well get it. I’m not doing anything else.” He is “sometimes” conscious of the differences between Mountain State University and the community that he came from. “Last semester and last year I was a lot more aware of the differences. Besides the racial and ethnic changes, I never really spent that much time around...I guess I did not have a diversified group of friends in high school.” He did not feel torn between the two communities. He became conscious of class at a relatively young age, when “I was thinking about the evils of the world.” As far as race, “race was just something I always knew. I don’t really have a age to put it at remember going to school and knowing about what race was or at least knowing what my race was in relation to others.” He became aware of gender during puberty. When asked about the effects that the combination of his class identification, racial identification, and gender

identification, he observed, “well being a black man it seem like I keep my anger in check a bit more. If I get angry I don’t try to make an angry face or express it verbally or anything. I try to keep it in. Being black and middle class I try to not present myself as lazy or stupid I suppose.” He did not feel like he could be himself while at Mountain State University, “I think I’ve always had a problem with the question because I think I can only be myself when I’m alone....Don’t have friends or family up here to make me feel comfortable so I don’t feel like myself.” Thus, Johnston’s family did not appear to be able to help him with the transition as Mooky’s family had helped her.

When asked about hiding aspects of his identity in order to be accepted, he noted “Yes, I tend to....I feel like I should hide anger and my despair a bit more. I tend to modify my language when I’m up here as opposed when I go down to [major city in Mountain State].” When asked about modifying his language, he described what Anderson (1999) describes regarding code-switching. “[I] talk in more proper English and curse a lot less. I suppose because of that I tend to draw out sentences a lot more when I talk like that or repeat certain things.” He shifts the way that he talks and behaves while in higher education from a somewhat street orientation (Anderson 1999) to an academic orientation. “I suppose it’s weird because I do use a lot of the same vocabulary just when I am in an academic setting anyway. It feels a lot less comfortable to talk that way but I talk pretty much the same way when I talk with my friends who talk like I do.” He is not able talk with his family about what he is learning because, “I don’t have a good interest in what I’m learning so I can’t open a conversation and expect others to be interested in it.” His mother has a college degree but she was in a different situation that he is while she was pursuing college. “The mindsets that me and my mom had when we were going to college were very different...she went there to improve her life and the life of her family. I came pretty much

because she told me to.” He talks with his friends “a bit more because they...are in a more similar situation to me. They’re out of high school, pretty much same age and we’re still wondering what [we] want to do....Whereas with family ‘get degree no matter what’...my friends seem to see it as ‘get degree if what you want’ or ‘need like now.’ And if ‘it’s not what you need right now then find out what you want or need.’” He feels “somewhat confident” in the classroom and does not go to office hours. He is “pretty likely, or fairly likely” to complete his degree at Mountain State University. What sustains him as he pursues college is that he “already has twelve years of experience keeping it going; half-way through so might as well finish it.” Regarding barriers, Johnston observed that one limitation for him is the price of housing in the area surrounding Mountain State University. And another is “the science portion of the Arts and Sciences curriculum.” And finally frustration with restrictions such as “if you miss a certain amount of classes you’ll fail or get a ‘D.’ Not so much a problem with me, it’s just that...don’t see point of in college – we’re already paying you so who are you to show up and tell me when I’ve already paid you regardless.” He also noted “the cost of [Mountain State University]; the cost of books and underutilization of them.” A college degree will help him obtain his goals in life because “I hope it will help me get a more preferred job and less of a necessitated job or career.”

David

David came to the interview straight from sports. He was stressed out because he was running late but seemed exited about doing the interview. He identified as a first-generation, lower middle class, Mexican-American student. He was from Mountain State and participated in an academic program. David felt like he “fit in socially” at Mountain State University. “Academically felt like a little behind, I didn’t feel as prepared for college as I’ve see other

students. Economically did at first but then [would] see very wealthy kids...Parents have a lot of money, I would say I come from lower middle class. I feel like I have enough money for everything, but definitely see very wealthy students.” In regard to the transition from high school to college, “academically it was a rough transition, I did not feel prepared – classes were very difficult, very exam oriented as opposed to high school when you have participation and homework.” David is first-generation. “Both parents attended college, but neither graduated. Another thing that was hard with like other college educated parents and grandparents can show what to expect, my parents support me in what I do but in a sense have never been through dorms, or big major college experiences. So in a sense that was a challenge.” Unlike Rachel, he entered straight into an academic program “so that helped a lot...Came in, didn’t think it would be extremely hard but I didn’t think it would be as difficult. I have been through trials and tribulations...would have been easier if I could have dropped out.” To counter-act these experiences, he proposed a “class that explains the intensity of school...there should be some type of class or workshop before school even starts that shows you what everything is all about. Mentor who shows you the ropes would be good.” He discussed how “a big problem for me was peer pressure to go party, go out and play games, play sports instead of study” noting that “people can do that and they’re still fine, still drink and perform well in their academia. For me, I have to put in the work.” When I asked why he was pursuing a college degree, he replied “I’ve just always been told that I need to get a college education from my parents and my teachers in grade school, middle school, and high school. Because I’ve always been told that it did not really give me an opportunity to decide if that’s what I really wanted.” All of “my friends went to college, should be graduating. More or less went with the flow” until he met “my friends and most of their parents, almost all of my friends’ parents are college educated, and seeing [that]

almost wanting to learn more, to find knowledge to understand how our world works.” It was “seeing educated people and being around educated people [that] made me really want to pursue an education.”

When asked about his background, David replied “I am Mexican-American, by now most of my family is very Americanized....Most of the family all English speaking. Mom’s first language is Spanish. Not Mexican practices – but very family oriented.” He noted some of the traits of his cultural background observing that there are “more kids than other cultures...Family get-togethers, get together on major holidays. Great Mexican food. Christian – Evangelical Bible based.” He mentioned that he “always played sports in growing up...very involved in high school student government and philanthropy” and that he is “kind of a sociable guy – love people. I rarely will turn down a friend, try to be as friendly and nice as possible...I don’t judge and I’ve always been easy to get along with.” He noted that he is “absolutely” conscious of differences between Mountain State University and the community that he came from remarking that they are “definitely two ends of the spectrum.” He feels that he is “definitely a minority when it comes to my race [at Mountain State University]” whereas where he came from it is “fifty percent Hispanic/fifty percent White” which was “not a huge culture shock.” However, “economically it was a huge culture shock...a lot of people have money, economically it’s a lot different.” He has friends who have “been all over the world and that can be something that’s a little challenging when they have all of these opportunities and experiences.”

When asked if he feels torn between the world that he came and the world he is now part of, David remarked, “I don’t feel torn. I understand that I was raised in a lower middle class to middle class family whereas a lot my friends here have been raised in middle to upper middle to high class. [It] can be frustrating when I know that they can do these things because their parents

are well off.” Then “coming from a cultural race aspect – I’ve gone up and down with...I guess initially I was reading stats for [Mountain State University] there is twelve percent Hispanic/Latin, then walking around campus you don’t see any....That has not affected me when making friends.” He referenced recent racially motivated hate crimes noting that you “hear about hate crimes – you have very cold [people who] make race jokes but the majority...I wouldn’t say everyone is being more acceptable. I don’t think it’s about race as much as it was. I don’t think it’s completely gone but.”

David became aware of social class in middle school and observed that he is “always” aware of his class identification. He is not aware of his racial identification “as often” observing that “there are some people that are very proud to be Mexican. There the Viva La Raza thing – long live the Mexican race. [I’m] happy [with] where I am from. [It is] something that rarely crosses my mind.” He first became aware of gender during a sociology class on the topic when he was around twenty. He had “always [been] aware of male and female but then there’s the third gender. Really learned about and then became more aware of it...[I] guess I became more conscious of it in college.” When asked about the effects of his class identification, racial identification, and gender identification he noted, that “[I] don’t think about it as much. It makes me kind of want to work harder to gain more representation for minority male, for a Mexican male, for someone from a lower middle class. Prove that I can do it just as well as anyone can.” He felt like he had developed a new consciousness since he started college remarking, “Absolutely, I feel like I’ve learned since high school. I’ve become so much more aware of aspects of my life, of different people, or my choices, or knowledge. More educated in everything.” When asked if he can be himself while at Mountain State University, he replied, “I think so, I’ve never really...I’ve had some identification issues in the past...Took a long time to

really – more or less do not have those high school identities. In academia world you are smart guy more or less... Comes down to what you believe and what your goals and choices are. The person you are, the way you live your life, not so much ‘this is what I do’ but ‘this is what I am, this is how I live.’ In regard to feeling like hiding aspects of his identity in order to be accepted, he noted that “sometimes” he does. “Coming in freshman year everyone comes in and does not have a niche. Find your niche and the people you identify with and you can hang out with, have things in common with.” Yet, he felt asserted that, “honestly, I don’t think I represent the average student at [Mountain State University], I feel like I am accepted, do not feel like it with majority but I do identify with a lot of people.”

When asked about shifting the way he talks and behaves, David noted that he “react[s] differently around different people. Guys will be guys.... More liberal with than with parents. [But I am] maturing as a person and being able to communicate with my parents more.” He felt that “initially I did” shift the way he talks and behaves when at home with his family, which appears to be code-switching between what Anderson (1999) might term “decent” and “street” orientations. “I definitely had home world and school world. Their values verses my values [sic]. As I’ve matured I feel like I can tell parents almost everything now.” This is an interesting reference to the notion of two worlds – though not in the same way that Du Bois ([1903a] 1996) was conceptualizing it, but it does indicate a fissure between academia and where he came from. He noted that although he has been able to share what he is learning with his parents, “it’s hard for them to understand the college experience when they haven’t been through it. Hard to relate... its difficult... hard to relay that information when they have not been through it.” Most of his “close friends” chose college, yet “it’s hard when you have those friends that did not go to

college. Kind of become more distant – working or chose another path such as military; it’s hard to connect with them as much.”

