

From Resilience to Empowerment: Immigrant-Origin Adult Learners' Journeys

Towards Postsecondary Education

Critical Participatory Action Research

by

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ABSTRACT

This action research study, informed by qualitative critical bricolage methods explored immigrant-origin adult learners' lived experiences around education. It examined a California community college's practices and campus climate that hinder adult immigrant learners' equitable access to and success in postsecondary education. In an attempt to humanize and decolonize the "traditional" research processes, six immigrant-origin adult students on the Central Coast of California participated as co-researchers in a cycle of Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR), which served as the innovation within the overall action research. The CPAR innovation aimed to raise immigrant-origin adult learners' critical consciousness through their five-month-long participation in art-based autoethnographic inquiries and praxis. Through the exploration of their community cultural wealth, the goal of the CPAR innovation was to empower immigrant-origin adult learners to build local capacity for solutions. The CPAR team initiated collective action to improve campus climate and services by sharing their stories through an on-campus exhibit. The study revealed tremendous strengths and resilience of the participants and their communities. The study also found systemic barriers as well as personal and situational factors that affected their educational journeys. The barriers included past traumas, family and work responsibilities, as well as biases and inequitable practices in the education system. Recommendations for educational institutions include (a) training educators on trauma-informed approaches; (b) implementing culturally and linguistically responsive and contextualized instruction and knowledge assessment; (c) making support programs inclusive, adult-focused and stigma-free; (d) valuing students' aspirational, familial, and social capital; and (e) expanding distance learning

opportunities through improving technology access and academic support for online students. Study findings suggest that critical consciousness develops in a complex way and that collective efficacy and opportunity structures support student agency toward equitable academic access and success.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all my fellow immigrant-origin adult students. You inspired me to get on this doctoral journey. Over the years, I had the privilege to learn with and from you about diverse cultures, the importance of community, as well as injustices in the world. I wrote this dissertation so that our voices will be heard in the education system. Together, I aspire to continue changing our narrative from one of resilience to one of empowerment.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my family, whose love, understanding, and encouragement have been the driving force behind my pursuit of knowledge. Especially, to my children, James and Mone, who learned to make breakfast on their own as Mama was busy writing. I aspire to be a source of inspiration and a great role model for you. I hope you feel empowered to accomplish anything you set your mind to. I hope you feel proud of your heritage, and that your bilingual and bicultural knowledge serves you well in this world. To my husband, Jon, who has supported me every step of the way in many ways. You are my rock. Thank you for making dinner for the family after a long day of work and for being a sounding board every time I had an “amazing idea” or “epiphany” about the research. To all my family, your belief in me kept me going throughout my academic journey and led me to this moment of accomplishment.

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CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

— Paulo Freire

[N]o real political struggle can be waged by one lone voice in the wilderness. Emancipatory efforts within schools must be linked to collective emancipatory efforts within and across communities.

— Antonia Darder, Marta Baltodano, and Rodolfo D. Torres

“My goal? I want to get a degree to get a better job, and then I can help my family,” remarked one of the immigrant-origin adult students. Obtaining a more fulfilling and better-paying job is one of the most common reasons why adult learners enroll in adult education programs at Santa Barbara City College (SBCC). Immigrant-origin adult learners demonstrate hard work, resilience, and wisdom and can be successful in flexible and tuition-free adult education or noncredit programs. Yet, they face multiple barriers when it comes to enrolling and persisting in tuition-based college-level courses. For 17 years, I worked with adult learners, primarily immigrants, as a faculty member and administrator at SBCC. I witnessed the various challenges immigrant-origin adult learners were confronted with. The barriers included a lack of information about support services, academic pathways, and enrollment requirements, as well as limited access to proper academic advising. Students expressed issues around self-confidence and a sense of belonging on campus. Many students had to balance multiple responsibilities along with attending school. The cost of attendance, including the time away from paid work, was also a barrier. Today, as an educational consultant supporting adult education

institutions and community colleges in California and beyond, I see similar struggles across the board for immigrant-origin adult learners.

The problem of practice I aimed to address through this study was campus climate and practices at SBCC that affect immigrant-origin adult learners in their career and academic goal achievement. Through understanding immigrant-origin adult learner experiences, and empowering the learners, I intended to provide improvement actions for equitable access and success.

Larger Context

To understand the barriers immigrant-origin adult learners face, in this section, I illustrate the realities of today's postsecondary education institutions across the country and more specifically in the state of California. First, I describe the adult learners and their distinct needs. Then, I further explain some of the unique characteristics of *immigrant-origin* adult learners and the particular challenges they face on college campuses when their adult and immigrant-origin identities intersect. In addition, I rationalize why postsecondary education matters to immigrant-origin adult learners. Following the larger context section, I narrow in on a local community and provide the situated context concerning immigrant-origin adult learners and their career and academic goal achievement.

Adult Learners in Postsecondary Education

It is common for adult learners in postsecondary education to be over the age of twenty-five, to be balancing work and family responsibilities, and to have delayed entry into postsecondary education (Soares et al., 2017). Adult learners have a wide range of

education needs, life stages, and identities (e.g., veterans, immigrants, English Language Learners, single parents, individuals who are developing literacy and numeracy skills, etc.). Community colleges play an especially important role as adult learners are more likely to start their postsecondary journey in a two-year institution and enroll in a shorter certificate or credentialing program than their younger counterparts (Radwin et al., 2013).

Adult learners have distinct patterns of attendance. They are less likely to enroll full-time (twelve or more credit hours) or live on campus when compared with traditional college-age students (Soares et al., 2017). They seek shorter time commitments for education, which may translate into flexible episodic participation. However, attending part-time may require longer periods of participation (Radwin et al., 2013). Adult learners are also more likely to have previously earned certificates or a degree than traditional students (Radwin et al., 2013). In this fast-changing and technology-driven knowledge economy in which production and services rely more heavily on human intellectual capabilities than physical inputs or natural resources (Powell & Snellman, 2004), it is important that all adults—whether they have never attended college before or have a few credits under their belt—have easy access to and support for postsecondary education.

The effect of COVID-19 on college enrollment across the board was devastating; however, the pandemic affected adult learners and students of color in California community colleges disproportionately. The enrollment decline for the California Community College (CCC) system was 12% between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 compared to the 9.5% national average (Weissman, 2021). The reported CCC headcount decline (as opposed to the overall credit-hour-based full-time student count) was even more alarming

at 16.5%, which meant a loss of 260,000 individual students. A CCC system wide impact survey revealed that enrollment decline was steepest among adults, who are parents, as well as students of color (Weissman, 2021). One nationwide opinion poll indicated that 37 percent of adults pursuing education had to stop out due to financial hardships, employment issues, or lack of access to programs during the COVID-19 shutdown (Gallagher, 2021).

As community college enrollment recovers, it is critical that adult learners' needs are considered. Tuition and cost of attendance remain major barriers to adult learners' enrollment. While free college tuition programs, often dubbed as "College Promise," have become more common, many of those programs focus on recent high school graduates and "traditional" age students. A study conducted by the American Institutes for Research in 2021 identified 67 such Promise programs across the nation but revealed that many of those Promises were only for full-time and first-time college students (Radford et al., 2021). Adult learners who attend part-time and returning adult learners are often excluded from the opportunity. It is time for higher education institutions to review and reimagine their practices to better serve adult learners.

Adult learners in postsecondary education are more likely to be first-generation college students, females, and people of color as compared to "traditional" college students (Rabourn et al., 2018; Soares et al., 2017). As the student body's diversity increases, higher education institutions including community colleges need to change their current practices that revolve around "traditional" students. The American higher education system was originally built in the colonial era for elites or "to train young men for the ministry" (Caple, 1998, p. 10, as cited in Padilla et al., 2019). Higher education

expanded by means of the Morrill Act of 1862, which allowed states' acquisition of "public" lands—which had belonged to Indigenous people—to build colleges (Lee & Ahtone, 2020). Through the activism of feminists and people of color, higher education has become more accessible for more individuals over time (Baldwin, 2021; Faulkner, 2016). The G.I. Bill in the 1940s and the federal college financing options in the 1960s also made attending college a more affordable option for the masses (Komives & Woodard, 2003, as cited in Padilla et al., 2019).

Today, higher education is often presented as a pathway to socioeconomic success, and a healthier happier life (Ma et al., 2016; Perna, 2005, as cited in Padilla et al., 2019). However, some argue the promises of higher education are still enjoyed only by the privileged majority, "while the marginalized are subjected to the opportunity costs as well as the social and economic risks of attendance with no such reward" (Nichols, 2015, as cited in Padilla et al., 2019, p. 745). For instance, in a study at an urban community college, 85% of immigrant-origin students were placed in "remedial" or developmental courses as first-time freshmen as opposed to 55% of native-born students (Teranishi et al., 2011). Statistically, less than 25% of community college students completed a degree or certificate within eight years when they started in remedial courses, compared with 40% when students started in transfer-level courses (Teranishi et al., 2011). It is critical that higher education institutions reinvent themselves for more equitable outcomes.

Immigrant-origin Students' College Access and Enrollment

First- and second-generation immigrant-origin students represent a diverse and growing community in higher education, especially in community colleges (Kim & Diaz, 2013; Padilla et al., 2019; Suárez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi et al., 2019). According to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal (2022), first- and second-generation immigrant-origin students were responsible for nearly 60% of the enrollment growth in higher education between 2000 and 2018. First- and second-generation immigrants, including undocumented individuals, represented 28% of all postsecondary students in the U.S. in 2018. More than 80% of those were students of color (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, 2022). For community colleges, the first- and second-generation immigrant ratio was slightly higher at 30% in 2011-12 (Suárez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi, et al., 2019). Further, “Asian, Hispanic, and White first- and second-generation immigrant-origin students are more likely to enroll in community colleges than their third-generation peers are” (Suárez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi et al., 2019, p. 5).

First- and second-generation immigrant-origin learners may face multiple structural and situational barriers affecting their access to higher education compared to other groups. Pivovarova and Powers (2021) found the disadvantages immigrants face persisted beyond the first generation. Interrupted formal education during their K-12 years is more common among immigrants than among native-born (Housel, 2020). The interruptions can be due to family responsibilities, migration, and socioeconomic realities (Housel, 2020). Also, the U.S. education system had a history of de facto racial and ethnic segregation even on the Central Coast of California (García, 2018). It was part of many of the school districts' practice to track Latina/o/x students in trade occupations or

manual labor jobs (Carrillo, 2016). Liou et al. (2016) reported that teachers had low expectations for students of color. In the case of migrant students, Alvarez et al. (2021) claimed students were “keenly aware of the hostile environments . . . that did not value their families’ work or the migrant presence in the schools and also failed to recognize the specific needs of these students” (p. 326).

Recent reports revealed inequitable policies and practices for educational access were still prevalent in K12 schools from Florida, New York, Texas, and North Carolina to Arkansas and Tennessee (Asamoah, 2017; Avelar La Salle & Johnson, 2016; Burke, 2016a, 2016b). Through my conversations with Latina/o/x adult learners and colleagues, I learned that the phenomenon was also happening in California. They shared that information on college enrollment, advanced placement courses, and standardized testing was not available to them when they were in high school (adult immigrants, personal communications). School counselors recommended native-born second-generation students who were fluent in English take English as a Second Language (ESL) courses¹ and join the workforce immediately after high school (an immigrant-origin adult student, personal communication, May 20, 2022).

With their open-door policies and broad missions, community colleges are distinctly well-positioned to increase educational equity and democratize higher education (Suárez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi, et al., 2019; Sullivan, 2017; Teranishi et al.,

¹ While students in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses are often multilingual before learning English, and the recent scholarship in language teaching adopted more inclusive and asset-based terminology, ESL is used in this dissertation as it remained the official name of the program at SBCC and many other California community colleges at the time of writing.

2011, as cited in Suh et al., 2022). As the College Board (2008) dubbed community colleges “the Ellis Island of American higher education,” these open-access institutions attract students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Passel, 2011, as cited in Darbes, 2019). Many immigrant families see community college as a gateway to their socioeconomic success (Kim & Diaz, 2013; Teranishi et al., 2011, as cited in Padilla et al., 2019). Thus, a large proportion of Asian and Latina/o/x immigrant-origin students start their higher education journey in community colleges and enroll part-time while attending to their work and family responsibilities (Kim & Diaz, 2013; Teranishi et al., 2011, as cited in Padilla et al., 2019). In California, community colleges serve more Latina/o/x, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (NHPI), and Asian American (AA) students than any other higher education system (Reddy et al., 2022). Indeed, 61% of Latina/o/x, 59% of NHPI, and 41% of Asian American undergrads started their higher education career in a California community college in the Fall of 2020 (Reddy et al., 2022). Those numbers, however, include younger native-born third- and greater-generation immigrant students.

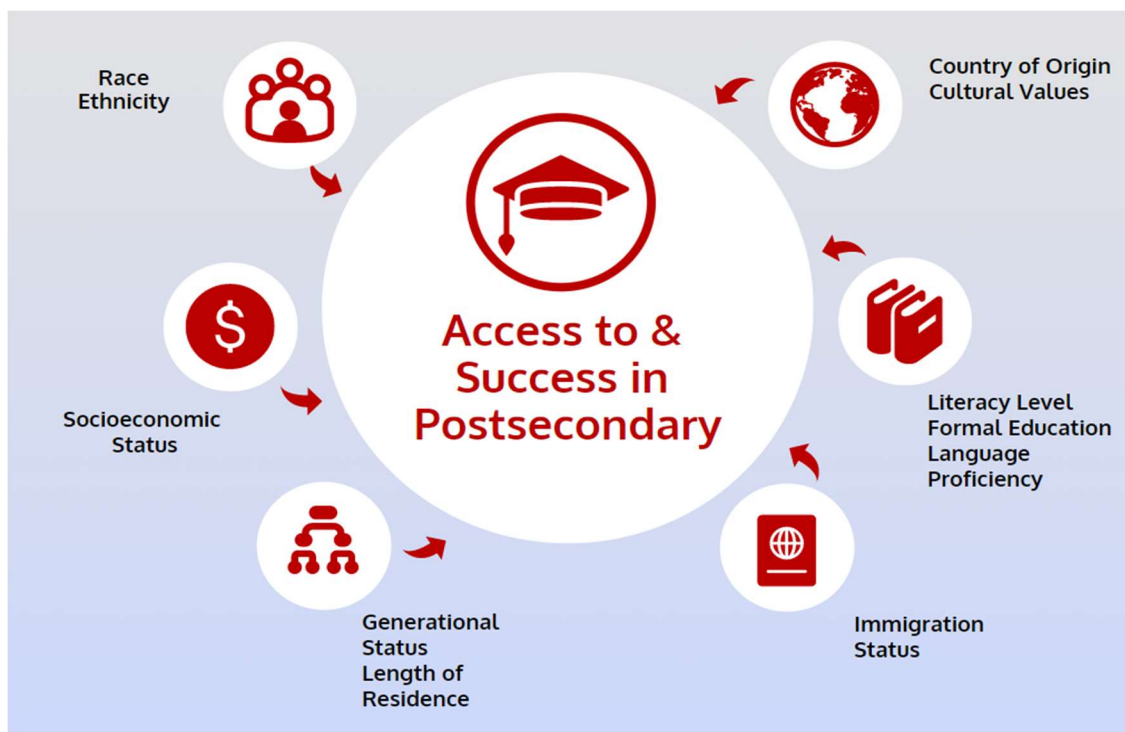
College Experiences of Immigrant-origin Adult Learners

Immigrant-origin adult learners in community colleges are part of the larger adult student population and as such, share many of the same characteristics (i.e., part-time enrollment status, and balancing work, family, and other obligations outside of school). In addition to the barriers all adult students face, an immigrant-origin background can present unique challenges (Suárez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi et al., 2019). It is important to recognize that the immigrant-origin adult student population is a heterogeneous group

consisting of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, a wide range of English proficiency and literacy skills, and an array of immigration and socioeconomic statuses. These background factors influence immigrant-origin students' perspectives of and experiences in higher education in the U.S. (Mwangi et al., 2021). See Figure 1 for elements that affect immigrant-origin students' access and success in postsecondary education.

Figure 1

Immigrant-origin Identity and Access and Success in Postsecondary Education



Note. This chart, designed by the author, visualizes various aspects of immigrant-origin identity affecting access to and success in postsecondary education explained in Kim & Diaz (2013).

Each of the background factors of immigrant-origin learners affects their experiences, but the intersections of multiple elements that comprise an individual's

identity also have implications. However, higher education institutions tend to group the immigrant-origin population with diverse needs and abilities together in one category—English Language Learners (Bergey et al., 2018). In addition, research studies on multilingual immigrant-origin learners have often neglected, confused, or combined the issues of language skills and the complex aspects of race, ethnicity, and immigration status (Oropeza et al., 2010, as cited in Darbes, 2019). Even when institutions recognize the needs of different racial groups, “all too often multi-cultural issues get dichotomized into Black and White racial tensions, excluding the unique perceptions and experiences of other racial and ethnic groups” (Chang et al., 1999, as cited in Cress & Ikeda, 2003, p. 75). In order to understand the diverse needs of immigrant-origin students, below, I describe some of the unique challenges immigrant-origin adult learners face on college campuses when those identities intersect: Negative Campus Culture and Systemic Inequities and Deficit View of Immigrant-origin Learners.

Negative Campus Culture and Systemic Inequities

Campus climate and culture are sometimes used interchangeably; however, culture is formed through the history of beliefs, attitudes, and relationships on campus and climate can refer to people’s perception of those relationships in the present time (Stolp & Smith, 1995). For the purpose of this dissertation, I define campus climate as the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students regarding the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential (Pascarella et al., 2005, as cited in University of California, 2022). I define campus culture as written and unwritten rules that impact people’s behaviors and physical facilities through which colleges manifest their way of embracing diversity and affecting students’ physical and emotional safety.

Immigrant-origin students consistently reported lower levels of belonging to the campus community and less satisfaction with college experiences than their native-born counterparts (Kuzhabekova, 2010, as cited in Kim & Diaz, 2013). Some of the challenges immigrant-origin students face are racial, ethnic, and language-based microaggressions, stereotype threats, bigotry, violence, and other forms of discrimination on college campuses (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Kim, 2014; Mwangi et al., 2021; Suárez-Orozco, Casanova et al., 2019; Yosso et al., 2009). Microaggressions and race-based biases exist in higher education and negatively affect students. Microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative . . . slights and insults” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271, as cited in Suárez-Orozco, Casanova et al., 2019). Yosso et al. (2009) found that Latino/a/x undergraduate students experienced racial microaggressions and negative campus climates on predominantly White university campuses. Suárez-Orozco, Casanova et al. (2019) observed multiple cultural, racial, and language-based microaggressions in New York Community Colleges. Microaggressions in the study were most often (91%) initiated by instructors in “remedial” classrooms (Suárez-Orozco, Casanova et al., 2019). There is growing evidence that microaggressions and stereotype threats have pervasive harmful effects (Steele, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Casanova et al., 2019).

A hostile campus climate can negatively affect Asian immigrant-origin students’ mental health (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). Asian American college students are 1.6 times more likely to make a serious suicide attempt than all other ethnic groups (Qiao, 2017). One study revealed that perceived racism negatively affected foreign-born Asian students’

cumulative GPAs while perceived racism positively correlated with native-born Asian American students' academic performance (Yoo & Castro, 2011, as cited in Kim & Diaz, 2013). The results illustrate how different identity factors may affect immigrant-origin learners in varied ways. The results also indicate that just because certain groups are performing well academically does not necessarily mean they feel a sense of belonging or they do not experience negative mental distress.

In addition, because of the harmful model minority myth, Asian and Asian American students may not receive needed support. The notion of the model minority was first presented by a sociologist, William Pettersen (1966), based on stereotypes, and it perpetuates a myth that Asian Americans achieve a high level of success solely through their perseverance, hard work, and grit, in other words, their bootstrap mentality (Shin, 2016). Soujin Song, a student at Pasadena City College, explained, "Asians are usually perceived to do well in school. I think because of this, and many other socioeconomic factors, we have less support in schools because people don't think we need it" (as cited in Reddy et al., 2022, p. 28).

The model minority myth ignores the diversity among individuals and within Asian American communities and takes policymakers' attention away from the critical immigration, socioeconomic, and mental health issues Asian Americans face (Blackburn, 2019; Shin, 2016). When data is disaggregated to analyze complex and heterogeneous immigrant groups, one finds a very different picture than the false narrative of the myth (Kumashiro, 2009; Yoo & Castro, 2011, as cited in Kim & Diaz, 2013). For example, one in seven Asian immigrants in the U.S. is undocumented facing potential deportation, but Asians are often excluded from the national immigration conversations (Blackburn,

2019). Also, Asian American students are three times less likely to seek out professional mental health support even though they are more likely to face serious mental health issues (Qiao, 2017).

The model minority myth also erases racism against Asian Americans, from verbal and physical harassment in the schoolyard to discrimination in the workplace (Shin, 2016). While discrimination and violence against Asian Americans are not new, the 2022 report by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism revealed that Asian hate crimes increased by 339% in the U.S. in 2021 compared to 2020 (Yam, 2022). Almost one-third (32%) of Asian American adults indicated that they have “feared someone might threaten or physically attack them” (Ruiz et al., 2021). Between 2019 and 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, California reported a 420% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes including ones committed on college campuses (Reddy et al., 2022). Violence and racism against Asian Americans continue to impact students and the larger community.

Finally, one of the most vulnerable immigrant-origin student populations could be undocumented students. An estimated 10.5 million to 12 million undocumented immigrants reside in the U.S. (Kamarck & Stenglein, 2019). Undocumented students come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2018 American Community Survey, 46% were Latina/o/x, 25% were AAPI, 15% were Black, and 12% were White (Feldblum et al., 2020). Undocumented students face a myriad of systemic and structural obstacles to accessing postsecondary education. These barriers include institutional inequity, discrimination fueled by political propaganda and negative media coverage, fear of deportation, poverty, violence, and inadequate schools

(Kim & Diaz, 2013; Osei-Twumasi & López-Hernández, 2019). Further, undocumented students are excluded from federal student aid opportunities as well as most state-based opportunities (The Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2021).

Deficit View of Immigrant-origin Learners

Certain student assessment policies may hinder immigrant-origin students' goal achievement. On the one hand, it is important to acknowledge that learning takes time and to provide appropriate support, given the fact that many aspects can affect student progress. For example, some 1.5-generation students (who immigrated to the U.S. as a child) could benefit from supplemental courses (Che, 2019). However, policies and practices based on Eurocentric epistemologies can hinder immigrant-origin students from gaining access to transfer-level courses based on decontextualized high-stakes "standardized" tests. Toth et al. (2019) argued that placement testing communicates "specific cultural values, language ideologies, and expectations to test-takers . . . In short, it communicates power" (p. 8). In the traditional placement system, students of color are more likely to be placed into remedial courses, and students who start their higher education journey in remedial courses are much less likely to achieve their educational goals (California Community Colleges, 2018; Toth et al., 2019). The majority of immigrant-origin students in the college system are students of color (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, 2022). Thus, standardized assessment instruments and traditional placement policies raise serious equity concerns for many immigrant-origin students. For example, community college faculty reported that bilingual students who were proficient in English had been placed in ESL (Che, 2019). Many community college students,

especially working adults with family responsibilities, do not have the time or money to persist through a year of additional and unnecessary coursework (Toth et al., 2019).