In regard to other students appearing to innately know things that he did not, David noted, “for me being first generation I did not know how to study...A lot of the kids who come here can come from private school or very highly funded public high school with very educated teachers. Those teachers are greatly educated. Far superior when it comes to transition to college. Are a little ahead of a student like myself – with their parents and education background it’s a lot easier for them I think.” During the interview, David’s remark regarding not “knowing how to study” reminded me of John Jones in Du Bois’ ([1903a] 1996) parable.

When asked about feeling confident in the classroom, David remarked that, a “huge struggle for me was feeling competent around my peers; feeling academically smart around my peers. Huge challenge, felt so inferior around other students...Currently I feel great, finally have crossed that bridge and understand you know ‘I can do this. Nobody is better than me.’” He noted that the academic program that he was involved with “gave me an opportunity, a place to go, a backbone – that little extra push for motivation [was] huge to help me excel through my school years and get college.” He had thought about leaving college when he was struggling with classes, but he noted that “I’m a first generation college student, I have to just work through it...worked too hard to let it all go.” He is “very likely” to complete his degree at Mountain State University. With regard to how a college degree will help him achieve his goals in life, he noted that he wants to concentrate on an area close to his degree, but he may go onto graduate school. “[I] feel like I set my goals one goal at a time; big goal right now is just to finish college. No set plan right now. Having a college degree will help me with opportunities for the future; which there are a lot of options.”

Todd

Todd was the final student that I interviewed and he was looking around for me as I came down the steps. I had sent him a description of myself as tall with long black hair and noted that I would have my computer with me. He identified as a non-first-generation, middle class, white student. He was from Mountain State. Todd felt like he would fit into Mountain State University “cuz I felt like it was a big campus and there would be someplace I would be able to fit in, be myself, and do what I want to do.” He described his transition to college from high school as “challenging,” noting that, I had to develop new study techniques, to sit down and study the material more. And the classes were less frequent so I didn’t realize the impact of that; it’s more material in a less amount of time.” He is pursuing a college degree “so I could get a good job and have a good life after college. Be able to have a family and be able to support them.” He described his background as “white, middle class.” Todd was “rarely” conscious of the differences between Mountain State University and the community that he came from; he “kind of grew-up in the [Mountain State University] area so there’s not much difference.” In regard to feeling torn between where he came from and the academic world that he is now part of, he said “not really.” He became aware of social class “either halfway through high school or my first year of college.”

He became aware of race in elementary school when they were “talking about [it] in school, like the civil war, I think that is what made me [aware].” I asked him how often he is aware of that he identifies as white he answered with “Oh *that*.” When asked if there is anything that makes him aware of his racial identification, he replied “some of the privileges that I have compared to some other people of different races, I guess” noting that he is aware of his racial identification “most of the time.” He became aware of his gender identification when he took a

class on it and noted that “sometimes” he is aware of it. When asked about the effects of his class identification, race identification, and gender identification, he replied, “I guess they don’t really impact me usually. I mean sometimes I will be like ‘hey I’m where I am because I’m white.’ But I don’t really think like that, so.” With regard to the question of developing a new consciousness since he started college, he remarked, “sure – I guess I’m more open different ideas and cultures seeing a wide array of people more than it was in high school where there was mainly white people, so. There’s more culture, there’s more different types of culture here.”

He felt like he can be himself at Mountain State University observing, “oh yeah, absolutely – it’s college. You have to be yourself to be able to find out where you fit in.” He “rarely” feels like he needs to hide aspects of his identity in order to be accepted at the university. He does not feel like he shifts the way he talks or behaves when in a privileged setting such as higher education, but he does “somewhat” when he is with his family and his friends from home. He is able to talk about what he is learning about with his mom, but with his dad, he said “sure I can talk to him about it but has never really gone to college but we can’t say anything or stress anything. All he does is just listen.” His mom is able to understand what he is talking about. It “has always been like that through elementary and high school; [she] got involved with how I am doing academically and socially. My dad has always been backseat to that type of stuff.” Here he is reflecting something similar to Ann’s experience with her father who was also not college educated. Because most of his friends went onto college Todd is able to talk with them about what he is learning. He feels “comfortable” talking about his academic pursuits when he returns home.

As far as if there are things that other students appear to innately know that he does not, he noted that they might know more about science or math. Todd feels “somewhat confident” in

the classroom and “confident” during office hours. He asserted, “if I have questions they will be answered and the professor will be able to explain my questions in a lower, easier to understand manner than in a big lecture hall.” He has thought about leaving Mountain State University “a couple of times...Just like academic wise to see if there is a place that is either more easier or has different sets of requirements to graduate....” He decided to stay because of “the location, friends I’ve made, and financial issues too... transfer credits like for other schools.” He is “likely” to complete his degree at Mountain State University. As far as what sustains him as he pursues his degree, he observed that, “I’d say my friends and family, advice from them.” Barriers that he has encountered include “trying to figure out how to pass my class and keep my stress down...time management and procrastination and trying to overcome those.” A college degree will help him obtain his goals in life because it will provide him with a “better paying job than I have now.”

Analysis of the Interviews

One of the students whose lifeworld and life-struggles (Rabaka 2010) were investigated was Ann. While in college Ann appears to have developed something akin to “double consciousness” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) in that she is able to see herself through the eyes of others. As she noted regarding the primarily Latina/o students that she works with, “It would be a lot easier if I looked Hispanic, spoke Spanish...but because I am more American I can’t do that as much.” Unlike John Jones who was unable to hide his blackness, her ability to pass as white identified means that people do not know her background, unless she chooses to tell them. For as she observed during the interview, “a lot of friends who just see me have not idea that I am Hispanic.” This puts her in an interesting place regarding the Veil of Race. Whereas Du Bois ([1903a] 1996; [1920] 1999) saw the color-line delineating the Veil of Race in the United States

he did not tell us where Latinos/as fit. Moreover, where do people who, like Ann, are bi-racial fit into the schema? To a degree, Ann appeared to be aware of the Veil of Race for as she reflected, “I have like a little foot in the door of this world, I feel like I have a responsibility to do something to help.” Here Ann appears to be referring the two worlds that Du Bois ([1903a] 1996; [1920] 1999) described. As a woman who can pass for white, she has a foot in the white world but as a woman who is bi-racial she is aware of the world on the other side of the Veil of Race. She knows the other world – the Latina/o world because she grew-up with her father which provided her with an understanding of that world, yet because she is bi-racial and can pass as white she has a “foot in” the white world as well. Here she also appears to be referencing the color-line (Du Bois [1903a] 1996; [1920] 1999) but occupies a uneasy place because of her bi-raciality and the perception of whiteness.

Beginning in college, Ann was striving to understand the Mexican part of her identity. Whereas the world divided by the Veil of Race and a clearly defined color-line meant that John Jones grew up knowing his blackness, and as he grew comfortable in his blackness the white John would slap it in his face, Ann grew-up with a hyphenated self and as a young child rejected part of the hyphen when she rejected her father’s language. The rejection of her father’s language – Spanish – did not appear to come from either of her parents but may have come from what Durkheim called the prevailing “collective consciousness” which devalues the acquisition of Spanish, the heritage of being a Mexican-American as can be seen in some of the recent laws that are being proposed similar to the SB 1070⁹⁰ in Arizona. Thus, what Hunter (2005) terms the “politics of skin tone” are applicable for Ann in terms of the invisibility of her bi-racial identity. She has a white mother and the acknowledged perception of whiteness by other people (see Hunter 2005:25 for information about the debate).

⁹⁰ Senate Bill 1070, Arizona.

Unlike John Jones, Ann grew-up with a white consciousness, but as she got older she went in search of her roots in the Mexican world. During college, she went down to Mexico, on Study Abroad, “to understand [my] dad’s culture better. Through high school always thought American. And because I do understand my culture I am a Mexican-American with a hyphen.” Even though she went in search of her father’s culture, during the interview Ann still clung to the feeling of being a “typical” student. She also claimed “Hispanic” rather than Latina heritage, which is interesting when one considers that the term designates Eurocentric Spanish blood rather than indigenous roots and for some historically it was an attempt to achieve whiteness. She also observed that she is “pretty familiar” with her father’s culture – thus in some way she occupied a voyeuristic position as she embarked on the process of attempting to integrate the hyphenated into part of her identity. Although Ann has features of whiteness that have allowed her to have certain benefits as a result, she experienced an awakening in college similar to John and is now contending with the understanding of herself as a bi-racial person – to understand what it means to be “Mexican-American with a hyphen.” In a sense she, like John Jones, linguistically rejected that part of herself that was identified with the white world, and in doing so is seeking a place where she can be free from the strife that is caused by always seeing oneself through the eyes of another.

Thus, we may now be at a place over a century after Du Bois wrote “for the problem of the Twentieth-Century is the problem of the color-line” ([1903a] 1996:1) where we need to expand. The concepts of race and ethnicity can be problematized when one comes into consciousness of an independent self that no longer relies on their parents to make sense of the world for them. Thus, students who possess an emerging consciousness takes on a meaning that Du Bois ([1903a] 19996) intended for people who were born into a world where the shadow of

the Veil of Race would pass over them during early childhood. In Ann's case, the Veil of Race came over late and appears to be linked to the independent self. Education, at least in Ann's case, seems to be tied into it. As noted in the section titled "Du Bois and Education," Du Bois thought that education as one of the first steps that would lead us to the unveiled world. For Ann, something is beginning to happen – she now possesses an awareness of the Veils of Race *and* Class and the hyphenated space that she occupies within the color-line.