Furthermore, immigrant-origin students' bi/multilingualism, as well as multiculturalism, are often *problematized* rather than valued in higher education. Community colleges “diagnose” students' bi/multilingualism through English “diagnostic” tests and treat them in “remedial” English language courses (Kibler et al., 2011, as cited in Suh et al., 2022). As K. Wada (personal communication, May 9, 2022), an ESL professor at Cypress College on the AB 705 ESL Advisory Committee lamented, this is in stark contrast to offering college credits to native-born students for taking a beginning foreign language class. Often, immigrant-origin students' linguistic capital is not recognized or appreciated in the standardized language placement system as “language education is rooted in histories of white supremacy and colonial expansion” (Che, 2019, p. 195).

Besides institutional policies that may create barriers, research suggests that community college faculty and administrators can have biases against immigrant-origin learners and blame students for their “poor academic performance” and lower completion rates (Herrera et al., 2019). They often view immigrant-origin students as “academically deficient, and academically unsocialized” (Herrera et al., 2019, p. 137). Comments such as “students . . . were completely unprepared. They shouldn't really be here,” and “They don't do homework, they don't buy the book. . . . they don't have study habits,” as well as “They look very lazy” were heard on college campuses (Herrera et al., 2019, p. 137). When faculty and administrators are aware of an institution's shortcomings but are not able to change its ineffective policies and practices, they tend to fall back on the cultural

deficit models to rationalize why immigrant-origin learners are not successful (Herrera et al., 2019).

Postsecondary Education Matters

Why should adult immigrants consider postsecondary education when the system was not built for them, and college campuses can be hostile? More importantly, why should higher education institutions improve their practices to better meet the needs of immigrant-origin adult learners? Postsecondary education plays a vital role in individuals' social and economic mobility (Rutan et al., 2019; United States Department of Labor, 2019). As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, upward socioeconomic mobility through a better career is one of the main reasons why immigrant-origin adult learners come to SBCC. Recent labor statistics show that educational attainment generally correlates positively with wages and negatively with unemployment rates (United States Department of Labor, 2019). Associate degree holders earn, on average, \$11,100 more annually than high school graduates (Feist, 2022). Nearly 25% of adults over the age of 25 without a high school diploma are below the poverty level, compared to just above 10% who have some postsecondary education (United States Census Bureau, 2017, as cited in Rutan et al., 2019). If attaining even a short-term postsecondary certificate or credential can improve an individual's economic stability, then it is critical that learners have access to postsecondary education opportunities.

Although a primary mission of the California Community College System is to “advance California’s economic growth and global competitiveness through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous workforce improvement” (California

education code §66010.4), not everyone is included in the opportunity. Over 5 million, or 17%, of adults in California do not have a high school diploma (California Adult Education, n.d.), and are often ineligible for certain tuition aid programs. While many community colleges offer College Promise (two years of free tuition), many immigrant-origin adult learners are unable to meet the financial aid or College Promise requirements and are thus unable to enroll in community colleges. Successfully completing twelve units or more per semester for two consecutive years, as well as revealing their immigration status, or providing tax and income information can be challenging for immigrant-origin adult students.

From a societal point of view, when more individuals participate in postsecondary education, everyone benefits through the improvement of societal, economic, and political systems (Tilak, 2008). For example, the California Community College System, the largest higher education system in the U.S., generates 265.9 billion dollars in social benefits annually (Feist, 2022). This includes 3.3 billion dollars in savings through reduced costs of the criminal justice system, income assistance, and social services (Feist, 2022). This allows for tax dollars to be utilized elsewhere. Participation in higher education also prepares individuals for informed involvement in civic, sociopolitical, cultural, and economic activities (Tilak, 2008). Equitable access to postsecondary education should be everyone's concern.

Further, access to postsecondary education is not only a socioeconomic and political issue but a human rights issue, the right to education (Tilak, 2008). Article 13, paragraph 2 (c), of the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, declares that “[h]igher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the

basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.”

Employment Opportunity Gap for Adult Immigrants

As explained above, postsecondary training can change the socioeconomic trajectory of individuals through gainful employment, yet there exist opportunity gaps. Understanding the current inequities along the career pathways for immigrant-origin adult students helps higher education institutions improve their practices. While adult immigrants’ unemployment rates have been reported to be lower than their native-born counterparts, their wages have been reported to be consistently lower (Kim & Diaz, 2013). In other words, a higher percentage of adult immigrants are working but being paid less. Some of the wage gaps can be attributed to the education job placement mismatch. Pivovarova and Powers (2021) found that first- and second-generation Black and Asian female immigrants are more likely to be overqualified for the jobs they take in the United States. Foreign credentials and country-specific human capital such as understanding labor standards and technical requirements, and language proficiency, are often not recognized or valued (Pivovarova & Powers, 2021). Additionally, immigrant workers can face racial and ethnic discrimination due to employers’ implicit or explicit biases (Esses et al., 2006; Guo; 2009, as cited in Pivovarova & Powers, 2021). These factors can result in immigrant workers being underemployed.

It appears that racial and ethnic inequities are found in socioeconomic opportunities in California. While California has the highest rate of college-educated foreign-born adults (Olsen-Medina & Batalova, 2020), adult immigrants are still overrepresented in certain lower-wage jobs such as construction labor and housekeeping

(Kosten, 2018). More recently, COVID-19 affected Asian Americans and NHPI in the workforce more severely. Between 2020 and 2021, Asian Americans and NHPI experienced faster-growing unemployment rates and a greater number of long-term unemployment than White Californians (Reddy et al., 2022). Poverty rates in California are higher among immigrants, Latina/o/x, and adults with lower educational achievement (Bohn et al., 2022). The poverty rate for immigrants is almost 22%, compared to 14% for non-immigrants. The poverty rate for undocumented immigrants is even higher at almost 36%. The Latina/o/x population is disproportionately impacted, representing over 51% of Californians who live below the poverty level while the Latina/o/x population makes up only about 40% of the overall population. Southeast Asians also experience a higher level of poverty with more than 33% among Hmong, 25% Laotian, and 22% Cambodian community members when compared to 14.5% for all Asian Americans and NHPI (Bohn et al., 2021; Reddy et al., 2022). A much higher percentage of adults without a high school diploma are below the poverty line—at 29% and climbing—compared to 7% of adults with college degrees (Bohn et al., 2021). Many adult learners with lower educational attainment have their formal education interrupted, and the interruptions are more common among immigrant-origin learners (Housel, 2020).

What is important to note here is that most individuals in poverty are in the labor force. In 2019, 47% of those living in poverty had at least one household member working full-time, and 32% had at least one household member who worked part-time or worked full-time part of the year (Bohn et al., 2021). These working adults can have the opportunity to update and upgrade their skills through postsecondary education to gain a

family-sustaining career. California Community Colleges are positioned well to serve those needs.

As a result of this research and sharing the varied stories of immigrant-origin adult students, I believe we can start re-envisioning community colleges for more equitable educational and socioeconomic outcomes for all students. As described above, immigrant-origin adult learners may have additional stressors in life. There is much more colleges can do to better serve immigrant-origin learners and to cultivate a campus culture that fosters a sense of belonging among them.

Local Context: Santa Barbara City College

Informed by the federal and state-level initiatives such as CA Assembly Bill 705, Vision for Success, and Guided Pathways, SBCC is moving in the right direction in terms of creating strategic goals that are student-ready, inclusive, and equity-minded. AB 705 required California community colleges to “maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and math within a one-year timeframe” (Cal. Legis. Assemb. AB 705. Reg. Sess., 2017). Vision for Success is an initiative led by the California Community College Chancellor’s office that places equity at the center and supports students’ timely completion of certificates, degrees, and transfer requirements as well as obtaining gainful employment (California Community Colleges, n.d.-a). Guided Pathways is a nationwide initiative that the California Community College System adopted, and it aims to augment support systems and streamline students’ pathways through college (California Community Colleges, n.d.-b). A number of educators on campus have been making incremental progress. However, as

the following section illustrates, SBCC has considerable room for improvement. To make meaningful and impactful changes, I assert that listening to students' voices is critical. In this section, I introduce the community where the research was conducted. I describe the campus climate, and how the barriers to education are manifesting at the local level.

Demographics of Santa Barbara County

According to the Census Bureau's 2020 Population estimates, Santa Barbara County is home to 448,229 people, of which 47% are "Hispanic or Latino," 42% White (non-Hispanic or Latino), and 6% Asian. In the county, 23% of the population is foreign-born and 40% of the population who are over 5 years old, or approximately 166,280 people, speak a language other than English at home.

SBCC serves the entire southern region of Santa Barbara County, which spans east to west from Gaviota to Carpinteria on the south coast and to the border of Solvang and Buellton to the north (BW Research Partnership, 2019). In the southern county, more than 22,000 adults self-identified that they speak English less than very well (BW Research Partnership, 2019). While 81% of the county's population over 25 years of age earned a high school diploma or higher, the economic and workforce gap analysis for adult students in 2019 indicates that more than 11,000 adults have not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent in SBCC's service area (BW Research Partnership, 2019).

Local Community College

SBCC is a two-year community college on California's Central Coast. The beautiful beachfront credit campus stands on the unceded ancestral lands of the Chumash Peoples. SBCC's mission declares, "Santa Barbara City College welcomes all students.

The College provides a diverse learning environment and opportunities for students to enrich their lives, advance their careers, complete certificates, earn associate degrees, and transfer to four-year institutions” (SBCC, n.d.-b). In Fall 2021, SBCC served over 17,000 students across three campuses; one credit campus, located right across the beach, and two noncredit campuses, one located downtown and one to the north of the city. The three campuses are all part of SBCC and contribute to the same vision, mission, and strategic goals.

In 1918, the current SBCC began serving adult immigrants in the community after the original institution established in 1909 was discontinued following World War I and became what is now known as the University of California, Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara City College, n.d.-c; Surfmedia Communications, 2018). The noncredit (Adult) English as a Second Language and citizenship courses were the first courses offered to eighty-one students through what would become the present-day SBCC School of Extended Learning (Surfmedia Communications, 2018). Since then, the college has grown to be one of California’s mid-size colleges. It offers a wide range of associate degree and certificate programs, four-year university transfer programs as well as tuition-free noncredit programs. The division I worked for, the School of Extended Learning, is at the downtown and north Santa Barbara campuses and offers noncredit foundational skills courses such as adult secondary education (ASE), English as a Second Language (ESL), as well as introductory career technical education (CTE). The noncredit division also includes vibrant programs for older adults and fee-based life enrichment courses.

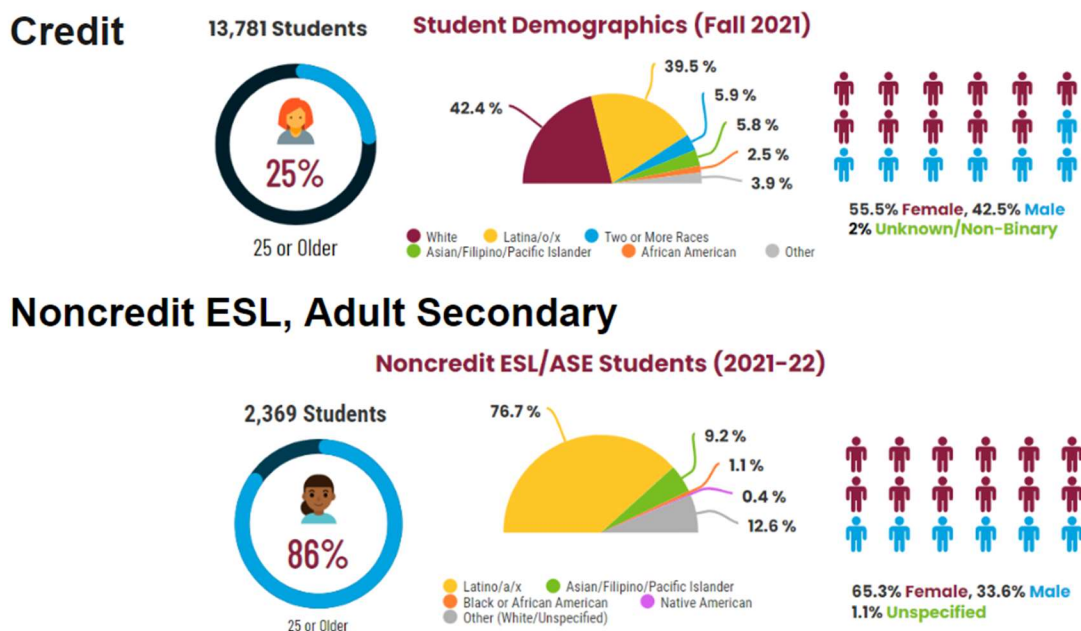
Demographics

Based on SBCC enrollment statistics from 2021-22, 86% of students in the noncredit developmental courses (ESL and ASE) are adults, 77% Latinas/os/x, 9% Asians, and 65% females. However, the majority on the credit campus are 24 or younger (75%) and White (42%). The credit program enrollment shows only 25% adults, 40% Latino/a/x, and 6% Asian. The gender representation on the credit campus is more even (Female: 55.5%, Male: 42.5%, Unknown/Non-Binary: 2.0%). See Figure 2 for more details.

In the noncredit ESL program, more than 18 native languages were represented in 2021–22. The noncredit students' education levels vary between less than 6th grade to graduate degrees (Internal Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems Data, 2021-22).

Figure 2

Demographics of Santa Barbara City College Students



Note. This infographic illustrates demographic information of Santa Barbara City College students in credit and noncredit ESL and adult secondary education programs. The two systems use slightly different methods to collect data, and the labels here are consistent with the source data. Source: SBCC Internal Data.

Campus Climate

Unfortunately, SBCC's recent campus climate, especially around the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion requires attention. Between 2018 and 2019, credit students expressed their frustration through multiple protests on campus and at board meetings (Bray, 2019a; edhat, 2019). In 2019, SBCC hired an independent survey company to conduct a campus-wide climate survey, in which 771 of the 2,294 employees participated. The survey results indicated several racist incidents followed by perceived ineffective leadership have negatively impacted the campus climate, especially on the credit side (Bray, 2019b; Quantisoft, 2019). The survey company's qualitative analysis of 588-page open-ended comments from the respondents revealed significant campus climate issues including the marginalization of noncredit students, faculty, and programs. While there were exceptions within some areas of the college, the overall college culture presented significant opportunities for improvement in terms of diversity, equity, inclusion, and leadership conditions (Quantisoft, 2019). The survey results illustrated a tremendous gap between the college's mission and its actual campus climate. To empower all students, including immigrant-origin adults, SBCC must value what the diverse group brings to the classroom and support their educational journeys.

Situational and Institutional Barriers for Adult Noncredit Students

Another internal survey conducted in the noncredit ESL program in 2019–2020 revealed situational barriers adult learners were facing. Over 57% (71 out of 125) of respondents indicated their work schedule is a barrier to course attendance. The next biggest obstacle was housework and other responsibilities (39%) followed by taking care of children or other members of the family (25%). Class schedules and support services at SBCC had not fully accommodated or addressed those adult learners' needs.

In addition, due to the departmental funding structures and other political reasons, the culture of working in silos has been established at various levels and areas of the college. Often, general and grant funds at the college are allocated to specific departments and programs. Due to the way proposals were written by credit faculty or other budgetary restrictions, noncredit students could not be served under certain college-wide programs or grants (e.g., Title III: Removing the Barriers to STEM, Title V: Student-Ready: Degree Completion for the Flexible Learner, etc.).

Furthermore, noncredit faculty and staff were often excluded from certain college initiatives, committees, and workgroups where decisions were made, and actions were taken. For instance, the noncredit faculty's request for representation in the local Guided Pathway initiative in 2017 was denied by the credit faculty lead at the time. The exclusion of noncredit faculty and staff often negatively affects noncredit students. In 2021, a policy decision was made for in-person or hybrid/HyFlex courses, and all students who are yet to upload their COVID-vaccine records were blocked from registering for such courses. The decision was made without consideration for the difficulty noncredit students face in uploading documents or even accessing their college

portal. The decision was made without an understanding of the noncredit program structure where many students only attended classes online when courses were designated as HyFlex. The change in the policy added another layer of barriers for many of the adult noncredit students.

Even when noncredit faculty and staff were invited to committees, many of us were made to feel less than in those spaces. During the time I was a noncredit representative on the partnership for student success committee between 2017 and 2019, a credit faculty member in English Skills, a defunct department since AB705 took effect, along with English, Math, and credit ESL instructors told me that noncredit faculty are not equipped to develop their own curriculum, and it would be a disservice to the “at risk” credit students if noncredit faculty were to teach those students in need. While a number of issues were documented in the aforementioned 2019 campus climate survey, improvements have been made since the survey.

Problem of Practice and Purpose of Research

Systemic barriers and the institutional culture that hinder immigrant-origin adult learners’ access and success are still prevalent. The problem of practice I aimed to address was the local community college’s campus climate and practices that affect immigrant-origin adult learners and their career and academic goal achievement. My focus for this study was on understanding the immigrant-origin adult students’ and alumni’s experiences, empowering immigrant-origin adult learners to demand changes in the campus culture to help transform their life trajectories and for the generations to come. In order to put forth recommendations for systemic change, the purpose of my

action research was to explore immigrant-origin adult students' lived experiences around education. In addition, I aimed to raise immigrant-origin adult learners' critical consciousness through our co-participation in autoethnographic inquiries and critical participatory action research.

Innovation Overview

I use the term “innovation” to refer to an action designed and implemented by a practitioner-researcher in their local context to effect change and advance social justice as they engage with their problem of practice. The choice of the term (innovation) is based on the framework and the vision of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), which is to “envision a future where equity-minded educational professionals lead lasting and positive change for the learning and benefit of everyone” (The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, n.d.). While I discuss the details of my innovation in Chapter 3, I provide a brief overview of the innovation to contextualize the research questions guiding this study.

As I described previously, current college practices, climate, and culture present tremendous opportunities for improvement. In order to reimagine the system so all students, including immigrant-origin adult learners, can achieve their educational and employment goals equitably, I formed a research team with immigrant-origin adult learners in the community. Together, we engaged in a five-month process of Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR). I elaborate on the CPAR philosophy and process later in Chapter 3. The CPAR team began our work by reflecting on our own lived experiences and identifying the barriers we face/d and the strengths we possess. Then, we

collectively decided to disseminate the findings on these barriers and strengths to the wider campus community through an on-campus exhibit. In an effort to set positive changes in motion, we shared our counterstories. Through the CPAR innovation, I aimed to activate the participants' critical consciousness and empower them through the discovery or reaffirmation of their community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).

My goal for this CPAR innovation was to amplify the voices of immigrant-origin adult learners. Based on the perspectives of critical theories, emancipatory education, and humanizing research, immigrant-origin adult learners participated as co-researchers, and they were included in the decision-making process during the CPAR innovation. I discuss these theoretical and methodological frameworks in depth in the next two chapters.

Who is the Research for and with?

This research study focuses on immigrant-origin adult learners in Santa Barbara. For this research purpose, immigrant-origin adult learners are defined as individuals over 25 years of age who are first- or second-generation immigrants who live (semi) permanently in the United States. First-generation immigrants are foreign-born individuals whose parents were also born outside of the U.S. and second-generation immigrants are native-born citizens born to foreign-born parents.

My Positionality and Role as Action Researcher

My personal background influenced the perspectives and assumptions I brought to this research. I was born and raised in Japan by two working-class parents. I learned English as a second language and was the first person to earn a college degree in my family. As both of my parents worked full-time and often overtime, my paternal

grandparents had a tremendous impact on my development. While they all cared for me with much love, my childhood was not free of abuse or trauma.

I am a settler and first-generation Asian (Japanese) immigrant who resides on the unceded ancestral lands of the Chumash Peoples on the Central Coast of California. I appreciate and benefit from the Chumash peoples' careful stewardship of the beautiful land nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Ynez mountains. I acknowledge the colonization of the land and the violence to the people that accompanies the act of colonization. As a settler and immigrant on the land, I aspire to contribute to the continued land stewardship of the Chumash Peoples. I am grateful that I can call this urban/suburban community full of nature home where I am raising two bilingual/bicultural children with my husband. I am an able-bodied heterosexual person. Talking about gender, however, is still complicated for me knowing that gender is a social construct and having dealt with (racialized) misogyny most of my life.

As an adult immigrant alumna of SBCC, I share the immigrant-origin adult learner identity with my study participants. I had to rebuild a career from scratch when I moved to Santa Barbara, California more than 20 years ago. While working multiple minimum-wage jobs, I opted to enroll in a short Career Technical Education certificate program at SBCC. Originally, I was hoping for a quick completion of a certificate that would connect me directly to a family-sustaining job. However, my passion for teaching eventually took me on another path.

For 17 years, I had the privilege to serve the local immigrant-origin adult population as an ESL instructional aide, faculty, and then as the director of noncredit programs at SBCC. The students I met during my time at the college through multiple

roles taught me a lot about their diverse cultures and value systems. I celebrated many life milestones with my students (i.e., new careers, job promotions, weddings, births, important school events, children being admitted to college, various holidays, as well as divorce and loss of loved ones). I witnessed their countless academic achievements (noncredit certificate completion, level promotion, adult high school graduation, college admission, etc.). However, I also observed the challenges immigrant-origin adult students faced. I cried with two of the students who were refugees when an innocuous classroom exercise of showing our hometowns turned into a triggering moment of their trauma. I helped a student find alternative housing to escape a physically and emotionally abusive relationship. Many of my students worked full-time, had multiple part-time jobs, or had family members who needed care, and attending class was not always easy. I did my best to create a classroom environment where students felt safe to learn new skills and the learning content was relevant and valuable to them.

I have advocated for my students and tried to correct people's stereotypes or deficit views of immigrant-origin students. In 2015, when I identified digital literacy and technology access as an opportunity gap, I applied for a grant and spearheaded the technology integration project for the noncredit ESL program. Even though some faculty members insisted that our students did not need it or were not ready for it, I succeeded in embedding digital literacy instruction into our curriculum and ensuring 1:1 device access in classrooms. In multiple state conferences and on-campus committees, I have heard faculty and administrators speak negatively about immigrant-origin students and noncredit programs based on their deficit view. I almost always spoke up when that happened. When I saw faculty and advisors' "gatekeeping" prevent adult ESL students

from pursuing a career path, I recruited a few allies in the noncredit CTE program and implemented an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model of instruction where students are supported to gain both foundational language skills and workforce training simultaneously. In 2020, when I realized that noncredit students were not included in the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund program, I advocated for funding equity, and more than 1,500 noncredit students received a total of over 1.3 million dollars in emergency aid through the effort. I care deeply about creating an optimal environment for immigrant-origin adult learners' success in postsecondary education. I perceived this action research as a continuation of such efforts.

It is important for me to take part in humanizing and decolonizing education and research while examining my own privileges and challenges. Through this study and the CPAR innovation process, I aimed to facilitate critical participatory action research and provide a platform for the immigrant-origin adult learners' voices to be lifted and heard.