Rachel appears to be grappling with the color-line itself as her references to being "white-washed" indicate. Like Ann she is experiencing an alteration in consciousness while in higher education but does not appear to have the right vocabulary or a complete understanding of what that entails. She comes from the same background as John Jones yet she has rejected knowledge of the Veil of Race early in childhood. During her interview she noted that she first became aware of race "whenever my mom started saying... Well I don't know... I know my mom always talked about certain things like 'she got that because' she is white and something like that. I never paid attention to it. Learned about until in college. I was aware but not exactly what was happening. Like environmental racism, I learned about that and I can totally see where that happens but I never even... though it could have been in a neighborhood I was living in that was affected." So she appears to have rejected the Veil of Race, until a sociology class raised her consciousness of it. The problem of the color-line for Rachel was something that she did not acknowledge as a young person. Thus, the shadow of the Veil of Race appears to have come over her as it did for Ann when she occupied as space in the academic world. She is now being perceived of as "white-washed" by some members of her community because of the alteration in consciousness that she has had while in the academe. Within "Of the Coming of John" (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:186-203), Du Bois never hinted at John being white-washed. Rather he possessed

an altered consciousness, similar to Rachel's, that the white world had a problem with. The elders in the black community that he went back to did not appear to have a problem with the altered consciousness for they let him teach the children.

So in the time that spans over a century have we had societal growth surrounding the color-line and the Veil of Race? Something about the context appears to be shifting. People appear to be coming to an awareness of the Veil of Race later in life and possessing the alteration in consciousness that Du Bois described. Yet, one is left to wonder what would have happened if Rachel or Ann had not gone on to higher education. Would they have come to the awareness on their own? Would they have experienced the alteration in consciousness?

Rainbow was an interesting case when it came to the Veil of Race and the Veil of Class. From her interview, it cannot be discerned that she is even aware of the Veil of Race. Which according to Du Bois' ([1903a] 1996; [1920] 1999) concept would make sense – she occupies a place of whiteness which is privileged with *not having* to be aware of the world(s) on the “Othered” side of the Veil of Race. In her interview, she only made small references to its existence and only when she was directly asked about race. The town she is from is predominantly white. She observed that “all through elementary school and high school, there were like two kids from different ethnicity, which is surprising....When you get to the countryside there's not too many races that I know of. There's probably more now. People are getting warmed up to the whole idea.” She also stated that her “parents grew-up slightly racist. They never actually put that on me, but they made me aware that they were racist, but they never wanted me to be.” Yet her response to the question of how she identified racially was “human.” Was the answer an attempt to align herself with people who were placed on the Othered side of the Veil of Race? Or was it an attempt to assert that “we are there,” that we have achieved the

dream outlined within Dr. Martin Luther King's famous speech? Or was it something else? When I asked her how often she is aware of her racial identification she stated "not too often...I mean I am aware...It's just...I don't know." Unlike most of the interviewees, who were students that identified as students of color, Rainbow was "not aware" of her racial identification "very often" which says something about the unearned privileged position of whiteness (see McIntosh [1988] 2001) that she occupies with regard to the color-line.

As far as the Veil of Class, Rainbow had not become aware of social class until "I was in high school. Kids either drove to school or took the bus...Kids grouped themselves according to class, I was in that middle working class." When I asked how often she is aware of her class identification, she replied, "around here, not so much aware because it's hard to tell. A couple of semesters ago, we took a poll on where your parents were in social class and surprisingly I was in the lowest twenty five percent. It made me realize that there's a lot of rich kids who come here. Seventy-five percent of the class was in the upper twenty percent, which is 'normal'....I wouldn't think of that because from just looking around at college kids it's hard to say." From her statements, it does not appear that she is aware of the implications of the Veil of Class, but that she has been informed of its existence by a teacher. Through the exercise in her course, she found out which side of the class-line her parents occupy – that of the working class – but she does not appear to have reflexively grappled with its meaning.

Mooky provides another interesting case study – that of a student who is a Mexican-American immigrant who has become very aware of the power dynamics that surround her. She appears to possess "double conscious" (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) in that she is very aware of how others perceive her – as her descriptions of her interactions with both the class and the white woman who thought she was a member of the cleaning staff illustrate. She had some awareness

of the Veil of Class early in childhood as the description of the little girl who came asking for money illustrated, but she did not appear to know her own family's position in relation to the Veil of Class until she entered her first semester in college. Then she became very aware of it. With regard to the possession of multiple identities (Orbe 2004), she appears to have them, but they have not yet fused.

Like John Jones, Mooky has experienced tremendous growth while in academia. As she observed during the interview, she grew up within a culturally intact, homogeneous culture and understood herself through that culture. Then as she immigrated to the United States and began college she became aware of the Veil of Race and her positionality in relation to it. Like Ann, Mooky occupies a particular space within the Veil of Race. But unlike Ann, she does not occupy the space of Mexican-American, but that of a "Chicana." Mooky is also not able to "pass" as white as Ann has been able to, thus she had not been straddling the color-line but has been ascribed to an Othered space on the side of the color-line that is fully Latina, not white. She possesses a strong cultural tie to Mexico, and has retained that tie through her family and through the student group that she is now part of. Her involvement within higher education, especially with that student group, has opened her eyes to the power dynamics that surround her. In some ways, she occupies a space in the Borderlands (Anzaldua [1987] 2007) of academe, developing what Anzaldua might term a "metiza" ([1987] 2007) consciousness. Anzaldua observed that "the Borderlands are physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" ([1987] 2007:18). I cannot say if Mooky and I created this space within the interview, but she did appear to feel comfortable sharing very personal details of her life.

Like John Jones, Mooky does not fit in when she returns home. She commented, “I’ve tried to talk to my family about their use of words...Have joke so don’t say that because Mooky will get mad if she’s here. She went to college, now she’s educated; she thinks she can tell us everything.” It does not appear to just be that she attempts to share what she is learning with them, but also that “there’s a vocabulary that we use to talk about the underrepresented community...that I don’t use at all.” Thus, her interactions within academia have not only altered her consciousness but her language to a certain extent.

KA provides a case study of another immigrant experience –through the lens of a woman who immigrated here when she was three years old from a country in Africa. She appears to have been aware of race from an early age, but really began grappling with trying to define the differences between race and ethnicity her first year in college. Of the students that were interviewed, she appears be the most aware of the intersections (Collins 2000) of her multiple identities (Orbe 2004) observing that “as a black Muslim woman sometimes I end up representing or give my voice a lot about how gender plays a role.” This statement references how her gender, religion, and racial background intersect in everyday life – it speaks to her subjective experience as a black, Muslim, woman. She also highlighted throughout the interview the resources and support systems that she has access to, moving us away from what used to be the “ranking of oppressions” or the “additive model” (Anderson and Collins 2001a: 4) into the intersectionality of one’s identity within what Patricia Hill Collins (2000) terms “the Matrix of Domination.” According to Collins this Matrix is “characterized by intersecting oppressions” in which “[r]ace is far from being the only significant marker of group difference –class, gender, sexuality, religion, and citizenship status all matter greatly in the United States” (2000:23). The Matrix is contextualized by the resources and support that a person has access to. KA appeared

to be aware of the Veil of Academia – she was aware for a young age of the Veil of Class and the Veil of Gender. In college she appeared to become increasingly aware of the Veil of Religion⁹¹ and the Veil of Race.

Through code-switching (Anderson 1999) into an academic orientation, KA is able to command more respect for herself within the classroom. Whereas Ann occupied a somewhat voyeuristic position in relation to understanding her Mexican heritage, KA lives a more complete understanding of her African heritage and Muslim culture for these are part of her everyday life. Also, she appears to be aware of what might be termed the Veil of Religion. As observed within the literature review, students who do not come from a Protestant background may occupy a marginal position within the academy; for students who are Muslim – given the widespread stereotypes that have proliferated since 9/11 – this space may be even more marginalized than it is for a student whose religious background is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. For instance, CNN just released a “Special Report” not titled “Muslim in America” like they had titled “Black in America” and “Latino in America” but titled “Unwelcome: The Muslims Next Door.”

KA appears to be attempting to achieve a space for herself within academe. Not that of a “typical student” as Ann has tried to attain but a space for an underrepresented student by asserting that “I am a student. I’m here to get education just like everyone else.” During the interview she reflected that she can see that “a lot of people are narrow minded, ignorant...I get to show a different perspective – ‘I am a human being just like you and this is what I think.’” She noted, “I like speaking out and giving my perspective because a lot of people learn and I learn too. A lot of people are narrow minded – [they] have not gotten a chance to see outside of just

⁹¹ I could not pin-point an age because I did not directly ask about religion

their culture.” Here she is referencing the dialogical aspect of academia and why increasing cultural diversity is so important for the academe.

David made an observation during his interview that is also applicable to discussions of cultural diversity contending that the “way I look at it is [that] the majority of wealth in this country is unequally distributed between whites and minorities. If minorities want to excel they are going to have to mingle and be around white people, not just white people but [the] upper class. Being in this environment will only better my future. Being around educated people is a good thing.” Whereas some discussions of cultural diversity within the academy approach it from the perspective that white identified and/or upper class students will benefit from being around students of color and being exposed to cultures different than their own, David is observing something that is not mentioned as often – the impact that being present within academia can have on students from marginalized backgrounds.