Research Questions

The questions that guided this action research were:

1. What are the lived experiences of immigrant-origin adult learners centered around their education?
2. When immigrant-origin adult learners are engaged in a CPAR process, what ideas, artifacts, and actions are generated?
3. What are the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants' critical consciousness?

Long Story Short

The postsecondary education system currently presents multiple areas for improvement and opportunities for growth to better serve immigrant-origin adult learners. Adult learners, especially, immigrant-origin learners are a key constituency as higher education institutions recover from the recent enrollment decline. However, immigrant-origin adult learners' distinct needs are often not met, and their strengths are not fully appreciated in higher education due to its youth-centric and White middle-class campus culture as well as the deficit view of students of color. Community colleges can play an important role in democratizing higher education and supporting equitable access as the labor market data shows postsecondary education can lead to better employment and economic outcomes. At the local level, there was an urgent need to reevaluate the campus climate and practices at SBCC to achieve equitable academic and professional outcomes for immigrant-origin adult students.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

[W]e often find comfort in commonsensical ideas that make sense of the status quo, just as we often feel uncomfortable with ideas that disrupt norms.

— Kevin Kumashiro

What alternative is there to . . . “Us” versus “Them”? . . . Without some flexibility in our definitions we’ll remain forever stuck with the same old knee-jerk reactions, or worse, slide into complete apathy.

— Haruki Murakami

As an action researcher, who strives to achieve more equitable access to postsecondary education and professional and financial success for immigrant-origin adult learners, I approached this research through a critical lens. In keeping with the tradition of Critical Theory (Budd, 2008), my research analyzed the existing conditions of people in search of ways to improve the current situation. In this chapter, I examine theoretical frameworks on critical theories, cultural and social capital, as well as learning theories that are relevant to immigrant-origin adult learners. First, I describe the overarching theoretical lens that guided this study: critical theories, specifically, critical/anti-oppressive pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2014; Kumashiro, 2015), social cultural capital theories (Bourdieu, 1986), and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). I interweave andragogy and Knowles’ (1984) adult learning theory with critical theories to acknowledge adult learners’ unique characteristics. To explore the applications of these theories and gather inspiration for their use in this study, I reviewed research on the topics of critical consciousness, critical social justice education, and adult learning. As an action researcher, I designed this study based on prior cycles of inquiry, and I end the

chapter by sharing the findings from the previous cycles of my action research which informed this study.

Critical Pedagogy and Anti-Oppressive Education

Education can function as the practice of freedom or the practice of domination and conformity to the current system. Critical pedagogy can be traced back to the early 1900s and John Dewey's idea of social co-construction of knowledge, active interactions with the learning environment, and the meaning of education in a democratic society (Darder et al., 2017). Paulo Freire is an influential theorist who had an especially strong impact on social activists of color. Freire, who started his education career as an adult literacy teacher working with sugarcane farmers in Brazil, introduced the idea of "the banking concept of education" to describe systems of education wherein learners are viewed as empty vessels and teachers, as the sole knowledge possessors, must deposit knowledge into their students (Freire, 1970/2014). Freire (1970/2014) associated the banking concept with colonization, reproduction of oppression, and propaganda feeding. In the banking concept of education, colonizing culture is deemed as correct and valuable, and the colonized culture as inferior and in need of improvement. To counter this style of education, Freire (1970/2014) proposed a "problem-posing method" of education, where the teacher-student relationship is reciprocal, and the goal is not conformity but instead liberation and humanization.

With the problem-posing method, learners are actively engaged and encouraged to think critically about their reality through "dialogue," "conscientization," and "praxis." Dialogue promotes the co-construction of knowledge in fellowship and solidarity through

critical thinking in pursuit of full humanity. Conscientization entails developing a critical awareness of reality through critical thinking and perceiving reality as a process and transformation and not a static entity. Praxis is a combination of reflection and action for the transformation of the world in pursuit of humanization to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor (Freire, 1970/2014). Some of the important aspects of critical pedagogy include empowerment and conscientization of the marginalized, development of human agency through question-posing, interactive, dialogic action, and reflection (praxis), and the ongoing or never-ending nature of the movement (Darder et al., 2017).

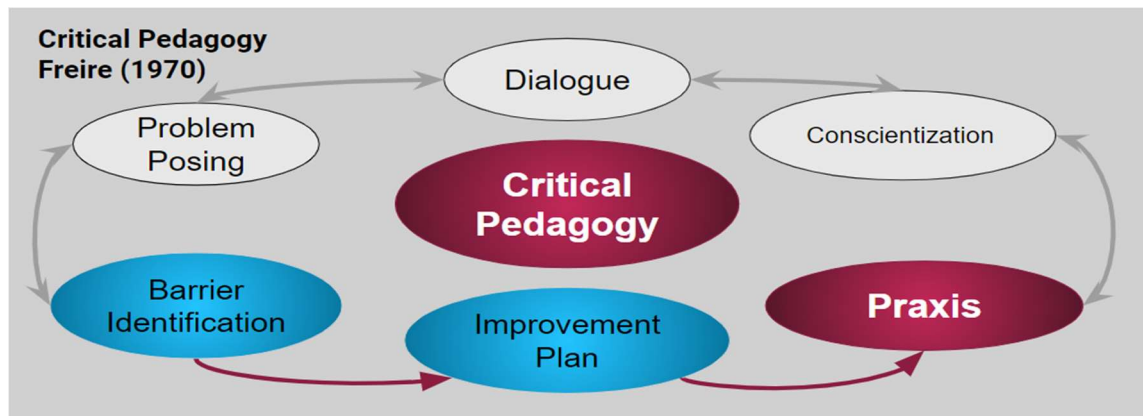
Noting that commonsensical “good” teaching is often complicit in reinforcing oppression, Kumashiro (2015) encouraged educators, along with their students, to step out of their comfort zones and interrogate the unintentional “hidden” lessons of oppression in the “normal” discourse in schools. Kumashiro (2015) also drew attention to the fact that the nature of knowledge is always partial. Individuals inevitably view events and experiences through different lenses and bring varied prior knowledge into learning spaces. As an advocate for anti-oppressive education, Kumashiro (2015) encouraged educators to embrace uncertainty as part of the learning process and teach them how to view learning materials and experiences from a variety of perspectives.

I used critical pedagogy and the praxis process to design my innovation and research (see Figure 3). Through a critical and anti-oppressive lens, the purpose of this research study was to interrogate the current systems that affect one’s education by examining immigrant-origin adult learners’ lived experiences. This study further aimed to raise immigrant-origin adult learners’ critical consciousness and provide

recommendations for meaningful improvement. I designed the innovation so that the CPAR team would engage in problem-posing, dialogue, and conscientization.

Figure 3

Critical Pedagogy and Action Research Process



Note. This chart illustrates how I utilized Freire’s critical pedagogy components (problem posing, dialogue, and conscientization) in my CPAR innovation.

Critical Hope

As part of the critical approach, the concept of critical hope guided the study. In his book, *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire (1992/2014) encouraged educators to approach social justice work with hope as “there is no change without dreams, as there is no dream without hope” (p. 81). Freire (1992/2014) explained hope is our ontological need. However, Freire (1992/2014) also warned believing hope alone can transform the world is naive and would quickly lead to “hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism” (p. 2). The kind of hope needed is not toxic positivity or what Duncan-Andrade (2009) called false forms of hope. Through his work with urban youths, Duncan-Andrade (2009) categorized false forms of hope into “hokey hope,” “mythical hope,” and “hope deferred.” “Hokey

hope” represents naive optimism and is rooted in the “up by your bootstraps” narrative, where hard work and playing by the rules should be enough to achieve the American Dream (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). “Mythical hope” is based on “the false narrative of equal opportunity, emptied of its historical and political contingencies” and celebrates individual exceptions such as President Obama’s election as proof of equitable society (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 183). This type of hope fuels a myth of meritocracy. “Hope deferred” refers to a focus on idealistic social changes in the distant future as a condition of educational improvement while there is no active engagement to support learners (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

Duncan-Andrade (2009) then explains that critical hope is what is needed, and it “demands a committed and active struggle” against inequities (p. 185). “Critical hope” is categorized into “material hope,” “Socratic hope,” and “audacious hope” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Material hope provides students with a sense of control and the resources to overcome challenges while acknowledging that the environment may not be ideal. When educators and learners examine their lived experiences in the real unjust world and choose to go down the painful path to justice and academic excellence with solidarity, that represents Socratic hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Lastly, audacious hope “demands that we reconnect to the collective by struggling alongside one another, sharing the victories and the pain” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 190). With audacious hope, educators build trust and support students in channeling emotions into positive engagement (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

Grain and Lund (2016) also explain how critical hope can hold a conceptual and affective space where individuals can critically analyze the current world we live in and

imagine an alternative at the same time. Drawing from Freire's (1992/2014) praxis, Grain and Lund (2016) also recognize that critical hope leads to action. Grain's (2022) seven principles of critical hope include:

- Hope is necessary, but alone it's not enough.
- Critical hope is not something you have; it's something you practice.
- Critical hope is messy, uncomfortable, and full of contradictions.
- Critical hope is intimately entangled with the body and the land.
- Critical hope requires bearing witness to social and historical trauma.
- Critical hope requires interruptions and invitations.
- Anger and grief have a seat at the table.

Based on the concept of critical hope, I aimed to create a brave space where co-researchers and I could honestly and critically analyze the current climate and practices of the college through our experiences. Also in the relational space, our goal was to envision a different reality in order to start making changes toward realizing our *critical* hopes and dreams.

Critical Consciousness Matters: Related Studies

One of the objectives of my innovation was to raise participants' critical consciousness by engaging in a Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) process. Critical consciousness can be explained as the capacity for critical reflection and critical action (Diemer et al., 2006). Below, I present related literature that illustrates how the development of critical consciousness relates to students' academic success and motivation.

Research shows that the level of critical consciousness among youth positively correlated with their educational attainment, as well as their determination for their future career and vocational outcome expectations (Diemer, 2009; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer et al., 2010, as cited in McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016). McWhirter and McWhirter (2016) found higher critical agency and behavior in Latina/o/x youths were associated with a stronger intention to seek higher education even after adjusting for the high school grade influence. In addition, Cabrera et al. (2014) found the Mexican American Studies Program in Tucson, Arizona improved student achievement, especially for those who come from low-income Latina/o/x families who were on the trajectory of less success under the previous standard curriculum. The program offered a culturally relevant curriculum and promoted critical thinking, social justice awareness, and activism. The students who participated had higher graduation rates, higher state standardized test scores, and higher college enrollment rates when compared to the students from similar demographic backgrounds who did not participate.

Carrillo's (2016) new intelligence framework called Mestiz@ Theory of Intelligences (MTI) can help explain the seemingly incompatible correlation between critical consciousness and students' academic outcomes in traditional education systems. According to Carrillo (2016), "navigating/contesting oppression; centering subaltern knowledge; centering critical, hybrid identities; straddling multiple forms of cultural capital; decolonization; struggling for psychic, cultural, emotional, and spiritual wholeness; and remaining committed to social justice" (p. 95) can be considered forms of intelligences one can leverage for their academic success and persistence. MTI builds on Mestiza consciousness theory (Anzaldúa, 1987). It supplements what is lacking in

Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences theory and other intelligence measurements (e.g., IQs) that center and benefit the white middle class. MTI can explain how critical consciousness can lead to new types of intelligences for academic success.

On the one hand, I attempted to redefine intelligence and valuable knowledge through critical pedagogy. For example, I planned activities to examine how students' home culture and multilingual skills can be valued and leveraged in learning. On the other hand, I recognized that increasing critical consciousness and leveraging one's resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) support students' academic success in a traditional sense within the current system.

From Social/Cultural Capital to Community Cultural Wealth

In Chapter 1, I presented postsecondary education as one of the trusted ways a person can achieve socio-economic mobility and financial and professional equity. However, as the existing employment opportunity gap between the native-born and immigrant populations shows, education institutions have room for improvement in order to become truly transformative for all students.

Bourdieu's (1986) social and cultural capital theory is critical in understanding how educational institutions are, inadvertently or covertly, perpetuating social inequalities. However, T. J. Yosso (personal communication, March 25, 2022) warned that through the deficit lens, Bourdieu's (1986) social-cultural capital theory has been (mis)used as a "how-to" guide where the responsibilities were placed on communities of color to adopt the dominant social and cultural norms to achieve socioeconomic mobility. Yosso (personal communication, March 25, 2022) further argued that the deficit model,

where communities of color are blamed for not assimilating into the white middle-class culture, maintains a distorted view of communities of color including immigrants. Yosso (2005) instead proposed a different set of capital that communities of color possess and demonstrate. Yosso called the group of capital “community cultural wealth,” which consists of six forms: (a) aspirational; (b) linguistic; (c) familial; (d) social; (e) navigational; and (f) resistance. Through my CPAR innovation, I sought to explore forms of capital that immigrant-origin adult learners possess yet are unrecognized and unappreciated by institutions.

Bourdieu’s Social and Cultural Capital and The Current System

According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248). In other words, social capital is about who one knows and how membership in certain groups can benefit individuals. For example, one may inherit or cultivate relationships by being born into a particular family or social class. This is a mechanism used by the dominant group to maintain their power and social status (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, compared to first-generation college graduates, continuing-generation students are more likely to utilize their parents’ and relatives’ connections to find a job (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2020).

Another form of capital Bourdieu (1986) proposed is cultural capital. This includes cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities inherited or acquired through formal schooling or “labor.” Cultural capital manifests in three ways: embodied, objectified, and

institutionalized. Embodied cultural capital includes how individuals behave or present themselves. For example, linguistic capital or the mastery of dominant discourse or syntax can be understood as a form of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990, as cited in Kim & Diaz, 2013). Freire (1970/2014) agrees that language is never neutral and “[o]ften educators . . . speak and [are] not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address” (p. 96). Objectified cultural capital is what you own and is closely related to economic capital. For example, possession of a luxurious car may be a symbol of power. Cultural goods, which hold historical, literary, artistic, or scientific importance to a culture, can also be understood as objectified capital. Again, the dominant culture often determines which objects or cultural goods have value. Finally, institutionalized cultural capital includes academic credentials or qualifications. Bourdieu (1986) argued that formal education contributes to transmitting cultural values and reproducing social class privilege across generations.

Other critical theorists also denounced hegemony and the education system’s role in the reproduction of oppressive social structures (Darder et al., 2017). “African American academic literature . . . has refuted the dominant narrative . . . which claimed education as a major vehicle for social advancement of disempowered peoples” (Noffke, 2009, p. 6). “Schools have . . . been instruments through which social forces were perpetuated” (Bond, 1935 cited in Noffke, 2009, p. 6). Higher education institutions are also complicit in reproducing inequalities through their “hegemony, patriarchy, classism, and White normativity” (Razack, 1998, as cited in Grain, 2022, p. 46). Saltman (2014) further criticized how the recent hyper-focus on the standardization of curriculum and high-stakes testing led by neoliberalism reinforced the educational reproduction of

racialized class hierarchy. Moreover, austerity education centering on grit and self-regulation as a means for success continues to train the working class to become obedient and efficient workers and does not cultivate dialogue, exploration, and critical thinking valued for leadership (Saltman, 2014).

In order to create an optimal environment for immigrant-origin adult learners, we need a new model, system, and practices. Educational research shows that White middle-class values dominate school culture (Horvat, 2001; Lareau, 2001; McDonough, 1997, as cited in Kim & Diaz, 2013) and higher education (Bannerji, 2000; hooks, 2003; Razack, 1998, as cited in Grain, 2022). Bourdieu (1977) criticized that educational institutions reward students who already possess the accepted cultural capital (e.g., students who know how to behave, dress, talk, and engage with authority with the right vocabulary and attitude) and reproduce inequity. However, in his theory, individuals are not viewed as empowered agents who can initiate change but are viewed as mere participants in social reproduction and inequality (Tierney, 1999, as cited in Kim & Diaz, 2013). Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model provides a new direction.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth

Yosso (2005) presents a different notion of cultural capital than Bourdieu's and conceptualizes community cultural wealth through an asset-based perspective. Yosso's community cultural wealth includes cultural capital that communities of color utilize to navigate the higher education system (see Figure 4). In my study, I used this framework to pose questions on how postsecondary education institutions can recognize and leverage immigrant-origin adult students' community cultural wealth to better support

them. To ensure equitable education with high rigor, it is crucial to understand students' cultures, circumstances, and environments (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Freire, 1970/2014; hooks, 1989; Oakes et al., 1997).

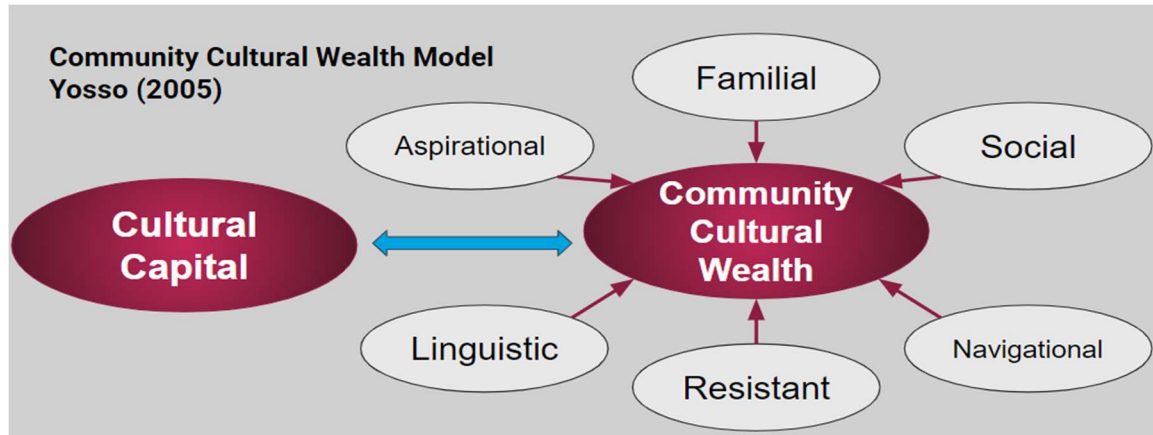
Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model encompasses six forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. Aspirational capital is the capacity to keep hopes and dreams alive for the future, even under adverse circumstances. Navigational capital includes skills to negotiate social and educational institutions even when those spaces were not designed with their needs in mind. Social capital refers to social networks and community resources that provide emotional and instrumental support for students of color. Linguistic capital encompasses cognitive and communication skills cultivated through social interactions in multiple languages and ethnolinguistic traditions. Familial capital is understood as a connection and commitment to community and cultural knowledges fostered among extended family (Auerbach, 2001, 2004; Elenes et al., 2001; Reese, 1992), which supports students' "emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness" (Lopez, 2003, as cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Finally, resistant capital refers to knowledges, skills, and behaviors used to fight against inequities and racism. Yosso (2005) references Japanese Americans in forced incarceration during World War II as an example of this form of capital, defining how it stands on the legacy of resistance by various communities of color.

Through the CPAR innovation, I intended to provide a counterspace for immigrant-origin adult learners to explore their community cultural wealth, first by empowering co-researchers to recognize their own cultural capital, and then in assessing and proposing improvements to SBCC's efforts to value and honor the cultural wealth of

their community. My intention was also for the counterspace to serve as an added resource for the co-researchers social and navigational capital, as well as act as a place where they can gain and exercise their resistant capital.

Figure 4

Community Cultural Wealth Components



Note. This chart visualizes the six components of Yosso’s community cultural wealth model and how Yosso’s model extends Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of Cultural Capital.

Power of Community Cultural Wealth: Related Studies

Through their study of migrant students, Alvarez et al. (2021) explored how community cultural wealth can be developed and leveraged. In the Cosecha Voices program, developed by Tato Laviera, Stephanie Alvarez, and José Martínez, migrant worker students earned college credits through creating *testimonios* in Spanish (their home language). Migrant students would write self-reflections on their lived experiences, conduct oral history interviews with elders in their family or community, and engage in digital storytelling. Such practices honors students’ linguistic and familial capital not only through the use of the home language but also through valuing their oral or visual

traditions and the knowledge passed on by families. In his *testimonio*, one of the migrant worker students, Roberto Reyna, reflected that he underwent conscientization through his experience with Cosecha Voices. He described his growing sense of empowerment and the Cosecha community supported his academic achievement. He believes the Cosecha community helped him and many others navigate through their undergraduate programs (Alvarez et al., 2021). The impacts of the program lasted beyond college. Reyna went on to earn his master's degree in Mexican American Studies and continues to be involved in advocacy work for migrant students. When students' voices are centered and reclaimed through a praxis-based pedagogical practice, students' social, navigational, and resistant capital is nurtured.

Other studies found that college services and programs such as dual enrollment programs, summer bridge programs, career services, and other identity-based programs can help develop students' social, navigational, and resistant capital by connecting students to mentors and role models as well as to useful information and resources (Bañuelos, 2021).

In terms of familial capital, a study with working-class adult students in England found that attending a college close to their families supported adult students emotionally as well as in tangible ways. Family members provided encouragement and a source of pride for working-class adult students. They also helped with childcare, housework, and even proofreading papers (Hope & Quinlan, 2021).

There are a few contributing factors found in the literature related to learners' aspirational capital. The aforementioned Cosecha Voices alum, Roberto Reyna, maintained that attainment of higher education was instilled in him from a young age by

his parents, who were not able to achieve it themselves due to their circumstances (Alvarez et al., 2021). As a child and adolescent, Reyna labored hard, imagining the academic education as a way out of backbreaking work (Alvarez et al., 2021).

The desire to repay one's family and understand their sacrifices can motivate immigrant-origin students as well (Bañuelos, 2021). Liou et al. (2016) found parents' and family members' high expectations as the primary source of aspirations for students of color. Students also desired high expectations and aspirational support from their teachers. One Asian American participant in a study expressed, "Teachers often like to help those who are already doing well in school . . . I have goals in life too, and I only wished my teachers can see that" (Liou et al., 2016, p. 118). It is critical for educators to recognize such aspirational capital and maintain high expectations for all students.

Studies have shown that the development of resistant capital influences students' career choices. Through their commitment to social justice, students tend to choose occupations that have direct impacts on the community they are from and belong to. Such careers in teaching, social work, medicine, and engineering can help the students/graduates pay it forward to support the next generation (Bañuelos, 2021).

Adult Students and Adult Learning Theory

Another important theory that guided my research was adult learning theory. In his meta-analysis, Chen (2017) described adult learners as a population in higher education whose strengths and needs are often ignored in colleges' decision-making. As a practitioner-researcher in adult education, I find that a much smaller number of studies on adult learners or the adult education context are available when compared to the number

of studies centered on K12 or on traditional-aged students in higher education. According to Donaldson and Townsend's (2007) literature review, only 1.3% of articles, or 41 out of 3,219, were about adult undergraduate students. Through my research and CPAR innovation, adult-specific concerns and values were at the forefront and as such, I designed my innovation using andragogical perspectives.