To some extent David appears to be gaining an vague awareness of how his identities intersect (Collins 2000) – he is beginning to see how being first generation intertwines with his class background and what resources and opportunities these do, and do not, afford access to. He also appears to be aware of the connection between class status and being from an under-represented racial group. As he observed within the quotation above, “the majority of wealth in this country is unequally distributed between whites and minorities.” He also made a reference to affirmative action during his interview noting that “white women have more...privilege than minority men” which historically has been true of the impact that affirmative action has had. Yet, what David appeared to be missing was the intersection with gender – how men from his cultural background are often in a more privileged position than women from his cultural background. When he talked about wanting to “gain more representation” it did not appear to be for women

and men from his background, it was “for [the] minority male, for a Mexican male.” The only time that the combination of gaining representation for men and women was when he stated, “for someone from a lower middle class.” Thus, when talking about gaining representation for underrepresented racial groups, he did not include women but he did presumably include women when talking about class. Interestingly, from the statements that he made, he did not appear to want to gain representation for people from poor backgrounds, nor working class backgrounds, but for people who were from the class background that he himself identified with.

Like KA, David asserted his right to be here, to carve out a space within the academe stating that he wants to “prove that I can do it just as well as anyone can.” In the context of the previous quotations, the unnamed “anyone” that he was talking about appears to be white men and women – especially those from upper class backgrounds who have college educated parents. Thus, to an extent he is naming that which is hegemonic – or what could be termed “represented” – within his interview. When he compared himself to these “represented” students, he noted that a “huge struggle for me was feeling competent around my peers; feeling academically smart around my peers; [it was a] huge challenge, felt so inferior to the other students.” He has moved from that space of feeling inferior into a current place in which he asserts that “[I] understand you know ‘I can do this.’ Nobody is better than me.” Thus, as he has moved through academia he appears to have reconciled some of the inner strife caused by the feeling that one occupies an “inferior” position. He attributed, at least partially, some of his success in doing so to the academic program that he is involved with observing that it “gave me an opportunity, a place to go. A backbone, that extra little push for motivation, [it was] huge to help me excel, move through my school years and get through college.” He spoke about a mentor he had in the program, naming her and stating that she “is awesome, she helped me a lot when it came to that.”

What will happen once he graduates and possibly returns home? Will David take the new consciousness with him? If he does, will it sustain him as he grapples with further implications of the color-line and the class-line⁹² – if/and when he becomes aware of it – what will the implications be not only for himself, but possibly for his partner and future children if he has them?

Johnston was also involved with an academic program, but unlike David, KA, and Rachel, he did not appear to attribute it to his success in pursuing a college degree. He also did not indicate during the interview that he was involved with any student groups. He knew about the student fund supported entity that Mooky referenced, but because he did not elaborate about it during the interview, it was hard to discern his connection to it – beyond common knowledge that it existed. Even though Johnston’s family lived relatively close to the campus, they did not appear to have been able to provide the physical presence that Mooky’s family provided – at least during her first semester. Nor did he make any references to returning to his family’s home with frequency; it is possible that the demands of his on-campus job prevented him from doing so, if he desired to. However, he did mention going to the city that his family resides in when he said that “I tend to modify my language when I’m up here as opposed to when I go down to [major Mountain State city].” Thus, of all of the students that were interviewed, he appeared to have experienced the most isolation – and/or possibly alienation.

The Veil of Race appears to have swept upon Johnston at a relatively young age. He observed that he “remember[s] going to school and knowing about what race was or at least knowing what my race was in relation to others.” Yet, even if he was aware of the Veil of Race at a young age, at least prior to college, he did not appear to have had a lot of friendships with people from other races; he noted that he was more aware of the racial and ethnic “changes”

⁹² See Gillman and Weinbaum 2007 for further information about Du Bois and gender.

during his first year and a half at Mountain State University and “I guess I did not have a diversified group of friends in high school.” Thus, it appears that the world that Johnston navigated through during his childhood and adolescence, best approximates – out of all the interviews – the world that John Jones navigated prior to college. A world that was sharply drawn through with the color-line and one could also say the class-line. Yet, the difference between the two studies is this – John Jones did not become aware of the Veil until he was in college as he “grew slowly to feel almost for the first time the Veil that lay between him and the white world; he first noticed oppression that had not seemed oppression before” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:191). Johnston became aware of the Veil as early as the time that he began school which would have put him around the age of five, and was even more aware – reaching a “deep depression” as he became aware only the Veil of Race but also the Veil of Class when he was between nine and eleven years old as he pondered “all the evils of the world.” Like John, his mother “wanted to send him off to school” (Du Bois [1903] 1989:187). Yet unlike John, Johnston’s mother had a college education. Thus for him it “wasn’t really hard to figure out classes, talk to my professors, do college papers.” Conversely, Du Bois tells us that John “did not know how to study, he had no idea of thoroughness....” ([1903] 1989:189). Johnston did not appear to be aware of the Veil of Academia – in terms of the intersections of all of the Veils – the Veil of Race, the Veil of Class, the Veil of Gender, and the Veil of Religion – yet he had felt the combined shadows of the Veil of Race and the Veil of Class as they swept across his young mind during his depression. Were they the cause of the depression? During the interview, Johnston attributed the depression to thinking about those “evils.”

Has Johnston experienced the strife of double consciousness? It cannot be definitively said from his interview, but he appears to have developed something akin to “double

consciousness” in that he sees himself “through the eyes of others” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:5) and not only that but he takes steps to counteract possible perceptions. He remarked, “so if yeah, I’m lazy but I try to take control of it before other people take preconceptions of it. If it’s a new class I’ll usually joke about it beforehand.” He did not appear to be worried about how others perceive him as a person, but how others may perceive him and generalize their “preconceptions”: “Being black and middle class, I try to not present myself as lazy or stupid, I suppose.” He also appears to have endured an alteration of consciousness, similar to that that John Jones had in college, at a relatively young age. And like John’s experience, it was education that brought about the alteration in consciousness. For Johnston, at least from what he told me, it was learning about inequalities in school that triggered the depression. His mother tried to explain things to him, but she could not alter the reality of the world that surrounded him – a world delineated by the color-line, the class-line; and as he would later learn the gender-line⁹³. Will Johnston live to see the unveiled world wherein the strife caused by the alteration in consciousness will be reconciled? Where people will no longer have to view themselves “through the eyes of others” rather their “double self” will merge into “a better and truer self” without the loss of either former self (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:5)

In contrast, Todd does not appear to possess any knowledge of the Veils, yet his case illustrates how the color-line is problematic from the white side of the Veil of Race, just as it is from the Othered side of the Veil. From the interview, Todd’s lifeworld (Rabaka 2010) appears to be positioned on the side of the Veils that maintains “double consciousness” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996); with regard to the Veil of Race through white identification. Looking from his response to his racial background on the survey – “Italian” – back in time, one can look back to when his

⁹³ See Gillman and Weinbaum 2007

ancestors strove to achieve whiteness and through a series of political alliances were able to do so within the United States. It should be noted that Todd does primarily identify as “white.”⁹⁴

Does Todd represent a hegemonic ideal type of student – a “typical,” “represented,” student? Like Ann, Todd has striven to achieve the identity of a “typical” student, yet unlike Ann, he has not gone in search of the type of experiential knowledge that may make him more aware of the Veils. Like Rachel, he has taken a sociology course, yet it does not appear to have had the impact on him that the course that covered environmental racism had on her. The course that he took primarily focused on gender; he noted that he probably first became aware of gender when he took the course. He became aware of social class “either halfway through high school or my first year in college. I honestly could not tell you.” When asked how often he is aware of gender he replied “sometimes” and the same for social class, but when I asked what effects they (meaning the combination of race, class, and gender) have on you – he was “so confused.” So I reworded the question to “how do they impact your everyday life?” To that he replied “I guess they don’t really impact me...usually. I mean sometimes I will be like ‘hey I’m here because I’m white.’ But I don’t really think like that, so.” What I noted at the time was absence of the naming of class and of gender in his response – rather than naming, he lumped his response into “they.” Experiential knowledge was mentioned earlier because that appears to be the mode through which students, such as Rachel and Ann, have attained their knowledge of the Veils of Race and Class. But something that is key is that both Rachel and Ann were able to personalize what they were learning applying it to their everyday “lifeworlds” (Rabaka 2010). The same was true for Rainbow, at least with regard to awakening her consciousness of her parent’s class background. Todd’s course appears to have made him “a little” more aware of gender, but since he benefits

⁹⁴In the survey there were two questions: the first asked about the student’s racial background and the second how they primarily identify.

from white male privilege, it does not appear to have made a significant impact on his “lifeworld” (Rabaka 2010) that he can see – thus McIntosh’s “Invisible Knapsack” ([1988] 2001).

So does Todd as a white, middle class, male represent a hegemonic ideal type of student in the study? In the ways outlined above he may but in other ways he does not. He lives at home with his parents, something that at a residential campus keeps him from having the ‘typical’ college experience. He also works at an off campus job in addition to going to classes, which may or may not be considered ‘typical.’ What he does, unquestionably, represent is a person who is very focused on pursuing a college degree so that he can “get a good job and have a good life after college. Be able to have a family and be able to support them.” Thus, he appears to be echoing elements of the American Dream (see Coontz [1992] 2000).