Adult learners often have distinct learning needs and expectations compared to school-age children or traditional college-age students. In Knowles' (1984) adult learning theory, adults are characterized as self-directed, as problem-oriented rather than content-oriented and as more intrinsically motivated than younger learners. Adults have prior learning experience as well as funds of knowledge that can be activated as resources for learning. Moll et al. (1992) defined funds of knowledge as bodies of knowledge and skills that are vital for household or individual functioning and well-being, collected and established historically and culturally. In addition, adults benefit from autonomy in the planning and evaluation of their learning. The most effective motivators for learning include elevated self-esteem, job satisfaction, or improved quality of life (Knowles, 1984). Self-confidence and self-efficacy are also found to be closely related to adult learners' success (Carpentieri, 2014). However, adult learners' intrinsic motivation can be hindered by barriers such as negative self-concept, inaccessible opportunities and resources, and time constraints (Knowles, 1984).

SBCC often focuses on "traditional students" when it comes to promotional materials, outreach efforts, and the development of services and instructional programs. My goal through the CPAR innovation was to envision changes so that the local

community college will be immigrant-origin adult learner-ready through understanding the lived experiences of those adult learners.

Adult Learners: Related Studies

A review of literature on adult learners reveals their unique motivations and strengths as well as the multifaceted barriers they face. Many of the motivational factors and their funds of knowledge can be recognized and leveraged as part of their community cultural wealth. In this section, I reiterate the complex barriers adult immigrants face in higher educational settings, connect research findings on adult learners to the concepts of community cultural wealth, and share some best practices found in the literature. The evidence from the literature below guided the approach and content of my innovation and overall study.

Barriers

Studies on adult learners confirmed multiple interconnected elements affect educational access and success. Knowles (1984) associates the lack of self-confidence, resources, opportunities, and time with low participation and goal achievement of adult learners. Feelings of inadequacy, inhibition, stress, anxiety, and fear of failure, judgment, or being “too old” to learn are common dispositional barriers that can limit students’ mental bandwidths and cognitive abilities (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Patterson & Paulson, 2016). Studies on adult learners found environmental factors, such as war (colonial or civil), political unrest, or immigration, as well as social and family situations, including emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, are some causes of trauma (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Housel, 2020; Patterson & Paulson, 2016). Adult learners face many situational barriers,

including work schedules, lack of employer support, the cost of attending college, and gender roles (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Housel, 2020; Patterson & Paulson, 2016). Also, Bernstein and Vilter (2018) found high housing costs, lack of transportation, and childcare as the three biggest obstacles for immigrant workers. At the institutional level, Chen (2017) described youth-centric college culture and traditional credit hour requirements as some of the major barriers for busy adults. According to the literature, there are many barriers that exist on a systemic level, including ageism, racism, nativism, xenophobia, social marginalization, exclusion, poverty, and cultural constructs or socioeconomic pressures that influence adults to prioritize short-term income over education (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016, as cited in Snyman et al., 2018; Flynn et al., 2011; Kim, 2014; Kim & Diaz, 2013; Mwangi et al., 2021; Suárez-Orozco & Osei-Twumasi, 2019; Yosso et al., 2009). Patterson and Paulson (2016) indicated that immigrant-origin learners in postsecondary education face cultural stereotypes, immigration problems, and language barriers. As well, disrupted or negative past learning experiences as a child have been found to be common obstacles among marginalized adults (Flynn et al., 2011; Housel, 2020; Patterson & Paulson, 2016).

Motivational Factors and Aspirational Capital

Multiple studies revealed adult learners' unique motivational factors, learning needs, and strengths (Chen, 2017; Falasca et al., 2011; Flynn et al., 2011; Housel, 2020; Kim & Baker, 2015; Kimmel et al., 2016; Osam et al., 2017; Patterson et al., 2016; Rabourn et al., 2018; Snyman et al., 2018). Adult learners' perseverance can be driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Kimmel et al., 2016; Osam et al., 2017; Snyman

et al., 2018). Multiple research studies (Kim & Baker, 2015; Kimmel et al., 2016; Osam et al., 2017; Snyman et al., 2018) indicated the desire to improve career prospects and financial standing was an important source of adults' motivation. Pay increases, promotions, and gaining respect from others were also important (Kimmel et al., 2016). Furthermore, being a good example to their children can be one of the strongest motivators for marginalized adults (Flynn et al., 2011; Hope & Quinlan, 2021). Appealing to immigrant-origin adult students' aspirational capital and connecting their motivations to learning content support students' academic mindset. Contextualizing learning and focusing on problem-solving connects classroom lessons to real-life application, an important motivational factor for adults. Self-directed learning (Knowles, 1984) cultivates student voice and agency (Hammonds, 2015). Student agency can lead to fostering students' critical consciousness and resistant capital.

Prior Knowledge and Community Cultural Wealth

Knowles (1984) argued that adults bring rich prior experience and schema for learning. Snyman et al. (2018) indicated that adult learners' prior knowledge can be accumulated from diverse contexts, including family circumstances, work, and community involvement, and should be leveraged in learning. For example, Alvarez et al. (2021) asserted that students gained a strong work ethic, and "life-long lessons in respect, responsibility, dignity, justice, family ties, and integrity, among so many others" (p. 327) through their experience as migrant farmworkers. When a variety of experiences and intelligences are acknowledged, students' community cultural wealth is honored. Related to Yosso's (2005) concepts of linguistic, navigational, and resistant capital, abilities that adults bring into formal learning environments include a wide range of practical

employment and life skills such as communication strategies, understanding diversity, leadership, teamwork, adapting to changes, and problem-solving in high-stress environments (Snyman et al., 2018). More specifically, appealing to learners' multiple intelligences and implementing culturally responsive teaching were beneficial in adult skills development (Housel, 2020). Such practices appeal to learners' linguistic capital as students have opportunities to demonstrate their learning through multiple media and communication modalities of varied ethnolinguistic traditions. This literature helped me design the CPAR innovation in a way that valued adults' prior experience and their linguistic and familial capital.

Evidence in studies on adult learners indicates that leveraging students' navigational and social capital (Yosso, 2005) is also effective. At the institutional level, recognition of prior learning facilitates adult learners' access and success in higher education (Chen, 2017; Snyman et al., 2018). Chen (2017) suggested that relevant services, such as adult-focused support communities, evening hours, and career counseling for a second career or higher-level positions, can support adults better than traditional approaches. These targeted support services, academic programming, and affinity groups can help immigrant-origin adult learners navigate the college system and build their social/professional networks.

The review of literature on adult learners supported the development of my overall study design. Through the CPAR innovation I knew I needed to examine the complexity of the barrier structure and its effects on individuals. This literature also guided some of the logistical decisions for the CPAR innovation. For example, to accommodate busy adults' schedules, all of our meetings took place online, and I ensured

easy access to materials for asynchronous work. Recognizing adult learners' unique motivation, strengths, and cultural capital supported my decision to lean on immigrant-origin adult learners' expertise and engage in collaborative project-based research. In a practical sense, it also helped me plan the innovation activities so that co-researchers had choices in content as well as modalities in which they express themselves.

Findings from Previous Cycles

Through three previous cycles of action research, I found that the ideas from the literature about adult learner characteristics, strengths, and barriers are present in my local context. In addition, I identified a few barriers unique to SBCC. The goal of my first cycle of research was to explore the barriers immigrant-origin adult students faced on campus. Building off of what I had learned in the first cycle, in my second cycle of research, I aimed to explore more about the barriers students faced and how they overcame them. For the third cycle, I conducted a content analysis of the local community college's official Instagram messages to analyze messages transmitted to the student population and the community at large.

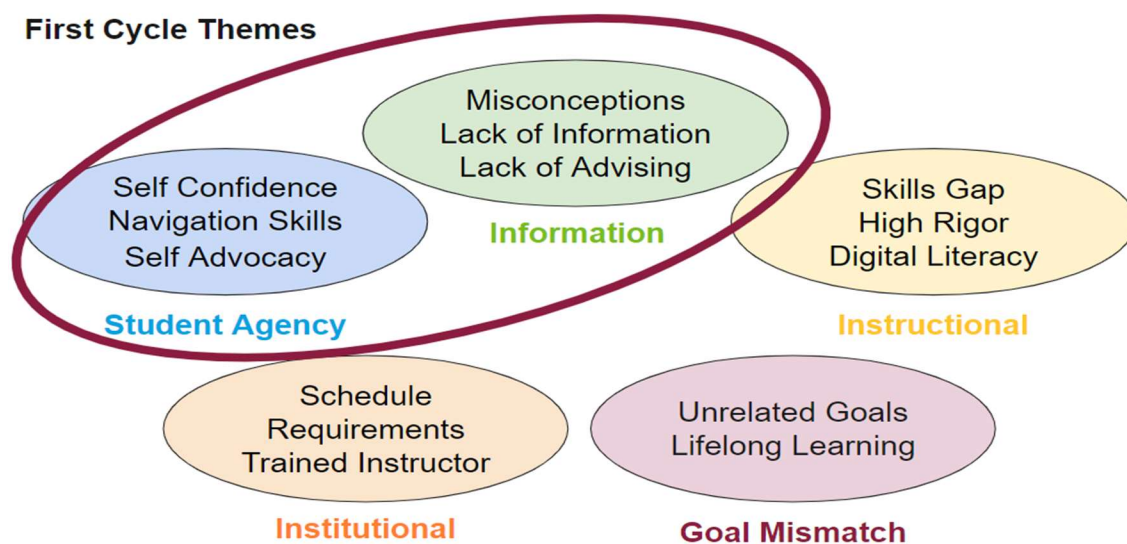
First Cycle: Barriers

In the first cycle, I conducted four interviews, between February and March of 2021, on the barriers and supports on the SBCC campus. I interviewed two faculty members and two students: one faculty member from each of the noncredit ESL and Adult Secondary programs and two immigrant-origin adult students: one current noncredit ESL student from Brazil in his 40s, and another student from Mexico in her late 20s, who completed the noncredit ESL and bilingual GED programs and was attending

the credit nursing program then. Through those interviews, learner agency, perceived skills gaps, and lack of information on existing services emerged as some of the barriers the immigrant-origin adult students face at the college. See Figure 5 for a visual representation of the themes that emerged. One of the unique obstacles that the students at the college faced was a lack of usable information due to the large volume of service and pathway information available through different departments. The culture of working in silos has also been established at various levels and areas of the college, and this presents as one of the obstacles.

Figure 5

Themes Emerged Through the First Cycle



Note. Interview responses were coded and analyzed. The barriers and reasons why noncredit students do not pursue postsecondary, or credit programs were organized into five themes or categories: Student Agency, Information, Instructional, Institutional, and Goal Mismatch. Based on these results, my focus for the second cycle became Student Agency and Information.

Second Cycle: Inquiry-Based Pathway and Support Exploration

Through the interviews conducted in the first cycle of my action research, I found a multitude of barriers that immigrant-origin adult students face. I identified “student agency” and “information” as part of my circle of influence and thus the focus of the second cycle, as shown in Figure 5. My second cycle of research took place from August through December of 2021. In this cycle, I continued exploring the barriers students faced but also focused on what Heath and Heath (2010) call the “bright spot” or positive deviant behaviors (Marsh et al., 2004). We often fixate on the problems when change is necessary, but that can lead to “analysis paralysis” (Heath & Heath, 2010). Based on positive deviance theory (Marsh et al., 2004), I investigated institutional best practices as well as the strategies used by some of the adult students. In the positive deviance approach, one seeks solutions to complex and seemingly insurmountable problems by learning from the individuals or groups within the community who have solved the problem through unique practices.

To find implementable and asset-based solutions within the adult learner community, I interviewed three students who successfully transitioned from noncredit to credit postsecondary programs. Through the interviews, I discovered that successful learners all utilized available college services and found a subject or a major they were passionate about. Next, I used what I learned from the interviews to design a short innovation consisting of two, 2-hour sessions of inquiry-based pathway and support service exploration. I implemented the innovation in two of the noncredit ESL classes, which resulted in a convenient sample of 28 immigrant-origin adult learners participating in the innovation and completing a survey about their experience. After the innovation, I

conducted interviews with two of the innovation participants. Through my analysis of the interview transcripts, my observation notes from the short innovation, and the survey data, the following key themes emerged:

- Some of the interrelated barriers and concerns for adult learners include the lack of information, balancing multiple responsibilities, cost of attendance, and issues of confidence.
- The key motivators for adult learners include their desire to provide better opportunities for their families, to have a fulfilling and higher-paying job, and to utilize their past experience.
- The useful institutional services include flexible or tuition-free enrollment options, financial aid, paid work-study opportunities on campus, career counseling, tutoring, and other academic support services.

Third Cycle: Content Analysis of Instagram Messages

For my third cycle of research, I examined SBCC's social media messages. I analyzed 80 Instagram posts including the images that accompanied the messages that the SBCC official account posted between August 1, 2021, and March 12, 2022. The purpose of the content analysis was to investigate whether the college's outreach messaging through a social media platform aligned with its strategic plans around diversity, equity, and inclusion. I selected SBCC's Instagram account as the source for this analysis based on its popularity (13,000 followers) and ease of access.

I developed a total of twenty-five codes through line-by-line coding and sorted the codes into four categories: (a) Policy Dissemination; (b) Enrollment Promotion; (c)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging; and (d) Event and Brand Promotion. More informational and promotional messages were found than messages cultivating belonging. Notable findings include:

- The most common topic (over 20 messages out of 80) was COVID-related policies and procedures. For those messages, the purpose appeared to be disseminating the evolving policy and procedural information widely and quickly.
- Campus photos as well as flyers and promotional slogans were used to promote enrollment. This aligns with the college’s strategic direction to “achieve enrollment efficiencies to better serve our community” (Santa Barbara City College, 2019, Strategic Directions and Goals 3). SBCC appears to be proud of its campus by the beach with lush vegetation and is aware that the breathtaking ocean and mountain views from its campus attract people. This was evident through the number of likes these posts received. The post that received the highest number of likes between August 2021 and March 2022 (1,516 likes when the average is about 150) was the one featuring the campus with a rainbow.
- While the college states serving the Native American population better as one of its goals (Santa Barbara City College, 2019, Strategic Directions and Goals 5.4), there was no land acknowledgment statement (Native Governance Center, 2019) found when SBCC utilized photos of the beautiful campus to promote the college which stands on the unceded ancestral lands of the coastal band of the Chumash Peoples.
- There were a few messages about supporting and promoting diversity. Such messages included the promotion of the Undocumented Students’ Week events,

celebrating Black History and Women's History Months. Support for diversity also was expressed through photo representation of black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in the posts. This reflects the college's efforts to increase diversity in publications. However, most of the photos are of traditional college-age students. There were only 2 posts out of 80 that featured adult students.

- While SBCC has been designated as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI), there were only 4 out of 80 messages that had any Spanish language. All of the 4 bilingual or Spanish messages were about disseminating COVID-related policies.
- There is room for improvement for SBCC to utilize Instagram and other social media outlets to reach the community members who are listed as its focus in the strategic directions document. The strategic directions include, “[c]onduct[ing] outreach for meaningful input from marginalized communities, including non-English speaking, undocumented, Native Americans, African Americans, Blacks, Latinx/Hispanics, students with disabilities, among others” (Santa Barbara City College, 2019, Strategic Directions and Goals 5.4). SBCC also aims to “[e]nhance bilingual communications and enhance bilingual access to reach a wider breadth of our community. (Santa Barbara City College, 2019, Strategic Directions and Goals 5.5).

Findings From Earlier Cycles That Guided This Study

Both qualitative and quantitative data from the first two cycles show that adult learners, especially immigrant-origin learners are interested in pursuing career-related educational goals. The data also showed that there is room for improvement in SBCC's

career and academic counseling practices. Immigrant-origin adult learners often have work experience and prior learning through on-the-job training or formal learning from foreign institutions. For many adult learners, their goals are connected to leveraging their prior experience. Relevance and application of the curriculum to their lives is critical for adult learners' motivation. The three successful students I interviewed (P1-P3) all have found something they love to study. In P1's case, finding sociology, a subject that he could relate to, fueled his motivation. He wished to utilize his unique experience as a justice-impacted individual to work in the field of criminal justice or social work. P3 reflected on her work experience in her native country and decided to get into the related field of computer science. The post-innovation interviewees (P4 & P5) expressed their desire to study business administration or marketing, in which they have experience. Like the above participants, many of the immigrant-origin adult students who participated in my short innovation were interested in fields of study related to their current or past experiences. These findings led me to further explore how to leverage adult learners' past experiences and community cultural wealth in my CPAR innovation.

Immigrant-origin adult learners I interviewed were concerned about balancing their adult responsibilities and the financial impact of enrolling in credit courses. Some of the services successful students utilized include:

- Flexible enrollment options with reduced or free tuition, and
- Paid internships and on-campus work-study opportunities.

Through the analysis of social media messages, immigrant-origin adult learners were not well-represented. Only 4 out of 80 messages were translated into another language, Spanish, and those messages were about the college policies and regulations. In

addition, there were only 2 out of 80 social media messages featuring adult learners. The college's outreach and public-facing communications can be improved to be more inclusive. Overall campus climate including meaningful BIPOC representation and respectful treatment became an area I wanted to further investigate through my CPAR innovation.

Long Story Short: How All Theories Connect

Adult immigrants bring rich and diverse life experiences, cultural and linguistic knowledge as well as critical intelligences to their educational experiences. For SBCC to truly be ready to support all learners, the traditional college culture that centers and privileges the White middle-class and youth will need to shift. Based on the understanding that adult learners have distinct motivations and strengths (adult learning theory), and how educational institutions can be complicit in the reproduction of inequities (social and cultural theory), I aimed to provide a counterspace where immigrant-origin adult students' experiences were centered and reclaimed. I utilized Freire's (1970/2014) critical pedagogy and praxis as the process the CPAR team would use to examine structural barriers and work towards conscientization and empowerment. I used Kumashiro's (2015) anti-oppressive questions to guide conversations across the CPAR innovation. Some of the CPAR innovation activities included exploring community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) through a strength-based lens. Using these theories and related literature, I designed the CPAR innovation with the goals of affecting co-researchers' critical consciousness and agency and setting in motion improvement actions at the college.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Reality is created out of confusion and contradiction, and if you exclude those elements, you're no longer talking about reality.

— Haruki Murakami

From the outset, her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization.

— Paulo Freire

I open Chapter 3 with a description of my ontological and epistemological positions as they are the foundations for my research decisions. Next, I describe my research design, innovation plan, and the methods I used for data collection and analysis. I close the chapter with how I addressed considerations for research credibility, trustworthiness, and validity.

Theoretical Alignment

As a researcher, I subscribe to an ontological and epistemological school of thought that recognizes the complexities of sociocultural and political issues. I believe there is more to human experiences than what can be mined, collected, framed in neat categories, and interpreted fully into preexisting meanings (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). I acknowledge our knowledge will always be partial and cannot be all-encompassing. What we can strive for is to be aware of particular lenses through which we interpret phenomena, to apply different lenses, and to examine the implications of each lens for a better understanding of the bigger picture (Kumashiro, 2015). It is essential to pay attention to the voices or viewpoints of the marginalized to explore varied perspectives.

As explained in Chapter 2, Freire's (1970/2014) critical pedagogy and other critical perspectives laid a foundation for this study. I sought "mutual humanization through understanding" (Paris, 2011, p. 137). I aimed to foster relationships of dignity and respect and pursued inquiries based on dialogue, conscientization, and praxis. In addition, I believe reality is socially constructed and interpretations are applied in context (Piaget, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, meaningful and applicable knowledge does not exist independently in a vacuum. My research questions, methods, and innovation reflected the constructivist idea that knowledge is built collaboratively, in a social setting, while individuals interact with each other, their environments, and their thoughts (Hershberg, 2014).

These ontological and epistemological beliefs formed the foundation of this study. The selection of lenses was informed by my experiences as an educator serving adult immigrants and other historically marginalized populations in the U.S. and as an insider-outsider researcher who shares immigrant, adult English Language Learner (ELL), first-generation college graduate, and working-parent-student identities with other immigrant-origin adult students. In this study, I took collaborative and empowering approaches through embedding Critical Participatory Action Research into my research as innovation (Fine & Torre, 2022; Pant, 2014). I embarked on this journey to new knowledge with an open mind, open heart, vulnerability, and courage to face uncertainty. I also brought passion and critical hope for new relationships, understanding, humanization, and possibilities.

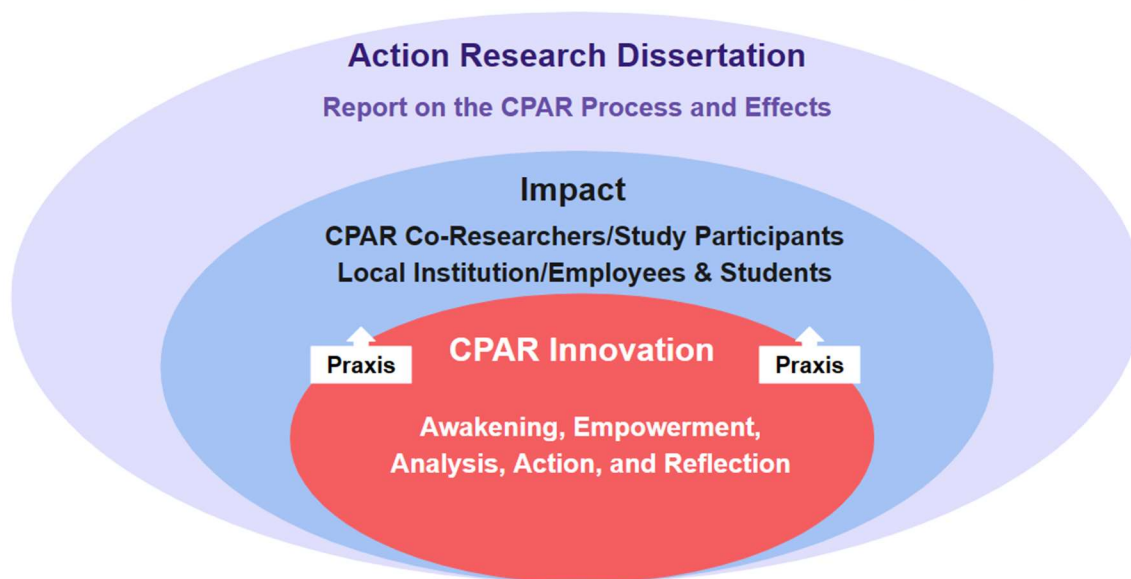
Research Design

Informed by the literature, theories, and previous cycles of action research, as outlined in Chapter 2, here I describe my research design and innovation plan. My innovation in this study was to conduct a cycle of CPAR with a group of immigrant-origin adult learners. Nesting CPAR within my overall action research study allowed me to incorporate a collaborative, humanizing, and empowered praxis process while fulfilling the educational doctorate degree requirements set by Arizona State University. Through the CPAR innovation, I facilitated the activities and the participants acted as co-researchers. The purpose was to honor the co-researchers' lived experiences and to elevate and amplify their voices. As a culminating experience of the innovation and as a step to achieve more equitable educational and professional outcomes for immigrant-origin adult learners, the CPAR team (co-researchers and I) shared our lived experiences with the campus community. Along with the collaborative data collection, analysis, and praxis I engaged in with my co-researchers, I independently analyzed the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants/co-researchers. I report the findings through the CPAR innovation process as well as the effects of the innovation in this dissertation (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Nested CPAR Model

Nested Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR)



Note. This image illustrates how critical participatory action research is nested within the overall research model. There are three stages: (a) CPAR innovation; (b) Impact; and (c) Action research dissertation.