McIntosh’s ‘Invisible Knapsack’ in Academia

Sometimes others can see that there are barriers for you, but you don’t see them because overcoming them, kinda thing, but it still may slow you down. – KA

Recently, my brother, Shane, was at my apartment and I was telling him about what I had typed up. As he read through the case-studies, he was perplexed by David. His face lit up and he said, “I think there’s something here – doesn’t he realize that because he is first generation, that he is missing tools out of his tool box? You’re not working with the same toolbox and you might not even know it. It’s almost like he went to school with his backpack on loaded up with his books and pencil case but what they don’t tell you is that is it’s not even the important stuff. What they don’t tell you *is the important stuff!* What you don’t even know what you are missing – how to study, or what opportunities, a what education can truly do for you, that it’s not just a job, that it’s not just something that you are doing because your family wants you to.” I got excited and

tried to describe Peggy McIntosh's ([1988] 2000) "invisible knapsack" to him – the unearned privileges that an individual gets from being white, from being a male. At a loss for McIntosh's ability to word it, I scurried over to my overflowing bookshelf desperately searching for my well loved copy of *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology* (Anderson and Collins 2001a). I flipped through until I found the text that I had annotated and highlighted so many years ago when I was still an under-graduate. Smiling I handed it to him and told him to start reading.

Within the article "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies," Peggy McIntosh ([1988] 2001) contends that just as men are taught not to recognize male privilege, whites are taught not to recognize white privilege. McIntosh defines privilege as an "invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious," noting that white privilege "is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compasses, emergency gear, and blank checks" ([1988] 2001:95). Can the notion of the "invisible knapsack" (McIntosh [1988] 2001) be applied to the experiences, to the lifeworlds (Rabaka 2010), of the students that I interviewed? Is Shane right? Did he and I pack everything in our backpacks that we thought we needed but because we were missing the applicable cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1990) we were missing the most important stuff?

That night we bantered about it for a while. After reading the article he asked me to describe "Of the Coming of John" (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:186-203) to him again. His eyes lit up as I described the stories of the two Johns and their tragic ends. "That's it – the white John has his knapsack of resources, whereas even though they both have education the black John is still lacking those privileges in his knapsack." I chimed in "and because the collective consciousness

of the time did not allow an African American from the lower classes the same type of upward mobility allowed for a white male, John Jones was left caught between two worlds - the world that he came from and the world that higher education had opened up to him.” Then he observed that, “they are blind in a certain sense – a white male who is first generation. Who prior to coming to college was society’s golden boy – no pun intended...Now he is missing tools in his tool box that would allow him to be a front runner. He is blind or ignorant to the fact that he is different.” David realized that he was first-generation and “saw that women are disadvantaged but then he is pursuing male dominance for his race, forgetting about the women of his race. He’s not even aware of his privilege above the women of his culture.” I noted that David made an interesting linguistic shift – he talked about wanting space in the academe for men of his ethnic background, but then when it came to class he wanted it for “someone from a lower middle class background.”

So what other privileges were the students in my study missing sight of? What was I as the “objective/subjective researcher” overlooking? “Oh *that*” - two simple words that I had overlooked but one of my professors, Dr. Alphonse Keasley, picked-up on. “Oh *that*” is how Todd responded when I asked him about his racial identification, as if having to define one’s race is a problem. But was it annoyance at just having to define one’s race, or were those two little words saying a lot more? When Dr. Keasley pointed it out, one of Du Bois’ famous lines flashed through my mind. “How does it feel to be a problem? they say...” ([1903a] 1996: 3). Even though I had just spent part of the afternoon debating with him about whether or not the conception of the color-line had shifted since Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903a] 1996) over a century ago, I was still struck by how quickly it could raise its ugly head. Have we come as far as we think we have? Do we still have “racism without racists?” (Bonilla-Silva

2003). If we theoretically remove people from the equation and just think about race as a concept, is it still color-blind racism? Or is it something else? Was Todd saying that identifying as a person of color was a problem? And what does it say about the Veil of Race today? In some ways the color-line and Veil of Race have substantially been altered since the time that Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black* ([1903a] 1996) and *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* ([1920] 1999) but Todd's comment reminds us that we may not have come as far as some might would like to think we have. When I pushed him and said "So you identify as white?" – he reacted when he realized that we did not have a shared understanding of whiteness. I was naming that which is hegemonic. He had similar response when I asked him about gender. Out of all of the students, he appeared to be the most used to thinking about his place in the world through a hegemonic lens. Rabaka observes, within his research and writings, Du Bois "deftly and defiantly hit at the heart of whiteness, chronicling its rise alongside the concept of race, noting that to be white is to be raceless, to be powerful or, at the least, to have access to power or people in positions of power" ([2009] 2010:41). This may be why Todd answered my question in the fashion that he did, because I was asking him to define that which is 'raceless.'

Sociologist Karyn McKinney had a similar experience during her research, observing that she has "found that being a white woman has an impact on my research. Ironically, I find that my role as a researcher is more difficult to negotiate when studying whites than when researching people of color. Although all whites do not equally benefit from white privilege, to some degree, each has advantages that people of color cannot take for granted. In studying the more privileged group, I found it harder to negotiate my stance as a researcher toward the respondents" (2008: 1303). She went on to observe that many of her "respondents believe that they are actually

disadvantaged today as whites. Some harbor negative views of people of color. Repeatedly, I was challenged by my disagreement with some of the beliefs of my respondents” (p. 1303).

I struggled for awhile about writing up Rainbow’s comment regarding her racial background. I kept asking myself if I was being too hard on her. What I struggled with was her response to the question “What is your racial background?” To this she replied “Human.” This could be viewed one of three ways: First, she may be taking a “radical humanistic” approach (Rabaka [2009] 2010). Second, she may be ascribing to a form of “color-blind racism” that Bonilla-Silva (2003) describes. Or third, it could be a combination of both. From meeting and interacting with her, I did not feel that it was outright color-blind racism, per se, but more in line with the radical humanistic (Rabaka [2009] 2010) approach. Yet, McKinney’s words reflect my predicament, for as “social science researchers, we are taught an ethic that suggest that we take the position of our respondent, or at least their words at face value....This position on research suggests that the researcher should not offer disconfirming evidence or arguments against what the researcher states” (2008: 1303).

Like McKinney, I found myself struggling to “find an analytically and ethnically suitable position between the two extremes of being too ‘easy’ on and too critical of white people” and decided to take her advice regarding the recognition that, especially for my case studies, “it was not the individual whites who were my unit of analysis, but stories and discourses representing whiteness” (2008: 1304). Thus, I am interested in what these two case studies tell us about the perception of whiteness – what language the students used to discuss whiteness and how that contributes to the larger dialogue regarding whiteness. As a radical humanist (Rabaka [2009] 2010), I identify myself as an ally for people who identify as being of color. As McIntosh queries, “What will we do with such knowledge? As we know from watching me, it is an open

question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken invisible privilege systems and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base” ([1988] 2001:105).

Because I approach the world through a lens similar to that of McIntosh ([1988] 2001), many of the students who identified as being students of color appeared to be candid with me when it came to discussions of race. What also may have helped with at least three of the participants who identified as students of color is that we had an established rapport prior to the interview. And that is not to say that my racial identification factored into the interactions – during the interview with Johnston when I asked him about being conscious of differences between Mountain State University and the community he came from he hesitated. He stated, “I never really spent that much time around...” before looking up at me and saying “I guess I did not have a diversified group of friends in high school.” What I gathered from his answer was that he felt unsure about saying that he had not “spent that much time around” people from races other than his own, especially white people. I surmise that the initial rapport that I built with the students who were underrepresented, by acknowledging my own somewhat marginalized position within the academe as a first-generation, working class student, helped bridge some of the experiential space between us, or as Anzaldua ([1987] 2007) termed it created a space within “the Borderlands” of academia.

The Politics of Skin Tone

Hunter observes that the “debate about the racial status of Mexican Americans persists even today, particularly in the context of immigration and assimilation....Will they assimilate into Anglo society like earlier European immigrants and become racially white or will they

continue to be discriminated against and become black?” (2005: 25). Thus, what Hunter (2005) terms the “politics of skin tone” is applicable to the case study of Ann. In terms of the invisibility of her bi-racial identity – Ann has a white mother and is perceived of as white by other people – she is white, yet rather than seeking assimilation, she has sought out experiential knowledge of the second component of her bi-racial identity moving from identifying as “American” to “Mexican-American with a hyphen.” It appears that, because of the invisibility of her bi-racial identity, she is not the direct target of prejudice and discrimination, such as Mooky experienced, but still feels the effects of them because she identifies with the “invisible people” who are directly subject to prejudice and discrimination.

That being said, how Latina/o immigrants, such as Mooky, fit into a world separated by a seemingly dichotomous color-line? Du Bois provides some clues within *Darkwater: Voices From within the Veil* when he observed, with emphasis on imperialism, that the “using of men for the benefit of masters is no new invention of modern Europe. It is quite as old as the world. But Europe proposed to apply it on a scale and with an elaborateness of detail of which no former world ever dreamed” ([1920] 1999:24). Thus, “[t]his theory of human culture and its aims has worked itself through warp and woof of our daily thought with a thoroughness that few realize. Everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is ‘white’; everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable is ‘yellow’; a bad taste is ‘brown’; and the devil is ‘black’” (Du Bois [1920] 1999). Here Du Bois is demonstrating how the application of the color-line within the hegemonic discourse ascribes “whiteness” and contrasts it with both presumptions regarding a “crayon box” (Rabaka) conception of race; hence, the demarcation of the “color-line.” Thus, as previously mentioned, being of a lighter skin tone does not mean that a person became white identified; rather, the color-line was retained – and is still retained – by separating

those who were white identified, of European descent, from other groups that became classified as separate races.

While an argument can be made regarding whether being Latina/o is classified as a race or an ethnicity, statutes such as Arizona's SB 1070 show how that the Latino/a identity is beginning to be classified as a separate race. The basis of the color-line in the United States stems from the one-drop rule during slavery (see Hunter 2005:18-19), however it also is rooted in the tense racial/ethnic relations that have existed between people who are Latina/o and white identified people. When the United States "won" the Mexican-American war, large areas of land that were part of Mexico were overtaken by the United States. Hence the saying, "we did not cross the border, the border crossed us." The people who were formerly citizens of Mexico were not provided with the same rights as enjoyed by European American citizens, rather their land was often taken from them, they were stripped of many of their rights, and were treated as inferior to white identified Americans (see Hunter 2005:17-35; Anzaldua [1987] 2007).

Within his third autobiographical text, *Dusk of Dawn* ([1986] 1996), Du Bois observes that there is a "color bar" which differs from but is conceptually related to the Veil of Race and the color-line. It appears in some way, to be a re-conceptualization of the color-line as a "bar" that delineates where a person is placed with regard to the color-line based on their proximity to hegemonic white ideals. After World War I, Du Bois observes that, "my problems of human difference, of the color-line, of social degradation, of the fight for freedom became transformed...I saw the color bar could not be broke by a series of brilliant immediate assaults. Secondly, I saw defending this bar not simply ignorance and ill will; these to be sure; but also certain more powerful motives less open to reason or appeal...economic motives" ([1986] 1996:557). From reading Du Bois' description one could contend that the color bar is a

manifestation of the color-line on the collective consciousness. Rabaka observes that, “the color-line is not now and never has been simply about the social construction of race and the harsh realities of racism. Much more, it is also about racially categorizing and dividing human beings in adherence with white supremacist capitalist colonialist social hierarchy” (2010:279). Thus, it about is how the collective consciousness values perceptions of whiteness, or the appearance of whiteness, and degrades perceptions of non-whiteness. These perceptions are based upon ill conceived notions of phenotypical differences – skin tone, hair color, eye color, the shape of one’s nose, the shape of one’s eyes, etc. That Du Bois saw the color bar as tied into economic motives is telling, for it shows the relation of the political economy to some of the recent debates surrounding the perception of “illegal” immigration – especially from Mexico and other countries – and propositions such as Arizona’s SB1070.

Thus, Du Bois’ concept of the “color-bar” aids in an explanation of where Mooky would fit into the conceptual schema of the dichotomous color-line – yet because Du Bois ([1986] 1996) does not overtly address native language as being part of the color bar it is hard to place her theoretically. Was it her inability to “pass” as white that caused the other students to turn to her during the classroom discussion or was it that she may have been open with her identity of being Mexican-American, and/or that English is her second language? Hunter makes an observation that appears to be applicable asserting that the “first half of the twentieth century was a time of increased urbanization and industrialization in the United States and served to be a backdrop for the way in which Mexican Americans continued to be racialized. Through a lens of ‘American-ness,’ and ‘whiteness’ Mexican Americans were purposefully created as outsiders to the United States and as an economic threat to U.S. working people” (2005:25). This statement, relates back to Du Bois’ observation regarding the relationship between the political economy

and the color-line. Moreover, Hunter contends that, “[i]mmigration and issues of the United States-Mexico border began to define the debate about Mexican Americans and their status as a racial minority group or as an assimilating ethnic group....The identity of Mexican Americans, as defined by whites, was that of the non-American.” (2005:25-26). The prior statement relates to how during part of the interview Ann identified as Hispanic rather than Latina, although in the quantitative survey, and later in the interview, she said that she identifies as “Mexican-American.”

So how does the color-line affect students that identify as African American? In the case of Rachel, during her interview she did not appear to acknowledge the color-line, rather she appeared to take a radical humanist approach (Rabaka [2009] 2010). During her interview Rachel observed that she had a heightened consciousness of class due to sociology courses but that with race she does not “think about [it] unless something happens that like majorly affects any kind background, anyone’s background. If their black, Latino/a, Jewish, anything that you know if anyone is targeted then I feel it for everyone. It’s not like oh the blacks are being targeted so *I’m going to feel something, it’s like everybody.*” When I read her quote as I went through the transcripts I was reminded of a statement that Du Bois made within *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of Race as a Concept*, “Lynching was a continuing and recurrent horror during my college days: from 1885 through 1894, seventeen hundred Negroes were lynched in America. Each death was a scar upon my soul, and lead me to conceive the plight of other minority groups” ([1986] 1996:575). During a “Gender and Racial Justice Forum” that was held last year at the University of Colorado at Boulder, a student – Adrian Green – asked members of the administration, including the Dean of Students, what it was going to take for them to do something, would it take someone getting murdered? He made this statement in

reference to a hate crime that Olubiyi Ogundipe, a student from Nigeria, recently endured wherein he was called a “monkey,” told to “go back to his country,” and physically assaulted by a white male while walking in Boulder close to the CU Boulder campus. Rachel is talking about how hate crimes such as this, which was widely publicized, impact her on a personal level. Like Du Bois, she appears to feel the scarring from these types of incidents, regardless of the background of the person who is targeted. Thus, the division that the color-line poses does not appear to have seeped into Rachel’s inner-consciousness.

In contrast, Johnston appears to have been aware of the color-line, or at least the seeming dichotomy, from early in childhood. During his interview he observed that “race was just something that I knew. I don’t really have an age to put it at – remember going to school and knowing about what race was or at least knowing what my race was in relation to others.” What is the difference between his response and Rachel’s response? How does consciousness affect one’s perception of the color-line? Rachel did not appear to become aware of the color-line until college, whereas Johnston has been aware of it since childhood. Even if a person does not acknowledge the color-line, it theoretically still affects them. The same is true for the class-line and the gender-line⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ See Gillman and Weinbaum (2007) for discussions of the implications of gender and sexuality in Du Bois’ work.

DISCUSSION

To commit ourselves to the work of transforming the academy so that it will be a place where cultural diversity informs every aspect of our learning, we must embrace struggle and sacrifice.

- bell hooks⁹⁶

Yes, our institutions in our campus that foster diversity and make me feel welcome and valued here are being attacked. Please do something, this is not okay. We are not the majority so we need help making our voices be heard by those that hold power.

- Mooky⁹⁷

When I first read this plea by Mooky, I was struck by my own inability as a graduate student to directly enact systematic change within the structure of Mountain State University. Having been at the University of Colorado at Boulder for a decade I had observed similar problems – related the inability to substantially recruit and retain students from underrepresented backgrounds; the cutting of, or veiled and sometimes overt threats to cut, programs that provide a sense of community and inclusion for students who are underrepresented; and reflections on the structure of the university itself and the low numbers people from underrepresented backgrounds in prominent positions on campus – such as administrative positions and especially among the faculty body.

Upon reflection I realized that I can do something. I can present the words of the students who participated in this study to members of the administration at Mountain State University, to a student fund supported entity that serves underrepresented students on the campus, the Student Government, and the surrounding community. The survey responses and interviews provide rich qualitative spaces in which students were able to voice their concerns about the

⁹⁶ 1994:33

⁹⁷ Survey respondent/interviewee.

world of the academe that surrounded them. And in turn they had a substantial influence on my own identity as a researcher, bringing me back to my working class roots and reflecting upon my own experiences of being a first-generation scholar. For instance, when I read a section from a student who addressed the existence of a class-line at Mountain State University, I became self conscious of the ways in which I myself dressed, of recent purchases that I had made, and of how students that I interviewed might perceive me as a researcher.

As the section on diversity documents, many of the students are very concerned about the rising cost of tuition and the lack of racial diversity at Mountain State University. Tuition has risen substantially in the past few years. Students also expressed concern about the recruitment of underrepresented students from surrounding areas in Mountain State. The knowledge that Mountain State University is a predominantly white university does not appear to be something that the students were lacking when they came to the university. Rather, students who identified as being students of color chose to attend regardless – even though some had been overtly told that they would have to contend with the predominance of whiteness – as Johnston was told during a campus visit while he was in high school. Yet, as David discussed in his interview and Mooky and KA in theirs, there is a quest to maintain, and further provide, a space for the underrepresented students that surround them and those who will follow them.

This study demonstrates how although Du Bois is typically ascribed a marginalized position within the academe, namely within Sociology, as that of a “race man” (Rabaka) or that of a man “who just wrote a major work” (Keasley) his insights into culture, class, and gender have significant implications for future studies, especially those regarding the experiences of students who are underrepresented within academia. Rabaka’s *Against Epistemic Apartheid: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Disciplinary Decadence of Sociology* (2010) elucidates the

substantial contributions that Du Bois has made to fields such as Education, Critical Race Theory, Gender, Religion, and Criminology; this work is an attempt to expand Du Bois, as others have done (see Gillman and Weinbaum 2007), beyond simply being a “race man” into that of a inter-disciplinary scholar with roots in Sociology.

From a sociological standpoint, what have we learned from applying Du Bois’ concepts to the case studies? With regard to the implications of the categories related to group membership – specifically the in-group and out-group dichotomy we have ascertained insight into social power within the academy. Alarcon (2003) asserted that when groups that wield greater social power are able to use “generic terms” to speak about themselves, those who have less social power are forced to use marked terms – such as “students of color” or “first-generation” and “working class.” Ann initially began college using an unmarked racial identity – calling herself “American” – and then progressed into the use of a marked term, that of “Mexican-American.” By identifying with a group whose members may occupy the position of “invisible people,” Ann gave up some of the social power associated with adhering to a white identity. KA, Rachel, Mooky, David, and Johnston began college identifying as students of color and because they did so they do not have the “social power” associated with whiteness. Todd recognized that he does possess greater social power being white identified, noting that “sometimes I will be like ‘hey I’m here because I’m white.’”