Action Research

The guiding tenets of action research provided the foundation for this study design. Action research refers to studies conducted by practitioner-researchers to investigate their current reality and to effect changes through a cyclical or spiral process of problem-defining, theorizing, planning, applying/acting, and analyzing/reflecting in their context (Noffke, 2009). Aligned with the values and goals of action research, the focus of this research was on a specific local context. The purpose was not to produce generalizable results; however, I intended to build on the existing literature on immigrant-origin adult learners and generate findings that can be transferred to other contexts. While not all action research is participatory, nor do all action research studies

incorporate critical perspectives, this study design was further guided by participatory action research and critical perspectives.

Nested Critical Participatory Action Research

I incorporated the principles of Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) into my action research study and embedded a cycle of CPAR as my innovation. As a reaction to positivist ideas of seeking objective truth by ignoring human subjectivity in phenomena, CPAR emerged in the social science fields in the 1940s as a way to emphasize collaborative and empowered participation of community members (Fine & Torre, 2022; Pant, 2014). CPAR's goals inherently include social change, action, and problem-solving based on knowledge and reflection.

I believe this method was quite appropriate in my context and for addressing my problem of practice. CPAR was popularized in the 1970s through Paulo Freire and others' work. Freire's style of participatory action research originated and thrived in the adult education realm, which is also my context. Following the CPAR philosophy, I recruited immigrant-origin adult learners to be active co-researchers in my innovation and engage in autoethnographic inquiries, dialogue, reflection, and collaborative action. My intent was to value the knowledge, expertise and lived experiences of the local immigrant-origin adult learners. I also aimed to adjust the asymmetrical power structures of traditional research where the researchers make all the decisions in terms of the analysis of the phenomena, innovation, and dissemination of the results.

Bricolage

In addition to nesting a CPAR innovation into this dissertation study, I used a bricolage approach in my research. Aligned with my epistemology, bricolage acknowledges the complexity of human experiences, educational environment, and social issues. It avoids reductionist methods that oversimplify and generalize human experiences (Kincheloe et al., 2018). In bricolage, researchers utilize multiple methodological and theoretical lenses, in order to deepen and broaden their analysis and understanding. The analysis process is cyclical with ongoing reflection and “feedback looping” (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Through bricolage, researchers revisit their initial inquiry and artifacts throughout the research process and along the way, may determine new lines of inquiry. Bricolage challenges the positivist paradigms and allows researchers to actively construct research methods using tools from multiple disciplines. For example, Kincheloe et al. (2018) discussed critical ethnography from the anthropological tradition as a method within bricolage and how critical consciousness can be developed and deepened through reciprocal relationships between researchers and research participants. To explore the lived experiences of immigrant-origin adult learners in an emancipating manner, I employed bricolage as one of my research methodologies.

Research Questions and Nested CPAR as Innovation

As I mentioned above, there were a few layers to this action research. Below, I delineate the process of this nested Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) and the approaches to answering my research questions. The CPAR innovation included the research team’s participation in autoethnographic inquiry, self-reflection, data analysis,

presentation of counterstories, and ideations of improvement recommendations. During the CPAR innovation, I took the role of a facilitator, but I also participated in all of the activities along with the co-researchers. I then analyzed the actions and artifacts generated through the CPAR innovation and the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants' critical consciousness. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of immigrant-origin adult learners centered around their education?
2. When immigrant-origin adult learners are engaged in a CPAR process, what ideas, artifacts, and actions are generated?

As part of the overall action research and my dissertation process, I also collected and analyzed data to answer the following research question.

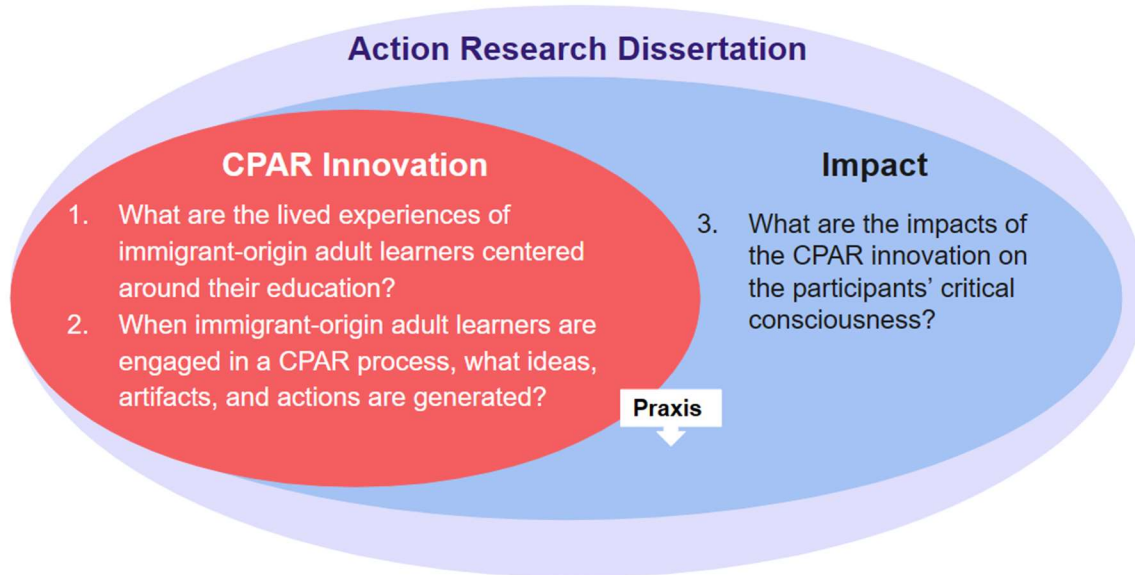
3. What are the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants' critical consciousness?

See Figure 7 for how each research question correlates with the research stages.

Figure 7

Research Questions and Nested CPAR Stages

Research Questions and Stages



Note. This diagram describes the stages when data for each research question are collected: the CPAR innovation stage and the Impact stage.

Setting

This study was situated in the community surrounding Santa Barbara City College (SBCC). The study was grounded in the lived experiences of immigrant-origin adult learners who were, at the time of participation in the study, attending or had attended SBCC's noncredit adult education programs or credit programs. Research activities were mostly conducted online, both asynchronously and synchronously. There were a few research activities conducted in person on the three SBCC campuses. The study was implemented between December 2022 and May 2023.

Participants/Co-Researchers

In line with the nested approach of this study design, the participants in the CPAR innovation were simultaneously participants and co-researchers. While the term

“participant” is typical in dissertations, I choose to include the term “co-researcher” when referring to the CPAR innovation process. 10 immigrant-origin adult learners responded to my purposive sampling recruitment method. With purposive sampling, participants are selected because of certain characteristics. I intentionally sought participation from impacted individuals, in this case, first- and second-generation immigrant students who had attended SBCC’s noncredit or credit-bearing programs. While Fine and Torre (2022) encourage broad participation in CPAR in general, they also note that there are many instances where purposive sampling is warranted. I contacted a few students I knew and who participated in earlier cycles of this action research study. I also recruited participants by making an announcement in two of the adult ESL classrooms. Finally, I asked ESL instructors and the interim director of the noncredit programs to forward my recruitment email to their students (see Appendices A, B, and C). In the end, six immigrant-origin adult learners consented to participate in the CPAR process. See Table 1 for participant demographics.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants/Co-researchers (n=6).

Characteristic	n
Gender	
Female	5
Male	1
Non-binary/Other	0

Age Group	
25 to 34	2
35 to 44	1
45 to 54	1
55 and over	1
Ethnicity (short answer, self-definition)	
Asian	2
Hispanic	1
Hispanic, Latina, Mexican	1
Latino	1
Mexican American	1
Generations in the U.S.	
First-generation immigrant	4
Second-generation immigrant	2
Years in the U.S. (first-generation only)	
4	1
10	1
18	1
32	1
Enrollment Status (Multiple Answers)	
Former credit student	1
Former noncredit student	3
Noncredit student	4
Part-time credit student	1
Employment Status	
Full-time	5
Part-time	1
Educational Goals (Multiple Answers)	
Associate degree	2
Job-related training	3
Self-improvement /pleasure	5
Undecided	1
Other	1

Note. This table shows the demographic characteristics of the CPAR participants/co-

researchers. These data were collected at the beginning of the innovation between December 2022 and February 2023. The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions and short-answer options for ethnicity and years in the U.S.

My Role

I currently work as a consultant for an international not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance to the field of education and beyond to generate and utilize rigorous evidence that contributes to a better, more equitable world. My current responsibilities include translating research into training materials so evidence-based practices can reach practitioners in adult education and workforce development areas nationwide. The goal of my position is to affect student learning through changes in educator behavior via effective professional development. Promoting adult learners' successful transitions to postsecondary education and the workforce is part of my current job duties.

Prior to joining this research organization in 2022, I worked as the director of noncredit programs at SBCC. Some of the participants/co-researchers knew me through my previous work. I facilitated, observed, and participated in the CPAR innovation process. I aimed to foster co-construction of knowledge and amplify students' voices through my position and research. The CPAR team analyzed each other's artifacts and worked together to propose plans for praxis. The team collectively and individually decided what elements of our educational journeys to share with a larger college community in the form of an on-campus exhibit. As the CPAR innovation came to an end, I analyzed the innovation process and participants' experiences within the CPAR innovation to report the findings in this dissertation.

To alleviate potential issues around the power dynamics during the CPAR innovation, I followed the humanizing research practices (Paris, 2011). Pant (2014) warns that a true “partnership is not easily forged, especially with people who have been victims of a dominating structure. Entrenched submissive attitudes and negative self-images reinforce subordination” (p. 586). Paris (2011) suggests that in humanizing research practices, researchers may share their own experiences and shared identities to cultivate mutually respectful and caring relationships. During the CPAR innovation, I shared my life openly including some very difficult events in my life. I discussed my identities as an immigrant, adult English Language Learner, working parent, and first-generation college graduate. As an adult immigrant, I share some of the struggles many of the immigrant-origin adult learners face, and I feel part of the community.

I also recognize I am an outsider in the sense I was part of the college system, and I taught ESL at the college and served as the director of noncredit programs. I was self-reflective on my position of authority (both as an educator and researcher) and strived to foster collaborative and empowered participation of the members in the impacted community. I took a few measures to build trust and encourage open expression partly to enhance the trustworthiness of the research. I let the participants know that I no longer worked at the college so that the co-researchers feel comfortable sharing their criticism and critical feedback. We spent the entire first meeting (1.5 hours) getting to know each other informally and without recording to break the ice. We established our meeting norms, which included bringing our authentic whole selves, creating a brave space where all ranges of emotions are accepted, and committing to learning from each other. We revisited the norms at the beginning of each CPAR meeting. The team worked

continuously and communicated regularly throughout the entire five-month period. I believe these elements contributed to the co-researchers being comfortable opening up to each other.

CPAR Innovation

The purpose of the CPAR innovation was to increase co-researchers' critical consciousness, build their capacity for solutions, and initiate collective action to improve campus climate and services for immigrant-origin adult learners. Paulo Freire believed the participatory action research methodology “always starts with education—education is the starting point” (Glassman & Erdem, 2014). Freire (1970/2014) advocated that education should lead to agency building, liberation, and transformation of life trajectories. Fine and Torre (2022) recommend that CPAR should start with co-researchers sharing their own stories, experiences, and insights, as well as building understanding and the foundation of the nature of inquiry through reflection.

I designed the innovation as one way to explore the campus climate and institutional practices that create barriers for immigrant-origin adult learners. I planned for the co-researchers to engage in critical consciousness-building (conscientization) activities through dialogue and praxis. The CPAR innovation began with the CPAR team examining our own and each other's educational journey and community cultural wealth. In an autoethnographic manner, the CPAR team explored our educational history and aspirations through educational journey mapping. We examined personal, systemic, and situational barriers throughout the process. Then the CPAR team further explored our Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) using our chosen form of (audio/visual/written) storytelling.

I utilized the principles of critical andragogy to plan the CPAR innovation. As members of the research team, we not only self-reflected on our journeys and CCW but also helped interpret each other's work using dialogue, anti-oppressive questioning techniques, and critical conversations. In addition to the analysis of the artifacts generated during the innovation, the pre-questionnaire, the CCW conversation starter survey and the CCW story prompts helped the co-researchers examine the current practices, identify opportunity gaps in program offerings, and generate improvement ideas (see Appendices D, E, and F). Together, the CPAR team implemented an exhibit plan and disseminated our stories and findings. The co-researchers had autonomy in the modality and format for sharing their stories and expressing their opinions (see Chapter 4). Finally, we reflected on our experience through the CPAR innovation. The CPAR innovation process took place between December 2022 and May 2023 (see Figure 8 and Table 2). Figure 9 illustrates the breakdown of the tasks done synchronously and asynchronously.

Figure 8

Innovation Milestones

Innovation Milestones



Note This timeline illustrates the focus of each stage of the CPAR innovation and the major activities within each stage.

Table 2

Innovation Timeline and Procedures

Timeframe	Action	People Involved
November-December 2022	Recruitment (Appendices A-B) Initial Zoom Meeting (1.5 hours) • Get to know the Team Members • Set Norms (Appendix C) • Introduction to CPAR Individual Work (1 hour) • Pre-Questionnaire (Appendix D)	Author Participants /Co-researchers
January 2023	2 Zoom Meetings (1 hour each) • Journey Mapping: What, Why, and How • Journey Map Presentation Individual Work (3 hours) • Journey Mapping • Journey Map Initial Analysis	Author Co-researchers
February 2023	2 Zoom Meetings (1 hour each)	Author

	• Immigrant-Origin Student Stories • Your Stories Matter • What is Community Cultural Wealth (CCW)?	Co-researchers
	Individual or Small Group Work (3 hours) • CCW Survey (Conversation Starters) and Prompts (Appendices E-F) • CCW Exploration & Story Planning	
March 2023	2 Zoom Meetings (1 hour each) • Logistics of Storytelling • Storytelling and Feedback • Praxis Planning Individual or Small Group Work (3 hours) • Counterstory Development	Author Co-researchers
April-May 2023	2 Zoom Meetings (1 hour each) • Exhibit Planning and Reflection Individual or Small Group Work (3 hours) • Exhibit Preparation and Reflection *1 Zoom Debriefing Meeting (1.5 hours) (Appendix G) *Individual Work (1 hour) • Post Questionnaire	Author Co-researchers Campus Audience Author Participants /Co-researchers

* For RQ 3 (not part of analysis during the CPAR innovation)

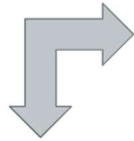
Note. This table delineates the innovation timeline with activities and individuals involved in each stage.

Figure 9

Innovation Activity Modalities

Innovation Activity Modalities (HyFlex)

Synchronous Zoom Meetings*



- Purpose setting
- Presentation/demo/examples (journey map/CCW exploration)
- Getting started on projects
- Sharing artifacts
- Analysis of artifacts (collective and assigned)
- Reflection & idea generation for action



Asynchronous Work

- Completing projects (map/CCW counterstory)
- Sharing artifacts
- Individual analysis
- Preparation for presentation



Collaborative Action

- Presentation of artifacts and findings
- Exhibit

* with participants' consent, Zoom meetings were recorded and made available asynchronously for better access and participation

Note. The CPAR innovation took a HyFlex format including synchronous and asynchronous online activities as well as in-person on-campus exhibit. This figure illustrates the breakdown of each component.

Methods

I designed this dissertation study as a form of qualitative bricolage, which is an eclectic method that utilizes appropriate instruments to answer research questions (Yardley, 2019). My decision to employ bricolage is to honor the expertise of immigrant-origin adult learners and utilize diverse and interdisciplinary ways of knowing, which I believe can provide broader perspectives and augment understanding (Timans et al., 2019). To support the credibility, and confirmability of the study (Ivankova, 2015), I reviewed and analyzed each type of data separately and then merged all the analysis results and raw data for further synthesis and “crystallization” while I reflected on my positionality. Borrowing from the post-structural approach, I use “crystallization” instead

of the more common word, “triangulation.” Richardson (2000) explains the characteristics of a crystal:

[It] combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality, and angles of approach. . . . Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions.

What we see depends upon our angle of repose. (p. 934, as cited in Tracy, 2010)

Crystallization allows researchers to utilize various methods and multiple theoretical frameworks and collect different forms of data. Crystallization resists dichotomies such as art versus science and qualitative versus quantitative (Ellingson, 2011). As well, crystallization challenges the hegemony of positivism (Ellingson, 2011). When the goal is not finding a single valid truth, crystallization provides possibilities to understand complex issues more in-depth, even though understanding will always be partial (Tracy, 2010).

Data Collection

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, I collected qualitative data and artifacts generated during the CPAR innovation as participants/co-researchers engaged in the CPAR activities. The data collection instruments included journey maps, digital counterstories, meeting recordings, praxis, participants/co-researchers’ communications (i.e., text messages, emails) and my researcher notes. The separate components were integrated through crystallization for holistic and comprehensive interpretations. During the CPAR innovation, I took a zigzag or iterative process (Ivankova, 2015), I gathered data and

conducted a preliminary analysis simultaneously to inform Praxis. The preliminary analysis influenced the decisions around the exhibit. New questions to grapple with arose through this process. To answer RQ3, I used a semi-structured group debriefing meeting as well as my researcher notes to examine the effects of the CPAR innovation on the participants/co-researchers. See Figure 10 for how different types of data were used in coordination to answer each RQ.

Journey Maps

At the beginning of the CPAR innovation, the CPAR team examined our educational journeys through a mapping exercise. As a qualitative research tool, Annamma (2017) proposes using education journey mapping to examine power relations, injustices, and inequities between individuals and social/educational systems. As Annamma illustrates, emotional topography (highs and lows), political dimensions such as capitalism and racism, and physical boundaries such as international borders, immigration history, and taking the bus to a school outside of your area, can all be expressed through mapping exercises. The CPAR team reviewed examples in Annammas (2017) work in order to create our own educational journey maps. In an autoethnographic manner, we reflected on our experiences and how past events affected our educational and life paths. We also used the maps to identify our strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and future goals.

Counterstorytelling

Part of the purpose of this CPAR innovation was to share immigrant-origin adult learners' diverse stories. As Adichie (2009) discusses the danger of a single story in her TED talk, understanding counterstories or stories told from varied perspectives is a tool

for anti-oppressive education. Kumashiro (2015) argues while “[s]ome stories keep us blinded to or complicit with oppression, other stories urge us to challenge oppression” (p. 64). My intent was to utilize counterstorytelling as a theoretical and methodological instrument for social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The second phase of CPAR innovation included an exploration of the CPAR team’s CCW. The team then generated digital counterstories individually. This expression included audio or visual stories such as videos, e-Photo stories, three-dimensional dolls as well as a poem. CPAR encourages user-friendly approaches to information dissemination, and “video, art, community theatre or quilting” (Pant, 2014, p. 586) could be used as methods of information dissemination.

Researcher Notes, Participant Communications & Meeting Recordings

During the CPAR innovation, I kept researcher notes to record reflections, ideas I grappled with, and challenges that emerged. My researcher notes also included observation notes from the CPAR team meetings. I collected participant emails and text messages for analysis. I recorded the CPAR team Zoom meetings for future analysis. At the conclusion of the CPAR innovation, the CPAR team had a debriefing session, which acted as a semi-structured group interview for the overall research (see Appendix G). Once the CPAR innovation was over, I transcribed the meetings where the CPAR team discussed our journey maps and our counterstories as well as the debriefing meeting to analyze relevant data.

Open-ended Questionnaires

At the beginning and end of the CPAR innovation, I posed some open-ended

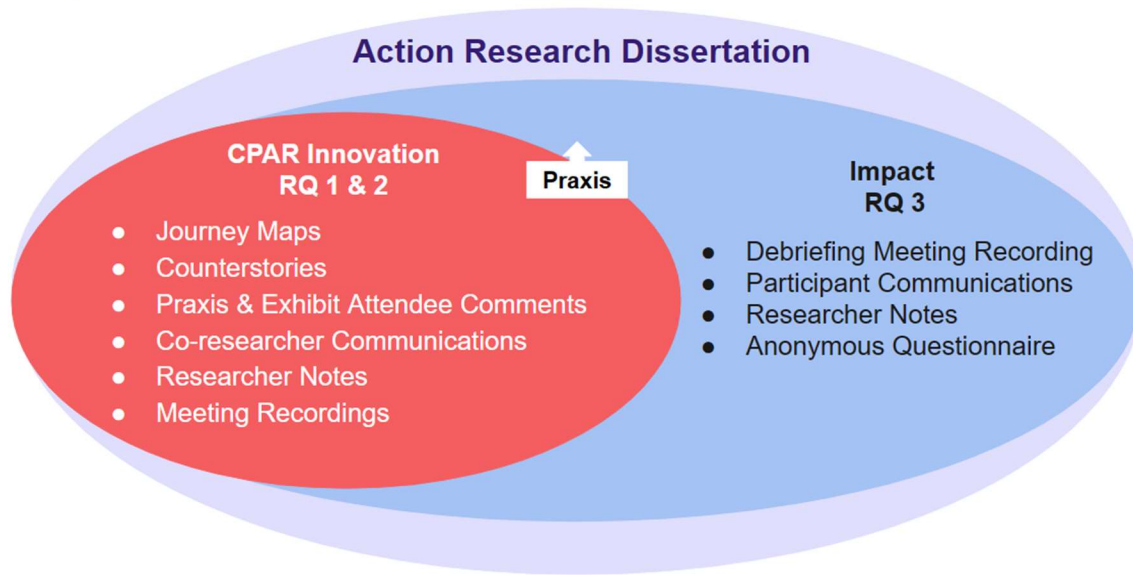
questions to the participants via an online questionnaire. Using the pre-innovation questionnaire, I collected participant demographic information and asked participants to respond to three open-ended questions: (a) Do you think adult students are made to feel welcome at the college in the credit programs? Why or why not? (b) Do you think students with immigrant backgrounds are made to feel welcome at the college in the credit programs? Why or why not? And (c) What are some ways SBCC can improve to support adult immigrant students' educational goals?

While I did not use the data as part of my analysis, the online questionnaire included items about adult learner experiences inspired by Ruffalo Noel Levitz' (2022) adult student priorities survey, as well as the critical consciousness inventory developed by Thomas et al. (2014). The questions were intended to get the participants ready to discuss the content in our CPAR innovation meetings, and the responses were collected anonymously. At the end of the CPAR innovation and debriefing meeting, I sent a post-innovation online questionnaire, with one open-ended question to capture any lingering questions or comments participants wanted to share anonymously.

Figure 10

Types of Data Collected to Answer RQs

Types of Data



Note. This diagram illustrates the data collection tools and types of data gathered at different stages of the study.