Rachel, KA, and David identify as being “first-generation,” which means that they recognize that they do not possess the level of social power in the academe that students who are non-first-generation do. Rainbow came to the identity of being first-generation during her interview, so it was hard to determine what that will mean for her perception of her level of social power. In regard to class status and its relation to a lower level of social power, Mooky

and David, seemed to be the most aware; to an extent, Rachel was aware but not to the same degree during the interview. Interestingly though, she was the only student who put “poor” down on her survey, rather than “working class,” “lower middle working,” or “lower middle class.” Whereas, KA and Johnston were aware from childhood of their class backgrounds, Rainbow did not become aware until she took the course in college.

This relates back to some of the prior research, especially by Orbe (2004), regarding the intersections, and saliency, of multiple identities while in college. The students who were interviewed also highlighted their place within what Collins terms the “Matrix of Domination” (2000:23) which “posits multiple, interlocking oppressions that stem from the societal configuration of race, class, and gender relations. This structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges (Collins 2000)” (Anderson and Collins 2001a:4). The students, with the exception of Todd, acknowledged their access to resources and the support that they had available while in college. For Rachel, KA, David, and Johnston this included access to an academic program. Rainbow and Mooky did not have access to the resources and support that such programs provide, which appears to have impacted their experiences. Todd occupied a position within the Matrix of Domination (Collins 2000:23; Anderson and Collins 2001a:4) that ascribed greater social power, not only based upon his whiteness but also upon the intersections of his class background, non-first-generation status, and male privilege.

The interviews highlighted how each individual’s placement within the Matrix of Domination (Collins 2000) affected not only their consciousness and interactions within the context of groups, but also the access that they as students had to the institutional privileges and power. Because Todd embodied a hegemonic student, he was not made aware of the power

that he possessed not only as a white identified student, but also as a presumably heterosexual male who was middle class and non-first generation. Thus, he had access to privileges and power within the context of academia that the other students who were interviewed did not. To varying degrees, the students that were underrepresented had limited access to power and privileges within academe. As Anderson and Collins observe, “[r]ace, class, and gender are manifested differently, depending on their configuration with the others” (2001:5); thus an individual’s access to power and privileges within the context of academia is shaped by these interlocking (Collins 2000) oppressions – such as being a student of color, being poor or working class, and being first-generation. Because sexuality and religion were not addressed within all of the interviews, it was not possible to ascertain those in relation to the Matrix of Domination, with the exception of KA who identifies as Muslim and therefore occupies a position with less social power with regard to religion in the United States, and Mooky, David, and Rachel, who identify as heterosexual and therefore occupy positions with greater social power than those who are part of the LGBTQ⁹⁸ community.

In this way, the case studies provide us with qualitative insights with regard to the Matrix of Domination (Collins 2000:23) that are lacking in the other studies that were covered in the literature review. They also provide us with a view into the shifts in the collective consciousness (Durkheim) since the time that Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1996) that is not discussed within prior studies. Johnston, especially, highlighted what it meant to be in a state of anomie – of normlessness (Durkheim). Of all of the students that I interviewed, I was struck by Johnston’s sense of alienation and the anomic state that college appears to have thrown him in, particularly when considering the implications that anomie had

⁹⁸⁹⁸ Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer

within the context of Tinto's (1994) *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition* whose conceptual framework was based off of Van Gennep and Durkheim.

Initially, I began this study with the conception that it would be easier for students who occupied a hegemonic position to navigate through the academy because it affirms the lifeworlds that they come from whereas for students from underrepresented backgrounds there is the potential for conflict between the lifeworld of the student and world the of academia. When thinking about a quilt it is more of a seamless transition for students from hegemonic positions that for students who come from underrepresented backgrounds who have to patch-it together.

It may be people who embrace the hegemony, knowingly or unknowing, who benefit from the unearned privileges that it bestows, are able to make what might appear to be more seamless transitions to higher education. This is where the difference between Todd's and Rainbow's experiences come in; Todd was to an extent unwilling to acknowledge the benefits that he gets from simply being white identified whereas Rainbow classifies herself as white in quotation marks but identifies as human currently. Students from backgrounds that are racially underrepresented in higher education, especially those from lower income and first-generation backgrounds, appear to have to patch-together their transitions to higher education. This is not something that happens all at once, but appears to be a gradual process.

The alteration in consciousness that underrepresented students⁹⁹ had occurred for the most part with increased exposure to higher education and the integration of what they are learning into their lifeworlds. This alteration may be brought on by the type of communities that the student grew-up in prior to attending college. These communities may have initially

⁹⁹ Included within this study.

ascribed the student a position within the subordinate or dominant group which may or may not have shifted as they began college.

For students who come from a racially homogeneous community of people who identify as African American or Latino/a – such as Mooky, Rachel, and Johnston – the alteration in consciousness may be brought on by exposure to a heterogeneous community, such as the one that John Jones was exposed to in higher education. Such exposure appears to initially facilitate, if not it does not already exist, the beginning development of the double consciousness, of always seeing oneself through the eyes of another. This may be because they are moving from a position in which they somewhat occupied a status within the dominant group of their former community into that of a subordinate group within academia. For students who come from a homogenous community of white identified people – such as Rainbow and Todd – the development of the second sight and double consciousness do not appear to be relevant. This may be because they are moving from an ascribed position of being part of the dominant group in their home communities – i.e., white – to that of the dominant group within academia. Of theoretical interest are KA, David, and Ann, who appear to have developed the second sight even though they were part of a heterogeneous community prior to attending college. Ann is of particular interest because she appears to have gradually developed the second sight and something akin to double consciousness as she went in search of her Latina roots; being white identified or “American,” as she put it initially, meant that she was ascribed a position of being part of the dominant group in academia, at least in terms of racial identification; whereas, she now identifies as “Mexican-American,” which is typically an ascribed position of being part of the subordinate group. This area will need to be researched further.

The development of what KA describes as “critical thinking” and Mooky as “decolonization of the mind” may provide that stepping stone for the pursuit of freedom and the rejection of the double consciousness. Where Du Bois proposed a concept – that of double consciousness – that is, on the surface level may appear to be strictly psychological, when analyzed further applies on a sociological level; with the parable of John Jones Du Bois is providing a snapshot of a larger social struggle – the struggle for freedom from the strife caused by double consciousness.

Kelley Walczak observes that “[a]dolescence is a time of change, transition and development. Students gain new knowledge, experience, and insights and struggle to make sense of the new information that they accumulate....Not surprisingly, the college experience is believed to promote a more complex way of viewing the world....” (2008:1). So how relevant are the insights of the students regarding a time wherein there appears to be a substantially changed consciousness? How might this change in consciousness differ from that expected from ‘typical,’ ‘hegemonic,’ ‘represented’ students? If self-authorship theory (Kegan 1994), as explored by Walczak, is “rooted in the belief that people are constantly evolving and that this evolution includes a constantly changing way of organizing thoughts, feelings, and relationships with the epistemological (cognitive), intrapersonal (understanding of self), and interpersonal dimensions (relationships with others)” (2008:1), what can this theory tell us about the students who were included within this study? In what ways did they engage in self-authorship during the interviews? How did their experiences differ and what are the commonalities?

To an extent all of the students who were interviewed engaged in self-authorship, the interviews were a testament to their lifeworlds and lifestruggles (Rabaka 2010). Yet, there

were differences in terms of their experiences, their conceptions of their lifeworlds, and the lifestruggles that they discussed. One common theme that was present within the interviews with first-generation students was the intensity of the struggle to “master the role of college student” (Clawson and Leiblum 2008). Differences came into play with regard to their conceptions, and awareness of, the saliency of their racial identification, their class background, their first-generation status, and gender.

Walczak contends that “the development of meaning occurs through the balancing and rebalancing of subject and object” (2008:1). How was meaning (Baxter Magolda 2004) developed within the interviews and how did the students balance this relationship? In what ways were they subjectified and objectified? The students elucidated their subjectivity within the interviews – speaking in-depth about, and interpreting at the same time, their lifeworlds – their lived experiences. Those who were underrepresented also addressed the ways in which they became objectified within academe. KA is one student who spoke directly about this objectification, noting that “[n]o matter what I tell people, [they] will look at me and I am sure will at least say ‘she’s different’ – ‘she’s not from America, she’s from somewhere else.’” In this sense, KA is being objectified as the Other. Mooky also highlighted objectification when she described how she was tokenized by her peers who saw her as their “Mexican friend.” The students appeared to balance their subjectivity, and their objectivity by others, in the interviews. Some, such as KA and David, did so by expelling their self doubts and asserting their right to be present within the academy. Throughout the students provided insight into their lifeworlds and lifestruggles (Rabaka 2010) through the meaning-making process of the interview itself.