Data Analysis

During the innovation, the CPAR team generated data to answer RQ1 and RQ2. The CPAR team initially and collectively analyzed our artifacts and narratives and chose what to include in the on-campus exhibit. During and after the CPAR innovation, I analyzed varied types of artifacts and data separately, and then as a whole after the initial analysis. For RQ3, I utilized Diemer et al.'s (2006) critical consciousness criteria (capacity to reflect and act) and the four components of the sociopolitical development model (Watts & Flanagan, 2007) to deductively code my data. Then, I continued the holistic analysis process, crystalizing and synthesizing the data as I wrote up my findings.

RQ1 and RQ2: Narrative/Content Analysis

The artifacts and actions generated through the CPAR innovation included co-researchers' educational journey maps, verbal explanations of the maps (meeting recordings), digital stories on our exploration and expression of community cultural wealth, exhibit items as well as the written responses and comments from the exhibit attendees. There were narrative data and audio-visual data to analyze.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) explain how interviews are co-authored between interviewees and the interviewer in a lived situation (not merely through the written words of transcripts) and how relying too much on coding can jeopardize losing polyphonic meanings of a statement or experience in a single category. While I utilized open coding with the journey maps and meeting recordings as part of the analysis process, I employed other methods to capture polyphonic meanings. I re-listened, re-read, and reviewed all the data multiple times going back and forth to adjust the findings (themes) as I wrote “around various chunks of data and ma[de] connections” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 155) and used writing as an analysis method. I also used graphic organizers and tables to map the connections I made and to deepen and refine my understanding (Bhattacharya, 2017) of the data.

Even though I utilized coding and developed themes, I acknowledge that narratives and human experiences cannot be reduced to a set of themes. Thus, I Re-Present (Bhattacharya, 2017) the data collected through the CPAR innovation so that the data can speak for themselves in Chapters 4 through 6. By re-presenting, I mean translating raw data into meaningful categories (groupings), and themes (overarching concepts) that capture the essence of the findings to convey a coherent understanding of

the participants' accounts in order to answer RQs. The data re-presentation includes interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the data collected. I also aimed to include "presence in the precarious and sometimes ineffable human reality" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 247) as well as visual presentations.

RQ3: Debriefing Meeting, Questionnaires, and Participant Communications

For RQ3, I used deductive coding to find the elements of critical consciousness development in the debriefing meeting recording and other participant communications. I transcribed the recording, read and reread the interview transcripts and other written communications. For systematic categorization, analysis, and synthesis of the text data, I developed a codebook based on the notion of critical consciousness: Capacity to Reflect and Capacity to Act, and the four components of the sociopolitical development model to provide more concrete concepts: (a) Worldview and Social Analysis; (b) Sense of Agency; (c) Opportunity Structure; and (d) Societal Involvement (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

As I synthesized the data for crystallization through writing, I attended to contrasting and conflicting points of view and interrogated how the story was told and examined, asking "[w]hy is this story told this way?" (Hile & Čermák, 2014, p. 552). I analyzed diversions through the elements of social context, power structure, and subject positioning.

Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Action Research Validity

Tracy (2010) discusses sincerity attained through "self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, transparency and data auditing" (p. 841) as one of the goals for qualitative

analysis. Herr and Anderson (2005) also maintain that reflexivity on the researcher's positionality is essential to action research. Above, I expressed my ontological and epistemological stance as well as my positionality in relation to this study with honesty and vulnerability. I am transparent about the perspectives and assumptions I brought to this study, and I continuously examined my positionality throughout my research. I utilized researcher notes as an audit trail as I reflected on emergent themes to maximize the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

By “crystalizing” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843) multiple sources of data with rich descriptions, I aimed to offer multivocality. Multivocality allows diverse perspectives in qualitative analysis and attends to diverging opinions (Tracy, 2010). Credibility increases through multivocality and the demonstration of the author's awareness of diversity (Tracy, 2010). In the presentation of my findings, I sought to provide culturally situated contexts as well as concrete details for clear understanding (Tracy, 2010). For example, in Chapters 4 and 5, I employed different forms such as collages, analytic accounts, as well as quotes from co-researchers interwoven into a narrative to organize and re-present data to achieve rigor (Ellingson, 2011). I also disclosed and discussed any outliers or disconfirming data in Chapter 6 (Ivankova, 2015). Furthermore, I incorporated member-checking and peer debriefing to increase the trustworthiness of my analysis (Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2020).

In addition, I addressed some of the action research validity criteria. Herr and Anderson (2005) argue that traditional criteria for quantitative research validity nor qualitative research rigor and trustworthiness are adequate to address action research quality. Such criteria may not align with action research's key aspect of practitioner-

researchers insider/outsider positionality. Instead, Herr and Anderson (2005) propose the following criteria: process validity, democratic validity, outcome validity, catalytic validity, and dialogic validity. I employed solid and appropriate methods described in this chapter (process validity), invited the impacted individual, in this case, immigrant-origin adult learners, to collaborate in the process (democratic validity), and took action to improve the problem (outcome validity) as well as to empower the participants (catalytic validity) (Herr & Anderson, 2005). I promoted dialogic validity in my research through working with my dissertation committee.

Long Story Short

The problem of practice I aimed to address through this action research was SBCC's campus climate and practices that affect immigrant-origin adult learners' career and academic goal achievement. The purpose of the study was to amplify immigrant-origin adult learner voices and to empower them to take improvement actions for equitable access and success. The selection of methods for this action research was informed by my experiences as an educator who had served adult immigrants and other historically marginalized populations in Santa Barbara, California, and as an insider-outsider action researcher who shares adult immigrant, first-generation college graduate, and working parent identities with many of the immigrant-origin adult learners.

In an attempt to humanize and decolonize the "traditional" research processes and power imbalance between "researchers" and "research subjects," six first and second-generation immigrant learners with varied backgrounds participated in the CPAR

innovation as impacted experts and co-researchers. The CPAR innovation was nested within the overall action research study.

Aligned with my epistemology and ontology, I employed a critical bricolage utilizing journey mapping and art-based counterstorytelling to explore immigrant-origin adult learners' lived experiences. We then initiated a praxis and collaborative action to improve campus climate and services through an interactive exhibit at SBCC. I collected and analyzed multiple forms of data (visual maps/stories, audio recordings, meeting transcripts, written questionnaire responses, email and text communications, and actions) to crystalize and synthesize the findings. I analyzed artifacts and initial findings through relevant theories and existing literature from multiple disciplines for further feedback looping. Finally, I utilized deductive coding and writing for holistic analysis to analyze the participants' critical consciousness development.

CHAPTER 4

RE-PRESENTATION OF DATA: IDEAS, ARTIFACTS AND ACTIONS

There is power in allowing yourself to be known and heard, in owning your unique story, in using your authentic voice. And there's grace in being willing to know and hear others.

— Michelle Obama

The irony is that we attempt to disown our difficult stories to appear more whole or more acceptable, but our wholeness . . . actually depends on the integration of all of our experiences, including the falls.

— Brené Brown

The purpose of the Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) innovation was to create a counterspace to empower immigrant-origin adult learners in the local community college and explore their counterstories. I also aimed to raise their critical consciousness to examine the campus climate and practices that hinder immigrant-origin adult learners' equitable access and success. Three research questions guided this process:

1. What are the lived experiences of immigrant-origin adult learners centered around their education?
2. When immigrant-origin adult learners are engaged in a CPAR innovation process, what ideas, artifacts, and actions are generated? and
3. What are the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants' critical consciousness?

Six immigrant-origin adult learners and I participated in the CPAR innovation activities between December 2022 and May 2023. Alejandra, Bengama, Emma, Linh, Joel, and I chose to use our real names so that attribution can be given to individual work

and ideas. The other participant wished to be assigned a pseudonym, and thus her work and contributions are shared under Antonia (pseudonym).

In this first of three data re-presentation Chapters, I start by answering the second research question as a way to introduce the reader to our CPAR team. Through the re-presentation of artifacts and actions generated across the CPAR innovation, I describe each of our stories and the way the CPAR team shared our stories with the larger campus community. Then in the following chapters, I address RQ1 and RQ3 in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

As described in Chapter 3, there were three major phases during the CPAR innovation: awakening, empowerment, and praxis. In the awakening stage, we examined educational journey maps and lived experiences of other immigrant-origin learners and students of color. Then, we developed our own educational journey maps and asked critical problem-posing questions about where the obstacles were along our journey. Together, the CPAR team compared and analyzed each other's maps. The team identified significant events, sometimes similar and sometimes unique, that affected each of our journeys.

During the empowerment stage, the CPAR team explored the six forms of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). We examined multiple examples of each form of capital through historical and contemporary events and testimonials found in research, books, and social media posts centered on immigrant experiences. Then, we created our own autoethnographic digital stories focusing on one or two forms of capital using videos, poems, and Photo Books.

Finally, the team decided to share our stories through an interactive physical exhibit on the Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) campuses as part of our praxis. We collected feedback, reflections, and ideas from the exhibit attendees.

Analysis Process (RQ2)

After reviewing all the artifacts, re-listening to the meeting recordings, re-reading the transcripts, coding, categorizing, and writing for analysis (see Chapter 5), I made the decision to organize chapters according to RQs, and to first answer RQ2 as a way to contextualize the process and outcomes of this nested CPAR. In this chapter, I show (rather than tell) the artifacts, ideas, and actions the CPAR team generated through the CPAR innovation.

Counterstories and Artifacts (RQ2)

When immigrant-origin adult learners are engaged in a CPAR process, what ideas, artifacts, and actions are generated? To answer this question, I re-present the CPAR team's counterstories and artifacts. I introduce each team member and their stories in separate threads of continuing narratives. For each person's section, I begin with a quote that represents a significant aspect of their journey. While the team members all shared similarities in our experiences (more about this in the next chapter), I wrote these sections to illustrate some of the individual characteristics of each member. I include the team members' journey maps (Figures 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 23) excerpts from our eBooks (Figures 12, 14, 18, and 24) and still images from our video segments (Figures 16, 20 and 22) to convey the ideas generated and provide the context to each story. The

digital stories and videos are available in their entirety at bit.ly/sbccstories and bit.ly/sbccvideo.

The following text contains sensitive subject matter, including suicide, trauma, and depression. Reader discretion is advised. If you or someone you know is struggling with any of the issues discussed in this content, please remember that help is available. Reach out to the suicide and crisis hotline at 988 for support and guidance.

Alejandra

The biggest factor in my educational journey has been the constant moving around . . . I've always been smart, but I didn't really take my studies too seriously, because I was going to move . . . as soon as I got comfortable as soon as I got settled into some new place, something happened. We had to move.

Alejandra shared her journey with multitudes of difficulties openly and bravely. From the constant moves in her childhood, feeling of abandonment, and longing for her father who “kicked [them] out on the street” to facing untimely deaths of friends and family members and her own suicide attempt and mental health challenges. As a proud mother to her son forging a new path, she shared a poem that described the mystical and biological connections among grandmother, mother, and daughter as well as generational trauma.

Figure 11

Alejandra's Map



Note. Alejandra utilized real family photos and online pictures to create the map.

Figure 12

Alejandra's Poem

I Am

I was the product of my environment before my life began.
Every aspect of my being was formed by the trauma my mother and grandmother had.
There was pain, there was loss that they alone had to withstand.
The combination of strength and insecurities were enough to drive someone mad.

Although times were different, not much has changed.
I was dragged into the same cycle of pain, trauma and shame.
As a woman of color I am belittled but expected to overcome the falls,
To carry the weight of my problems while standing confident and tall.

The generational trauma I grew into has molded me, that's true, but it doesn't diminish the fact that there are things that until this day, I rue.

After years of struggles, I wouldn't have it any other way
I have become the product of my environment that loves and understands my pain.
I have been hurt and have felt loss, but I am morphing into my reign.
To become the visionary leader that my son needs, to pave the way.

I am the one to create a new path and cherish the change,
To guide my son with love and confidence at any stage.
I am here regardless of all the obstacles at hand.
There's no doubt that I matter, for I am the way I am.

-Daughter of Pain

Note. Alejandra’s poem expressing the impact of generational trauma and what it is like to be a woman of color in the U.S. She ends the poem with a hopeful tone showing her strengths.

Antonia (Pseudonym)

We all have internal battles nobody knows we are fighting, but it is possible to achieve your goals.

As Antonia summarized at the end of our CPAR innovation, it was hard to imagine the challenges she overcame from her light-heartedness, smiling face, and positive demeanor. Her will to achieve her goals and her demonstration of social and navigational capital truly supported her in overcoming obstacles. Earlier in life, being a woman felt like having limited possibilities, but Antonia turned that “invisible tag and label at birth” into something to be proud of. She ended her eBook with “I am getting my associate degree to pursue a higher job because I am a woman, a mom, and a wife. And because I can do it all. It’s never too late to chase your dreams!”

Figure 13

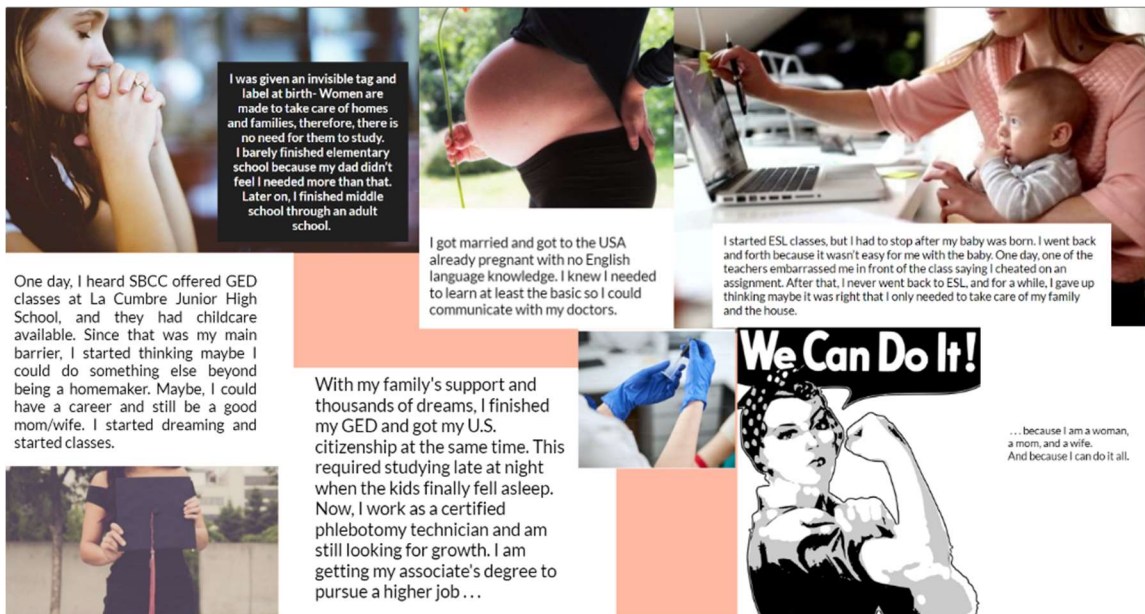
Antonia’s Map



Note. Antonia described the events in her life that affected her educational journey.

Figure 14

Excerpts from Antonia's Photo Book



Note. Antonia's photo book started by describing how she felt she had limited options in life because she is a woman but ended with an empowering message.

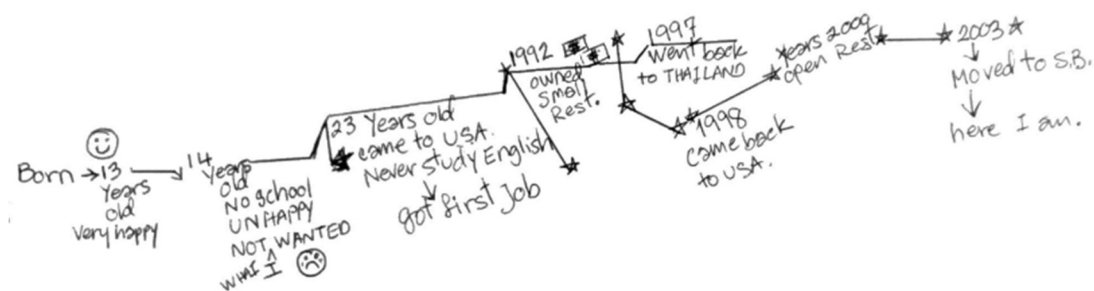
Bengama

You can't believe and trust people. . . . I learned something, which is you just have to step back and look at and do things as a business.

Bengama reflected on one of the hardships in her professional experience. Earlier in life, through the challenges she encountered, Bengama showed a rebellious and assertive side. Against her parents' advice, she immigrated to the U.S. and joined her cousin. Since moving to California, she learned English on the job and owned a restaurant business with her spouse. She ended up losing the business through dealings with a fellow immigrant businessman from Asia whom she refers to as "one of the most horrible people." While her emotions were raw when she talked about her experiences in business, she remains resilient and continues to work long hours to support her family. She discussed how having to prioritize work can be a barrier. COVID-19 ironically provided an opportunity to come back to school.

Figure 15

Bengama's Map



Note. Bengama kept her map simple, but she described the events in her life more in depth verbally.

Figure 16

Quotes from Bengama's Video

“ When I turned 19 years old, I wanted to earn my own money, which is work or own my business. I know that it's impossible because I don't have education.”

“ [My cousin who lived in California] suggested [to] me why don't you come to California?”

“ [My husband and I] opened a small Japanese restaurant together. After that, we had a business opportunity in Santa Barbara, so we moved to Santa Barbara. And something happened. So we had to close the business.”

“ I found out SBCC offers English class[es] for adults . . . I study English. Not too long, just a little bit. And because I just got a job after that and then I had to work 70 hours a week. So I didn't have the time to continue studying English until the pandemic year, 2020.”



Note. Bengama appeared in the video and told her story verbally. She included how the fact she was not allowed to continue her studies as a teenager affected her perception. Despite her concerns, she accomplished so much.

Emma

We were the ones that were falling through the cracks...the middle child of society.

Emma often brought critical viewpoints to our conversations with examples to share. She revealed some systemic inequities she witnessed throughout her educational journey and through her daughters' journeys. Since she left college as a young adult to support her family, she has focused on raising her children. She recalled “I was content in my little bubble.” That is, until the 45th President took office, whose negative rhetoric burst her “bubble.” She found herself “lost again in between worlds.” Then, COVID-19

ironically brought her the opportunity to resume her education by taking classes online. Chicano studies classes provided her with a liberating feeling against the challenging political climate. After the CPAR innovation ended, she completed all of the required courses and earned her associate degree in Chicano Studies as well as Liberal Arts.

Figure 17

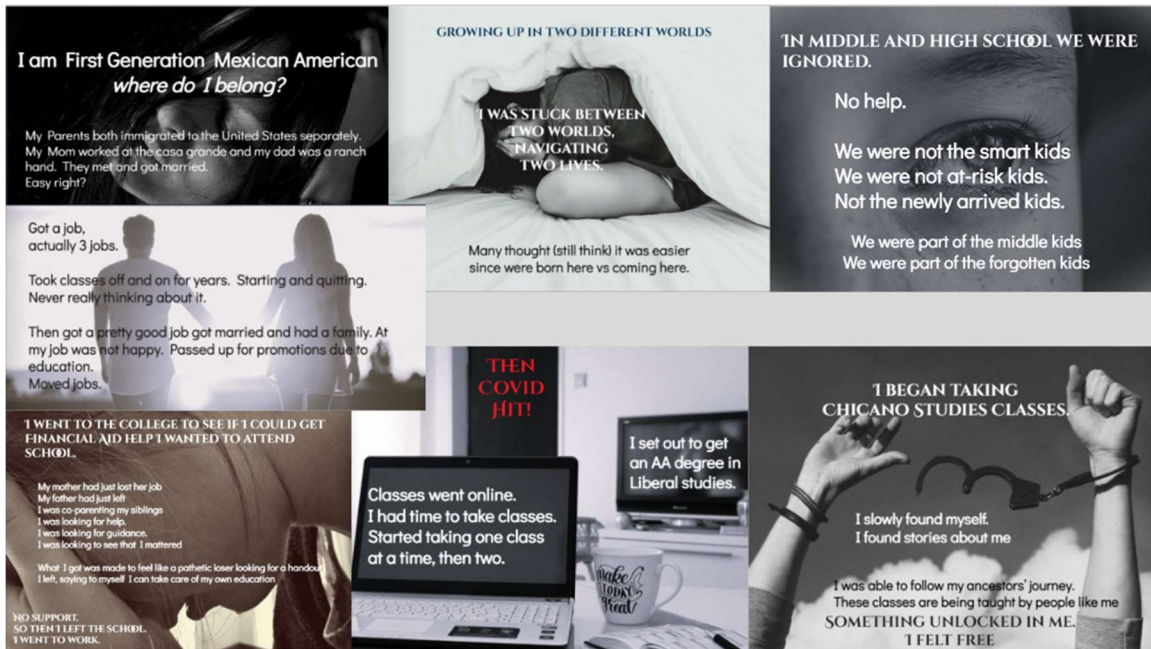
Emma's Map



Note. Emma's map included real photos and color-coded events.

Figure 18

Excerpts from Emma's Photo Book



Although my journey isn't as fascinating as many. It is a very similar story to many out there. I felt I needed to share it. There is a group of us that are the forgotten ones we are the "middle child" in society.

Most of us are successful and continue the journey our way. Content with our lives.

However, the fact that it took me 52 years to find a real educational connection and what it really meant to "learn from someone like me" seems insane.

What it means is we have a lot of work to do.

Note. Emma recounted her whole life from her childhood to the present day. Along the way, she faced many situational and systemic barriers.

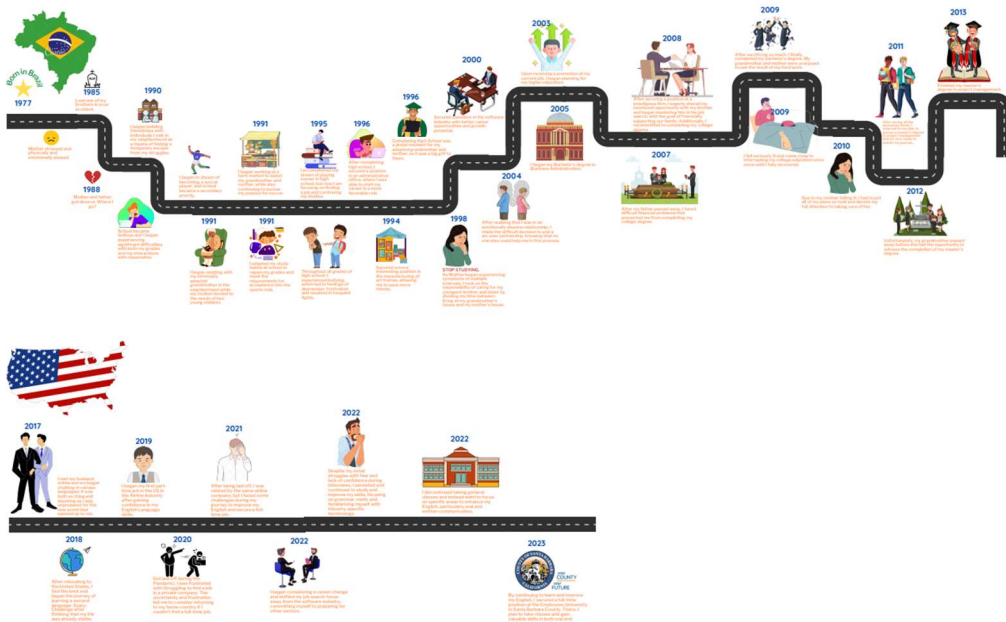
Joel

I started as a child . . . to learn and fight for life, fight to be someone, fight to do something because I wasn't . . . expecting someone to do it for me. So, my whole history was fight, work, study, respect people and go ahead.

Joel has overcome a multitude of hardships from childhood to adulthood including family, financial, health, identity, and academic challenges. He finally felt he was where he wanted to be in terms of career and financial stability prior to immigrating to the U.S. However, life had a different plan, and love brought him to the U.S. As he worked on reestablishing his life here, he felt, “Life is not fair, but we have to join the fight.” He invested an extensive amount of time, creativity, and effort into the CPAR innovation activities. He explored innovative ways and utilized an avatar created by AI for his video storytelling.

Figure 19

Joel's Map



Note. Joel used a web-based graphic design program to create a detailed journey map. We can see ups and downs along the way.

Figure 20

Quotes from Joel's Video



“ This is an avatar created by artificial intelligence, so it's not my actual voice.”

“ I knew since childhood that my only choice was to work and study hard. It was a difficult journey, but I refused to give up on my dreams.”

“ My journey in the US has been filled with challenges, setbacks and moments of distress. But I have also found support from my friends and family who have helped me along the way”

“ I am proud to be a Brazilian immigrant, bringing my unique perspective and experiences to the diverse fabric of American Society.”

Note. In his video, Joel shared the challenges he faced, the support he received and the hard work he put in throughout his life. He ended the video by sharing how proud and empowered he feels.

Linh

I lost my daughter . . . instead of hearing the [newborn cry], it was so quiet. And I normally like quiet moments. But that quiet moment was so scary that I could not bear to accept it. I got depressed. . . . Then I saw my oldest son. I just said I have to do something then.

Linh experienced one of the hardest things as a parent. Her second child's stillbirth was a huge turning point in her life after immigrating to the U.S. Her oldest son, who has autism, helped her snap out of her depression. She also found how seeking a community and leveraging her social capital supported her in getting through difficult times.

When my daughter passed away, I [had] heard a lot of stories about the people who had miscarried . . . but I never thought it would happen to me until I got a chance to get through it. . . . At first, I was saying nobody would understand me until I looked it up. I showed up there, and a lot of people [were] having a hard time in life . . . It's like my older son has autism, and I thought that was too much struggling. And then I started [getting] involv[ed] and saw people [with] kids with autism.

Through these extremely difficult experiences, she learned to look at the positive side of things. Linh says challenges and hardships help you learn and grow.

Figure 21

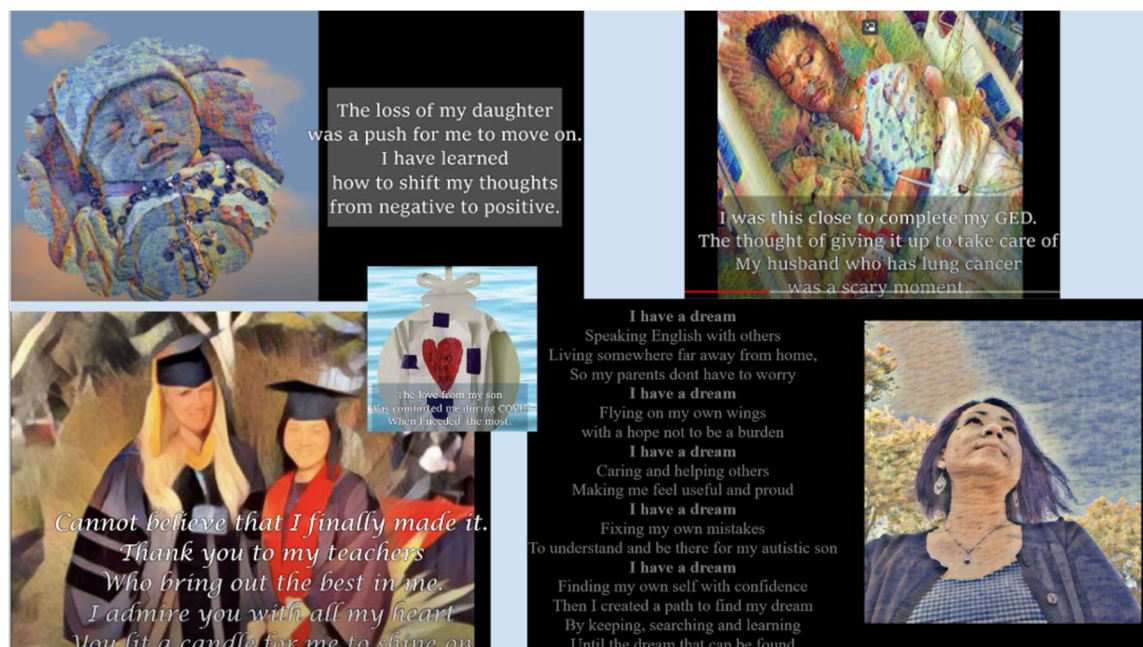
Linh's Map



Note. Linh's map with color-coded events. She separated her life into three stages: Vietnam, Negative (United States), and Positive (United States).

Figure 22

Screenshots from Linh's Video



Note. Linh discussed the challenges she faced and the support she received during her college journey. She also discussed how family played an important role in her journey.

Sachiko (me)

A lot of issues with alcohol and violence. [My grandpa] would throw things and break things in the house, and I remember hiding under the table with my grandma. So that was very complicated. . . . Looking back, it affected me because my grandpa was so loving, yet he did these things, and I didn't know exactly what was going on.

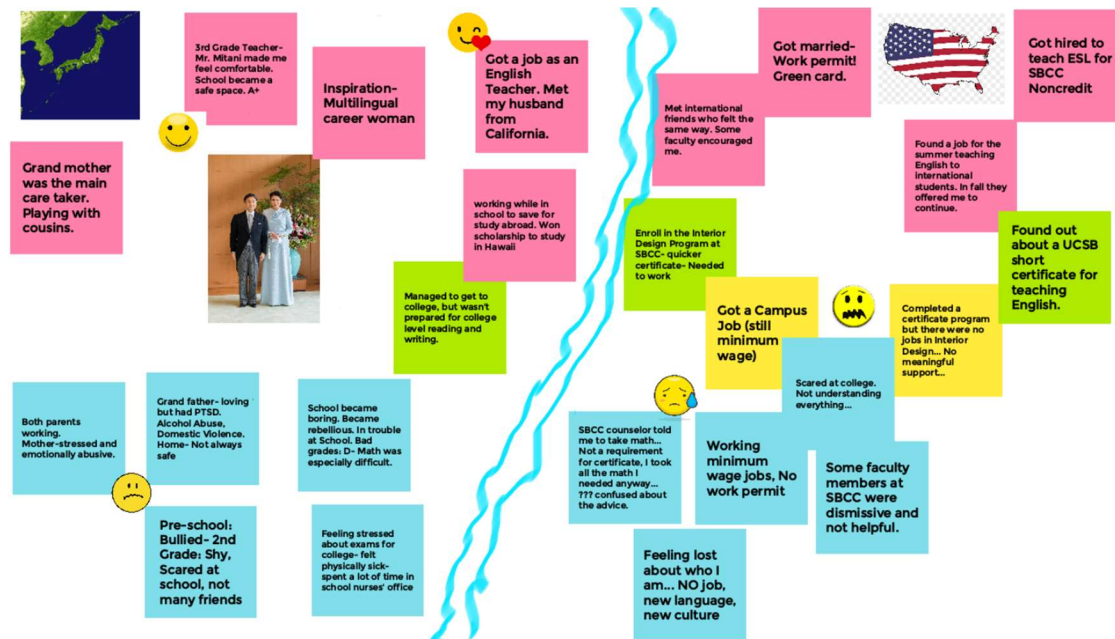
While there was not enough time to share everything that affected my education, I shared some of the events I had felt ashamed of, such as being bullied and growing up in a household with violence due to my grandfather's post-traumatic stress disorder. In a way, it was liberating, and I found a community in the CPAR team.

For the digital story, I decided to explore my aspirational and resistant capital. In an attempt to demonstrate various ways the co-researchers could approach storytelling, I created nondigital art with Japanese dolls covered with words and phrases that represented significant events that shaped my life. Then I used those dolls to create a 30-second stop-motion film. The dolls were on display at the exhibit. The photos of the dolls, as well as the stop-motion film, were included in my eBook. Using an *anime*-like template for the eBook felt right to me, and I titled my eBook, *In Search of My Ikigai*. Ikigai is a Japanese concept of one's reason for being and encompasses personal passions, beliefs, values, and vocation (Dictionary.com). The eBook was my attempt to

explain my journey to date through the lens of community cultural wealth, specifically, resistant and aspirational capital.

Figure 23

Sachiko's Map



Note. Sachiko's journey map. The map shows emotional ups and downs through the positioning of the events as well as the use of emojis. The events are color-coded (pink=high, green=neutral, yellow=not good, blue=low). Physical boundaries (i.e., Japan and U.S. border and the ocean between the two countries) are also shown.

Figure 24

Excerpts from Sachiko's eBook



Note. Sachiko utilized a Book Creator template to create her eBook as an example of a digital counterstory.

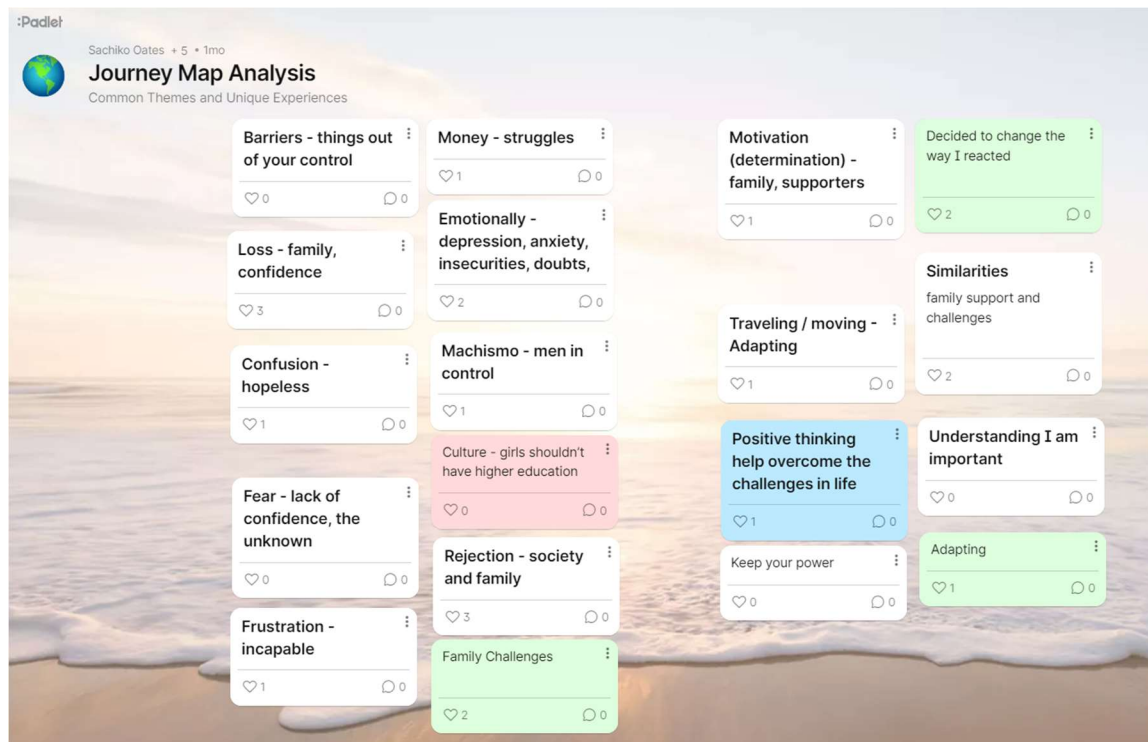
Ideas and Reflections (RQ2)

The CPAR process started with building trust, and the CPAR team openly revealed many of the events in our lives, including some very difficult ones, in our artifacts and through our meeting conversations. The CPAR team reviewed each other's maps, listened to each other's stories, and analyzed what our experiences meant. We discovered some similarities in each other's stories even though our positionalities differ. We reflected on how some of the unique, yet significant events affected our lives. Some themes started to emerge during our shared analysis of our maps and stories, these included the barriers we faced and the support and strengths we leveraged (see Figure 25). We used this analysis and the themes we generated to create an exhibit wherein we

could share our experiences with others (staff, faculty, students, and community members) at the college.

Figure 25

Team Journey Map Analysis



Note. The CPAR team worked in breakout rooms to discuss similarities and significant events found in each other's maps. We utilized Padlet, a virtual bulletin board, to share thoughts with all the members of the team. If a co-researcher agreed with another co-researcher's comments, they were encouraged to "like" the posts.

Action Through Praxis (RQ2)

As part of our Praxis, based on our analysis of the maps and exploration of community cultural wealth, the CPAR team shared our stories, ideas, and selected artifacts with the campus community in the form of an exhibit. During this phase, I

initiated many of the decisions on the details for the exhibit, but I requested the CPAR team's input and approval at each step. Some ideas, such as collecting feedback from exhibit attendees on paper, came from the co-researchers. The exhibit was titled "Immigrant-Origin Adult Learners' Journeys," and college students and employees at SBCC were invited "to bear witness to our stories of resilience and triumph." The exhibit traveled to all three SBCC campuses—Credit/Beachfront, Noncredit/Downtown, and Noncredit/North. The exhibit was up for two weeks on the credit campus inside the Center for Equity and Social Justice, one week on the downtown campus, and two weeks on the north campus in one of the noncredit ESL classrooms. See Figures 26 and 27 for the collages of photos from our exhibit (praxis).

The exhibit featured graphic-designed posters of quotes from our meetings and excerpts from journey maps organized by the stage of our journeys (i.e., childhood/in native countries, prior to enrolling in college, and after enrolling) along a tape that represented a roadway (see Figure 26). I also categorized the quotes and excerpts into "Challenges we've overcome" and "Strengths we leveraged and feats we've achieved." For installation, I utilized road sign stickers such as "Do Not Enter" "Road Work Ahead" and "Detour" to accentuate the barriers we faced and road signs stickers for "Interstate," "Airport," and "Exit" to highlight support, strengths, and achievements. I printed and displayed selected pages from our digital counterstories.

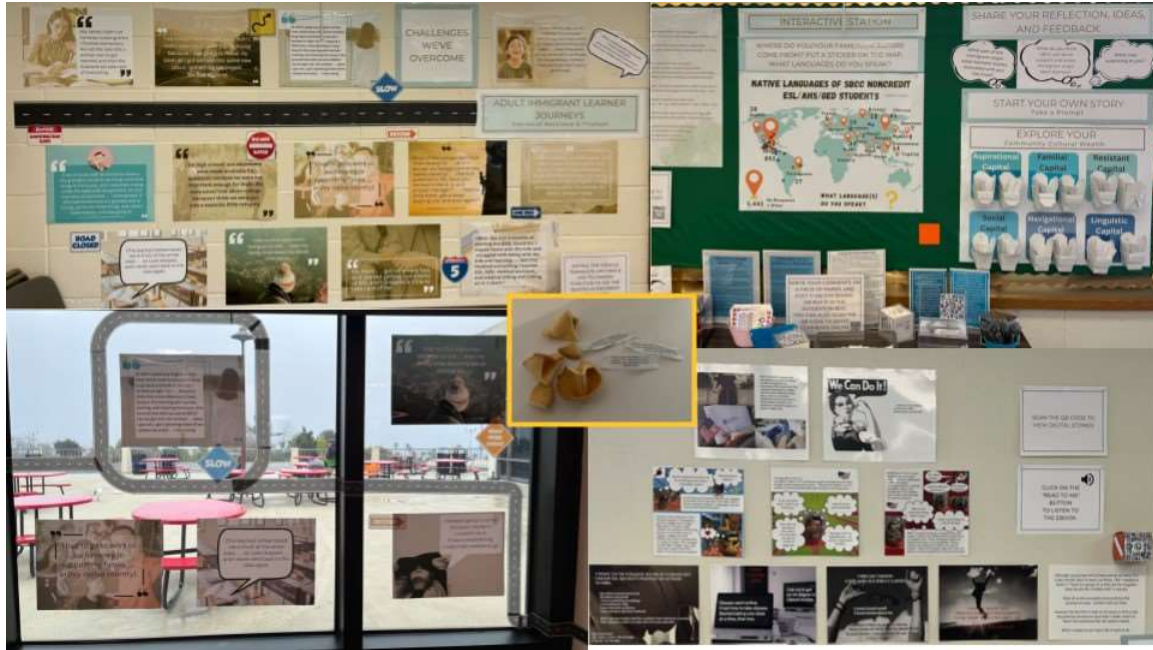
As part of the exhibit, there were activities where the attendees could participate in the research and interact with the content (see Figure 27). For example, exhibit attendees were encouraged to scan two QR codes to view digital stories (eBooks and videos) in addition to the printed and other physical materials (see Figure 26). The

attendees were also invited to share where they and their families/ancestors are from and what language(s) they speak by adding a sticker on the map showing the noncredit students' native languages (see Figure 26 and 28). The purpose of the map activity was not to gather statistical data but to encourage attendees to think about their own and their families' journeys. The attendees were also encouraged to take a story prompt related to Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. Many of the prompts were from Michelle Obama's (2019) book, *Becoming: A Guided Journal*. I organized the prompts by the forms of capital and placed them in take-out boxes attached to a poster. I also inserted three types of prompts inside fortune cookies (see Figure 26). The attendees were encouraged to take one cookie and start their own story. Finally, we also asked the attendees to provide their reflections, ideas, and feedback on the overall exhibit. We posed three questions for attendees to answer: (a) What part of the immigrant-origin adult learners' stories resonated with you the most? (b) What was surprising to you? And (c) What do you think SBCC can do to support and honor immigrant-origin adult learners?

In order to increase the accessibility of the content, a few of the posters were presented bilingually in English and Spanish. One of the critical documents that explained the consent process for responding to the three feedback questions above was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, and Ukrainian according to the current beginning English Language Learner population at the college. I posted signs to encourage the use of a free translation app and the "read to me" feature of the eBook, and at one location, my personal iPad was made available for the use of the Google Translation app.

Figure 26

The Exhibit



Note. The Exhibit showcased co-researchers' quotes on posters organized by challenges and strengths. The Exhibit also included printed pages of our stories as well as interactive stations where attendees could interact with the exhibit.

Figure 27

Exhibit Attendees Interacting with the Content



Note. Attendees read and interacted with the materials shared at the exhibit.

The Impact and Feedback

Although it is impossible to estimate exactly how many students, faculty, administrators, classified staff, and other community members we reached through the exhibit, we collected 63 stickers on the map, and 51 comments (47 handwritten and 4 online) (see Figure 28 and Appendix H). Once the month-long exhibit was over, I reviewed and sorted all the comments into three general categories: General reflection and feedback on the exhibit, attendee stories, and suggestions for SBCC (see Figure 28).

General feedback included commendations such as “This is incredible,” “Great job,” and “Very important and educational information.” Others shared that they felt inspired that changes are possible. One of the respondents was surprised about “the population trends in higher education,” and how immigrant-origin adult learners are critical members of higher education.

The exhibit resonated with many of the attendees. A young Ukrainian male student shared that having to move constantly resonated with him the most. One exhibit attendee wrote, “The perspective of student’s struggles [resonated the most and] . . . hearing similar stories was heartwarming. And that it was surprising to find out I am not alone, although I feel alone. We all have similar backgrounds.” Another exhibit attendee responded, “Being a woman of color, taking Chicano Studies courses and understanding the injustice” resonated with her. Another attendee said, “I am the daughter of immigrant parents and found myself crying reading the quote[s] and bawling when reading the stories.”

Suggestions for SBCC from the attendees included practical improvement ideas such as making financial aid more accessible and inclusive, offering more campus work/study opportunities, “[c]reat[ing] communities,” and “[e]mpower[ing] the students more by proactively informing them of the resources and options.” Others encouraged continued efforts to share our stories saying, “I think your exhibit should find a more permanent home at SBCC to help continually keep that awareness up.” “More events like this and have these students go and see the exhibits.” “Continue spreading messages and stories of my peers.” One even suggested contacting the college newspaper “so more people read these stories.”

Figure 28

Responses from Exhibit Attendees



Note. I grouped the collected attendee responses according to the types of comments. I also counted the stickers on the map. The map shows that many of the attendees who participated in this activity have Mexican/Central American roots.

Long Story Short

When immigrant-origin adult learners are engaged in a CPAR process, what ideas, artifacts, and actions are generated? As the CPAR team described the significant events in our lives through journey mapping, counterstorytelling, and dialogues/discussions, we uncovered similarities and patterns in terms of the barriers we faced and the support and strengths we leveraged. We felt empowered to tell our stories including some very difficult experiences. We felt proud to showcase our accomplishments. By sharing our stories with the campus community, we found that there are many others on campus who resonate with our stories. It was encouraging to receive many positive responses from the exhibit attendees. The exhibit encouraged attendees to start generating ideas on what the college can do to better support immigrant-origin adult learners.

CHAPTER 5

RE-PRESENTATION OF DATA: LIVED EXPERIENCES

Despite all our desperate, eternal attempts to separate, contain and mend,
categories always leak.

—Trinh T. Minh-ha

I believe that what's most important is what cannot be measured. ... the greater
part of people's lives consist of things that are unmeasurable, and trying to change
all these to something measurable is realistically impossible.

— Haruki Murakami

In this chapter, I re-present the Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) team's autoethnographic stories and lived experiences organized by the categories and themes I constructed through my analysis process to answer research question one (RQ1). Through my analysis, I generated three main themes: (a) Traumas that Impact Us; (b) Situational Barriers We Overcame and Strengths We Leveraged; (c) and Institutional and Systemic Access Issues and Support. I further classified each theme into two to three categories. First, I explain the processes I used to analyze the relevant data. Then under each theme, I present my interpretations of the events in our lives and the impacts of the events on our educational journeys as findings. To conclude the chapter, I draw inferences from the findings to answer RQ1.

Analysis Process (RQ1)

In accordance with the bricolage approach (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Yardley, 2019), I collected multiple forms of data, including artifacts (maps, written, visual, and verbal stories), praxis (exhibit, the decision-making process for the exhibit, the CPAR team's collective-self-analysis, etc.) meeting recordings and transcripts, researcher notes, co-researcher correspondences, and exhibit audience responses. I took an iterative

process and analyzed multiple forms of data to increase the rigor and depth of the study. To begin, I analyzed each form of data separately and then later, I reviewed different forms of data together for synthesis and crystallization. I include my sense-making process of the various collected qualitative data for transparency.

As data became available at different stages of the nested CPAR study, I analyzed the artifacts and actions iteratively and across three different phases. First, in February, I coded the journey maps, the recordings, and transcripts from the meetings in which the co-researchers discussed the maps prior to the exhibit. The first phase informed the CPAR team's Praxis. In the second phase, which started in May after the CPAR innovation concluded, I coded the transcript of the debriefing meeting. In the third phase, after I had analyzed the above data separately, I holistically reviewed all the collected data and used writing as analysis to construct and refine themes and categories. The multiple phases of reviewing, connecting, and mapping ideas helped me enhance my understanding of the data. I further describe each phase below.