What did the students tell us that is not already known from prior research? The

students, especially those who were first-generation, struggled to “master the role” of college student (Clawson and Leiblum 2008; also see Bryd and MacDonald 2005). Unlike the students in Pascarella et al.’s (2004) study, all of the first-generation students, with the exception of Rainbow, were involved in extracurricular activities. This finding may have, at least, partially been due to the sampling frame. This study was not able to speak to the “cognitive and noncognitive outcomes of college” that Pascarella et al. (2004:275) observed which may be an area for future research. The saliency of being first generation, as far as being aware of it “every day” as Orbe (2004:137) found within his study of first-generation college students was not observed except in David. However, unlike the interview questions regarding racial identification, social class, and gender, it was not directly asked about rather one’s first-generation status arose during the students’ discussions. Orbe (2004:138) observed that a smaller portion of participants discussed how their first generation status was “highly situational” which appears to fit into how Rachel, KA, and Rainbow observed the saliency of their status of being first-generation. Moreover, with regard to the lack of sense of community with other first-generation students that Orbe (2004:144) observed, the students who were first-generation, with the exception of Rainbow who was the only white identified first-generation student, had a sense of community with other first-generation students through the academic programs that they were involved in.

Were the students able to verify their identities (Cast 2003) within the context of higher education? To a certain extent they were, at least for students who identified as being students of color, with other underrepresented students and in the academic programs that they were part of. Rainbow appeared to be the only student who was not able to readily verify her identity as a “human,” first-generation, working class student. Todd’s identity as what could be termed

that of a “represented student” was verified by the institution itself in that he embodied a hegemonic student.

Were the students “torn” between two worlds? The answer to this interview question ranged from “no” to “sometimes” but was not definitive. Further research, possibly using different wording to get at this notion, will be needed to ascertain whether students are torn between two conflicting worlds. To some extent the students who are underrepresented do appear to occupy positions within what might be termed “the Borderlands” (Anzaldua 2003) of academia. On a spectrum, Mooky appeared to be most embedded within the Borderlands whereas Todd was not ascribed to this space.

Three concepts, one from Anzaldua (2003), the second from Du Bois ([1903] 1996), and the third from Anderson (1999), arose which appear to be applicable to the experiences of students who are underrepresented. Firstly, to a greater, and a times lesser, extent the underrepresented students – especially Ann and Mooky – appeared to have developed a “Mestiza”(Anzaldua 2003) consciousness. As Anzaldua defined it, La Mestiza’s self “has an added third element which is greater than the sum of its several parts. That third element is a new consciousness....” (2003: 181). The students’ identity as an underrepresented student was greater than simply being a student of color, or first-generation, rather the alteration in consciousness brought together their various identities. Secondly, Du Bois’ ([1903] 1989) concept of the second-sight appears to be applicable to the experiences of students who are underrepresented in that they perceive themselves “through the revelation of the other world” (Du Bois [1903] 1996a:5). Johnston highlighted this sight when he stated “being a black man it seems like I keep my anger in check a bit more. If I get angry I don’t try to make an angry face or express it verbally or anything, I try to keep it in.” And KA highlighted it when she stated

“[n]o matter what I tell people [they] will look at me and I am sure at least say ‘she’s different’ – ‘she’s not from America, she’s from somewhere else.’” Finally, Anderson’s (1999) concept of code-switching appears to be applicable in that it enables the successful navigation of the academic context. When a student embraces code-switching from a “street” orientation (Anderson 1999) to an academic orientation, it helps a student master the role of college student; further, it allows the student to project that they have done so outwardly. In other words, it lets them convey to other students and their professors that “I am student just like you” and that therefore they have mastered the role of student. Their reliance on the ability to code-switch implies the degree to which they have mastered of the role of college student.

In this study, I set out to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent do underrepresented students develop double consciousness?
 - a. If it does occur, at what point does this development begin?
 - b. What affect does the development of double consciousness have on students?
- 2) To what extent do underrepresented students feel that they belong in academia?
 - a. What factors influence a student’s perception of their ability to acculturate or lack thereof?
- 3) What sustains underrepresented students as they pursue higher education?
- 4) What are some of the obstacles¹⁰⁰ that students encounter?

I concluded as a result of this study that overall students are developing something akin to double consciousness (Du Bois [1903] 1996) in that they are developing the reflexive ability to see themselves through the eyes of others. The development of the altered consciousness, with the exception of Johnston whose alteration began in childhood and Todd who does not appear

¹⁰⁰¹⁰⁰ Specifically academic barriers that underrepresented students may encounter.

to have endured a significant alteration, began while they were in college. To an extent the underrepresented students are carving out their space in academia – although initially they felt uncertain about it. For the most part they are sustained by academic resources including academic support programs/entities. They are supported in their pursuits by their families, even if their families do not understand their academic lifeworlds (Rabaka 2010). Obstacles that the students encountered included their first-generationness, economics, academics, having to take on responsibility, falling behind, keeping their school life and personal life separate, and time management.

Because prior research in this area indicated that the lack of diversity within higher education exacerbates the experiences of alienation and culture shock that some of the students elucidated, future studies might further explore other ways to increase diversity and retention. Future research might also investigate what types of programs have successfully mitigated the some of the negative experiences and perceived barriers that are highlighted through-out this thesis. This could include changing pedagogy so that it is in line with Du Bois' view of education ([1906]1973:9-11; also see Rabaka 2003 and 2010).

CONCLUSION

Being a part of an underrepresented group of people, there is no one willing to hear the voice of those who are not like the majority.

- XicanoDelPueblo¹⁰¹

This study sought to transport the experiences of students who are underrepresented within academia “from margin to center” (hooks [1984] 2000). It also sought to bring W. E. B. Du Bois, a Sociologist and cross-disciplinary scholar, into dialogue with the 21st century; hence the focus on students who are marginalized within the academy just as Du Bois elucidated the experiences of African Americans who were marginalized within American society. As the interviews indicated, students who occupy marginalized positions within the academy – especially students of color – appear to undergo a fairly substantial alteration in consciousness.

This alteration appears to be connected to an awakening of awareness of one’s proximity to the color-line (Du Bois [1903a] 1996) in particular. When these observations are combined with those from the survey data something interesting emerges – a modern day snapshot of John Jones (see Du Bois [1903a] 1996: 186-203) begins to emerge. The survey data indicate that students of color were more likely to be first-generation, just as John Jones was. Students who were working class were less likely to feel that they would fit in when they returned home. Du Bois tells us that “[d]aily...[John] found himself shrinking from the choked and narrow life of his native town. And yet he always planned to go back to Altamaha,-- always planned to work there” ([1903a] 1996: 191). Rainbow made a similar observation regarding not wanting to return to live in the town that she was from. This is not to say that the other students do not want to return to the homes of their families, but it does indicate that there might be a reluctance to return to the Veiled world as they knew it before. This is an area that will need to be further researched.

¹⁰¹ Survey respondent.

Just as John Jones, like David, questioned his ability in college, “thought and puzzled along for himself, -- pausing perplexed where others skipped merrily....” (Du Bois [1903a] 1996:190) so too the students who were working class tended to indicate on the survey that they questioned their ability to succeed in college. While Du Bois did not directly discuss the diversity of the college, or lack thereof, that John Jones attended, it can be inferred from the parable – especially the statement that “[d]own in Altamaha, after seven long years, all the world knew John was coming” ([1903a] 1996: 194) that it was not very often that a young African American man from his community went to college. On the survey, students of color were less likely than white students to indicate that they felt Mountain State University was diverse. This is supported by the interview data as well regarding the students’ initial perceptions of the university. As was noted in the interview analysis section, and as the students’ comments in the diversity section indicate, how a student defines diversity appears to depend on their background. Students who occupy marginal positions within the academy, especially students of color, appear to feel that a predominantly white, Research One institution of higher education is not diverse¹⁰² - at least in terms of racial, class, and cultural diversity.

Limitations of the study were primarily located within three areas. First, the absence of the question of gender within the survey which was dealt with by coding those pseudonyms which were overtly feminine as female, those which were overtly masculine as male, and the rest as unknown; second, sampling with regard to the oversampling of students who were connected to underrepresented student groups and academic programs/entities. And third, the case studies were a very limited number of voices that may or may not be representative of the surveys. This is an area for future study. Future studies might also overtly address gender, religion, and sexual

¹⁰² This site was chosen rather than a community college, because of the career and potential financial opportunities that it offers for students..

orientation in addition to first-generation status, racial identification, and class background. These studies might also further explore the alteration of consciousness to see if double consciousness is fully developed, possibly using ethnographic methods or longitudinal studies. Alumni/graduate students might be interviewed to ascertain the long term effects of the alteration in consciousness that was observed with this study. It would be desirable in future research to attain input from students from a lot of different academic programs/entities and students who are unaffiliated with academic programs/entities. Future studies might also explore the implications of the Veil of Academia, retention of underrepresented students, as well as ways to ensure that students who are currently underrepresented become represented within academe.

The vast majority of students at predominantly white institutions are white, thus there needs to be a significant, consciousness changing education within this large body of “represented” students. Thus, one way to ensure that students who are currently underrepresented within academia become represented students is to increase cultural diversity - including increasing numbers of students from first-generation backgrounds, students who are immigrants, students of color, international students, and lower income students. Increasing cultural diversity would benefit both currently underrepresented students and represented students. It may lead to changing the consciousness, when combined with education, of the students who currently comprise the majority within academia who may or may not be adhering to unacknowledged or acknowledged hegemony within academe. Another would be to decrease the cost of tuition and provide additional funding and scholarships. Further, because students generally indicated that their involvement in academic programs and student groups were factors in their success at the university, providing support for these programs and encouraging involvement in student groups would likely aid in the retention of students who come from underrepresented backgrounds.

Lastly, listening to and heeding the voices of students who are underrepresented, such as those represented within this study, have the potential to bring about substantial change within academia – possibly leading to an unveiling.

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