Phase One (February 2023): Coding Journey Maps and Meeting Transcripts

Considering the CPAR team's preliminary analysis during our meetings in January (see Figure 25), I coded our journey maps and the recordings and transcripts from the January meetings when we discussed the maps. This process aided the CPAR team in preparing for the exhibit. Through reviewing the materials, coding and categorizing, I selected a few dozen quotes to share with the campus community. The CPAR team helped further refine the list. I utilized a few different approaches or eclectic coding (Saldaña, 2021, p. 223) for different forms of data: line-by-line coding for the

transcripts, In Vivo coding and process coding for journey maps, and audio coding for one of the emotional meetings with a co-researcher.

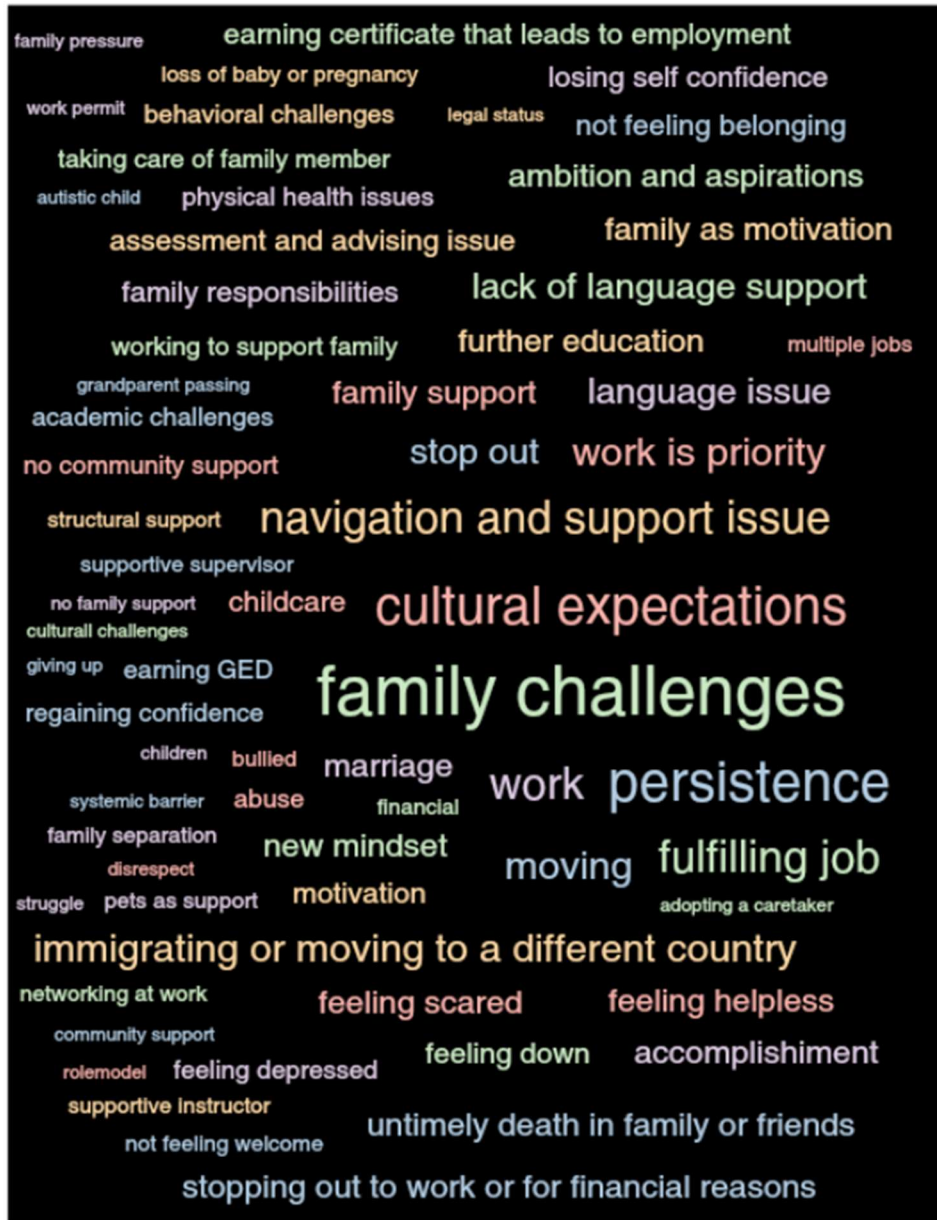
Since my inquiries through the first two RQs are exploratory in nature, I first utilized the open coding method to explore the transcript and map data without preconceived themes or ideas of what might be present in the data. Using Dedoose, a cloud-based analysis tool for multimodal data, I employed line-by-line coding of the meeting transcripts.

To analyze the journey maps, I mostly utilized In Vivo Coding and Process Coding using verb gerund form. Because some sensitive information, such as one's fragile mental state and traumatizing events, was shared in these maps, I decided to remain very close to the co-researchers' chosen words. The maps included text data, images, and other visual elements such as color coding, organization, and positioning of the events.

I also used the audio coding method (Saldaña, 2021) to analyze one especially emotional meeting with one of the co-researchers. This method allowed me move beyond the two-dimensional static transcript data and analyze the vocal tones, pauses, and other subtextual information to support a clearer understanding of the co-researcher's remarks. In my initial coding of the maps and meeting recordings and transcripts, I generated 158 original codes. Utilizing Excel, Dedoose's Word cloud, and Jamboard, a digital interactive whiteboard, I further mapped the initial codes. Then as the transition process, I used code landscaping (Saldaña, 2021) through Dedoose (see Figure 29). This process helped me see the codes in one place and visually identify the frequent codes.

Figure 29

First Phase: Code Landscaping, Word cloud



Note. I used this word cloud for code landscaping as part of the data analysis process.

More frequent codes appear larger in the word cloud.

To further examine and categorize the codes I had generated through the process thus far, I conducted focused coding (Saldaña, 2021) using Jamboard (see Figure 30).

The use of Jamboard supported me in organizing the data visually. During this process, I

started forming themes and patterns that were relevant to my research questions. I examined relationships between codes and made connections among them. I grouped the initial codes into barriers/challenges and strength/support, building on the CPAR team's group analysis on Padlet (see Figure 25). There were fifteen emerging themes under those two main categories: eight themes under Barriers/Challenges, and seven themes under Strength/Support (see Figure 30).

Figure 30

First Phase: Code Mapping



Note. This graphic organizer illustrates emerging themes under two categories: Barriers/Challenges, and Strength/Support.

After the initial cycle of open coding and data mapping, I utilized a prescriptive approach and domain coding (Saldaña, 2021) to code the journey map data. Since one of the theoretical frameworks for my study is Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model, I reviewed the data through the six forms of capital: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic to increase rigor and to apply multiple ways of knowing in line with the bricolage methodology. Even though the co-researchers were yet to have been introduced to the concept of CCW at the time of their creation, the journey maps contained evidence for all six forms of capital (see Figure 31).

Figure 31

Journey Map Prescriptive Domain Coding Results

Codes/Themes	Excerpts/Data Supporting the Code	Researcher' Interpretive Summary
Aspirational	Never too late to start school again. I went back to one class a semester One day I heard there were C&D classes and they offered free child care. I started dreaming again about to do something with my life. I registered and started again. I started ESL classes as soon as I got here. I was so determined to do something here. To be someone. 2 months later my son was born and I was able to communicate with doctors. 2022 I began considering a career change and shifted my job search focus away from the software industry, committing myself to preparing for other sectors.	Participants shared their motivational sources and discussed their hopes and dreams.
Familial	I have to do it for him. So that's why I tried. My older son is the most motivation for me to work on improve my English. It helps me to understand him, his teacher, his doctor, his friend. Had 2 baby girls. All my life dedicated to my family. I moved from SB to Lompoc and I was back to my starting point with no child care available. Fortunately my MIL was already retired and she offered me help. 2009 After coming to work, I finally got a promotion and another year was completed.	Families play an important role as part of the support system as well as a motivational factor for multiple participants.
Resistant	I don't need this blah blah blah this is BS, you know, and and so I walked out and I that's basically why I've been just taking classes as I could. No NO NO No I don't think it's frustration but I think ... companies lose opportunity... you lose ... And this is not my problem. Since your problem. I was not going to give up I started my classes again 1 year later (program again) One day the teacher embarrassed me in front of the whole class and I quit ESL for good. I got level 2 went to financial aid they made me feel like a begger took classes I paid for off and on	Participants turned discouraging or mean acts by others into a fuel to persist. In one case, J turned the issue into the system's, not his.
Navigational	to learn English quickly go to level 5, and I was totally lost there, because it's too advanced to learn. So my first experience like No, it's something wrong over here. I have to go back to learn level one level 2 that I talk with friends, they said. I have to find some class that I can, grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 whatever. now. And I made this plan to do this but it didn't come from SBCC class So I had I didn't know the room in Santa Barbara City College, how to park the car. And was there a parking limit? And it took me like almost 10 times to go back and forth to. Finally, I have the final registration on on my hand did all on own. Enrolled in SBCC without help was very lost	Even when the system was confusing and unhelpful, and advisors are not available or even harmful, participants figured out a way to persist in pursuing their studies.
Social	Boss very encouraging I was lucky to meet few good people around me, who encourage and support me. I looked up to them, try to get up and go and then explore the world around me. 2017	Participants cultivated support networks of friends, family and colleagues, etc.
Linguistic	Was a translator for my parents for school functions Over the last 10 years, I have been able to communicate with my family and friends in my native language. I have been able to help them with their English and I have been able to help them with their Spanish.	Participants used their bilingual and multilingual skills to communicate and help family members.

Note. This figure shows the six prescriptive codes based on the community cultural wealth model and the data under each code as well as my interpretive summary.

Phase Two (May 2023): Coding the Debriefing Meeting

Once the CPAR innovation concluded, I coded the meeting transcripts from the last two meetings with the CPAR team in April using the open coding method to incorporate the meeting transcript data into the findings. The meeting on April 18 focused on reflecting on the exhibit and the creation of their digital stories, and the meeting on April 30 was the debriefing meeting for the entire CPAR innovation. Even though the main purpose of the debriefing meeting was to answer RQ3 about the impacts of the

CPAR innovation, as the participants reflected on their CPAR innovation experience, they also spoke about their lived experiences (RQ1). Thus, I decided to use the transcripts from the April meetings to answer both RQs. Using the open coding process, I generated 163 initial codes. Then, I further grouped those codes into 19 categories by examining the relationships between the codes. Example categories include Barrier-Dispositional, Barrier-Institutional/Systemic, Barrier-Situational, Being Thankful, Coping Mechanism, Distance Ed, Learning New Things, Motivation/Pride, Not the American Dream, Past Trauma, Social Support (exhibit impact), Ways to Scale Up.

After that, I compared the categories I generated in Phase One and Phase Two and merged the categories where they overlapped. This step helped me identify recurring patterns, similarities, and differences in the data. In order to organize categories and their related data, I created “findings ‘at a glance’” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 346) to review the evidence and excerpts according to categories in one place (see Appendix I). I combined the categories I generated through the first phase of analysis, such as Self-Confidence/Self-Doubt, Financial/Work-Related Barriers, and Institutional Support Issues, into my phase two categories: Barrier-Dispositional, Barrier-Situational, and Barrier-Institutional/Systemic, respectively. New categories such as Not the American Dream, Distance Ed, and Past Trauma were added.

Phase Three (June–Sept. 2023): Holistic (Non-Linear) Analysis and Writing

I re-read, re-watched, and re-listened to the collected data multiple times to holistically review all the data including the CPAR team’s digital stories, my researcher notes, co-researcher communications, and exhibit attendee’s comments. As I explored the

data deeper, I combined and refined the codes into broader categories and developed themes. Eventually, I realized that most of the lived experiences could fall under the three domains I utilized in Phase Two—dispositional, situational, and institutional—drawing on Cross’ (1981) barrier classifications. I expanded Cross’ concept about barriers and applied these three domains to all areas of human development including support and strengths. I then sorted both barriers and strengths into those three main domains. The dispositional domain relates to learners’ personal, psychological, and mental states including perceptions of self and attitudes towards learning. The situational domain includes circumstantial conditions such as work, family, and financial aspects. Finally, the institutional domain encompasses practices, programs, and processes at the institutional and systemic level.

Through writing around the set of data grouped together in the above three main domains—codes, categories, segments of meeting transcripts, collages of journey map pieces, and excerpts from the digital stories—I put together a first draft of what would later turn into Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this dissertation.

At the end of Phase Three, I conducted member checking to enhance the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of my analysis. I shared the first draft of Chapters 4 through 6 with the CPAR team in July 2023, after the CPAR process concluded, to ensure that I accurately re-presented and interpreted the co-researchers’ perspectives and experiences in the findings. Everyone in the CPAR team voluntarily responded with their feedback, and the later drafts reflected their suggestions and corrections. After several more revisions and theme mapping exercises, I identified three themes in relation to RQ1 (see Table 3).

Table 3*Domains, Themes and Categories for RQ 1*

Domains	Themes	Categories within each theme
Dispositional	Traumas that Impact Us	At the Intersection of Culture and Gender
		Pushed To a Breaking Point: Bullying, Social Exclusion and Discrimination
		Not the American Dream
Situational	Situational Barriers We Overcame and Strengths We Leveraged	Life Keeps Happening
		Community Cultural Wealth
Institutional	Institutional and Systemic Access Issues and Support	Made to Feel Like a Pathetic Loser: Shortcomings of the System
		Great Support
		A Game Changer: Instructional Approaches and Modalities

Note. This table shows how I organized the data and relationships between the domains, themes, and categories within each theme.

Lived Experiences (RQ1)

What are the lived experiences of immigrant-origin adult learners centered around their education? The CPAR team generated educational journey maps, digital stories, and other artifacts. We shared our stories in the interactive exhibit and invited the exhibit attendees to share theirs. In this section, I describe the themes I constructed from the data on lived experiences. The themes are organized according to the three main domains: Dispositional, Situational, and Institutional. To facilitate a deep contextualized understanding of our group of immigrant-origin adult learners' lived experiences and

the effects of the events on their journey, I include quotes from the CPAR team meetings and extracts from our artifacts. In addition, I incorporate some of the exhibit attendees' stories as part of immigrant-origin learners' lived experiences where they are applicable.

Traumas that Impact Us (Dispositional)

It's too harsh, you know, but we just have to leave it. I just have to, you know, forget it, and . . . life goes on, and we have to move on. But sometimes it's hard to forget things, you know, especially when it's just like on your forehead . . . you can see it in the middle. You can see it already there.

— *Bengama*

In the dispositional domain, the first theme I discuss in this chapter is the traumas that impact us and through which we demonstrate our resilience. Everyone on the CPAR team had traumatizing experiences, and many such experiences had implications for our educational journeys. However, it is important to note that by no means are we defined by these past traumatic events. Rather, we own these experiences as part of our narratives in order to be our whole selves. As “critical hope requires bearing witness to social and historical trauma” (Grain, 2022, p. 71), I discuss three categories within this theme according to the types of experiences in connection to the traumas that impact us: (a) Intersection of Culture and Gender; (b) “Pushed to a Breaking Point:” Bullying, Social Exclusion, and Discrimination; and (c) “Not the American Dream.”

Intersection of Culture and Gender

Everyone in this CPAR innovation experienced some elements of gender-related struggles due to family dynamics or cultural expectations. When the CPAR team

collectively analyzed our educational journey maps, some co-researchers mentioned the notion of *machismo* and *misogyny* as some of the common threads among our stories. While there were other types of traumas some of us experienced, I re-present the traumas through the lens of culture and gender below.

Familial and Cultural Expectations and Gender. Familial and cultural gender roles, especially parental beliefs, affected many of the co-researchers' educational access. Often such expectations directly impacted our educational access and, in some cases, contributed to low self-esteem and confidence. What transpired in the research participant recruitment process with Bengama illustrated how her family's gender expectations affect her to this day.

"I want to do it, but I don't know about writing stories. I can talk but I can't write well," Bengama told me when I first met her in a Zoom ESL classroom. I was visiting the class to recruit co-researchers. I then told her and everyone in class that oral storytelling was fantastic, and in our upcoming research project, we would use whatever method of storytelling that each co-researcher would be most comfortable with. Later through the journey mapping exercise, I discovered that her formal education was interrupted when she was 14. Visibly upset and emotional, Bengama described what happened:

When I turned 14 or so . . . my family said . . . I cannot go to school anymore. But what happened was they tried to teach me . . . cooking to do the housework. . . . They [thought] that's more important than go[ing] to school . . . So I was very, I don't want to say depressed, but I was just disappointed. . . . I think I [was] . . . I'm not sure, 20, 21. I told my family. Okay, I'm going to California. And then they said, "No, you're not going to" because they are looking for someone to

marry me, which is like an [arranged] marriage. So, I said, “No, I don’t want to.”

And then they said, “No, but you have to because you don’t have any education.

So, I want you to marry someone who can bring you, you know.”

Bengama succeeded in moving to California and not marrying the man her family chose for her. Although Bengama communicates very well in English, having learned the language on the job, she appears quite affected by the fact that she was not allowed to receive formal education in her youth. It affects her confidence to this day, especially when it comes to writing even after being a successful business owner.

Antonia had a similar experience. She shared:

I, like many other women in Hispanic culture, was born with an invisible tag, and label; women are made to take care of homes and families, therefore there is no need for them to study. I barely finished elementary school because my dad didn’t feel I needed more than that.

Antonia further explained her father’s attitude, “He had the idea that a woman was to, you know, get married, and then the husband will take care of everything, so there’s no need for the woman to study or to do anything.” Antonia later went back to school and completed middle school as an adult and passed the GED after immigrating to the U.S.

Others in the study also had gender-related struggles due to family or cultural expectations. Emma described:

My dad didn’t allow my mom to work. It was kind of like a macho thing. My mom was a very hard worker, and they could have succeeded very, very well, but because he didn’t let her work. We were very limited in the income.

Linh also shared how she was “afraid” of her husband earlier in her marriage. She

described how she felt obligated to take on most of the household chores and childrearing as “an Asian woman,” which made focusing on her studies very difficult.

Abuse. Some of us experienced or witnessed abuse at the hands of a male in the family, which contributed to trauma. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023, June) classifies such experiences as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and states that ACE can “negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential.” Joel talked about his father being emotionally and physically abusive to his mother and ultimately feeling abandoned by him. In his digital story video, he shared, “My mother worked tirelessly to support her five children, even enduring physical emotional, and financial abuse from my absent father.” Alejandra discussed how her father “kicked [them] out on the street.” Even after being reunited with him, Alejandra ended up leaving his house again because of abuse. She described the impacts. “I fell hard because I was blinded by a vision of me being with a father . . . because I got daddy issues. But . . . he was abusive, alcoholic. I ended up leaving when I was 17. . . Oh, that’s in the street!” In my case, I witnessed my grandmother having to tolerate my grandfather breaking things in the house and verbally abusing her.

“Pushed To a Breaking Point:” Bullying, Social Exclusion, and Discrimination

Social exclusion and discriminatory actions based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical disability, neurodiversity, and institutional power structures also impacted our development. Such incidents occurred in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood in the schoolyard, on the college campus, and in the workplace.

Many of us experienced bullying in school. Alejandra, who grew up mainly in California, was bullied and called names in school. She described, “I was called a wetback, a beaner, because I spoke Spanish.” She continued, “This bully pushed me to a breaking point, where basically I got expelled from the district, and I started continuation school.”

Unsupportive or hostile societal atmosphere towards the LGBTQ+ community also affected a co-researcher’s mental health. Joel experienced depression as a teenager due to bullying in school and social isolation. After ending a romantic relationship with an abusive partner, he was not able to confide in anyone to gain support. Joel recounted: “I had . . . my first depression because no one in Brazil . . . even my family, knew about my sexual orientation . . . so I had to solve this problem myself . . . when I realized that I was emotionally abused.”

Exclusion and discrimination continued into adulthood. Linh explained her experience of exclusion by her immigrant colleagues because of her son’s autism and her husband’s physical disability. Linh described in her map how people called her son with autism a “crazy boy” as he talked to himself. She further shared about her husband:

He had polio, and he has one leg small and one leg big . . . And people bullied him a lot. . . . when I married him, they put me into that group . . . So that’s why I didn’t really have good support from them. The people [would] laugh at me and talk bad about me.

These experiences affected Linh’s learning and anxiety in social settings. She recounted how she had become emotional when her English tutor assigned her to use English outside of their learning times:

Every day, [the tutor asked,] “Did you go meet other people and use your English?” My tears started falling. I’m crying because I’m scared of going outdoors. I’m scared to see all the people. I’m scared of using my English and talking to other people. I’m afraid that people don’t hear . . . my pronunciation. And I told him . . . it’s not because I don’t [want to practice] English but because I’m afraid to go out and talk.

I also included in my eBook the “elitism, disrespect, microaggressions, racialized misogyny, racism, and harassment” I faced and witnessed at the college. I was quite often made to feel “less than” by colleagues in the credit divisions because I was part of the noncredit programs serving adult learners. Racial microaggressions and stereotyping were also prevalent on the college campus. For example, in a college committee meeting, one of the senior leaders called Asians/Asian Americans “a silent group.” As an Asian female, I also experienced and witnessed fetishization, grooming, and sexual harassment.

“Not the American Dream”

Alejandra summarized one of the takeaways from participating in this study, “There is no rush to try to be the American Dream. I mean it’s all at your time, your expense, your mental capacity, your emotional capacity.” Her statement illustrates how immigrating to the U.S. comes with sacrifices and challenges. One experience all of the CPAR team members had in common was our own or our family’s immigration. While the first-generation and second-generation perspectives differed slightly, our journeys were all impacted by immigration. Traumas related to the act of immigrating impacted our identity development, self-esteem, and mental health.

Impact of Immigration. The act of immigrating to a new country, no matter the circumstance or reason, is an impactful and often traumatizing experience that affects a person's self-esteem and mental health. The first-generation immigrant-origin learners expressed how challenging it was/still is to learn a new language as an adult, to start all over in career training, and to have had to depend on their spouses or others for everything from daily transportation to navigating various systems (financial/healthcare/education). Many of us discussed how those factors affected our self-esteem and self-image. Joel explained:

I fought my whole life and went through difficult things. . . I [was] good in the position [in Brazil] . . . independent emotionally, independent financially, and you can do it yourself. And you come to another country, and I'm totally dependent for everything, the language, finances. The job doesn't match with that what I did [in Brazil], and the language I have to learn . . . It's stressful.

Linh also expressed her feelings by recalling her journey:

I totally forgot that I got educated in my country. I thought I [went] backward. I'm a low-level person. I don't have anything. I don't have a language . . . when I was in my country. I finished high school. I finished college . . . and I was like a middle-class person supporting my older sister, who didn't finish high school, and I felt proud of myself . . . But when I came to this country . . . I completely forgot where I was before, and I feel . . . I'm a stupid person. I didn't know anything, and I got upset easily. I got mad easily, and I forgot where I was.

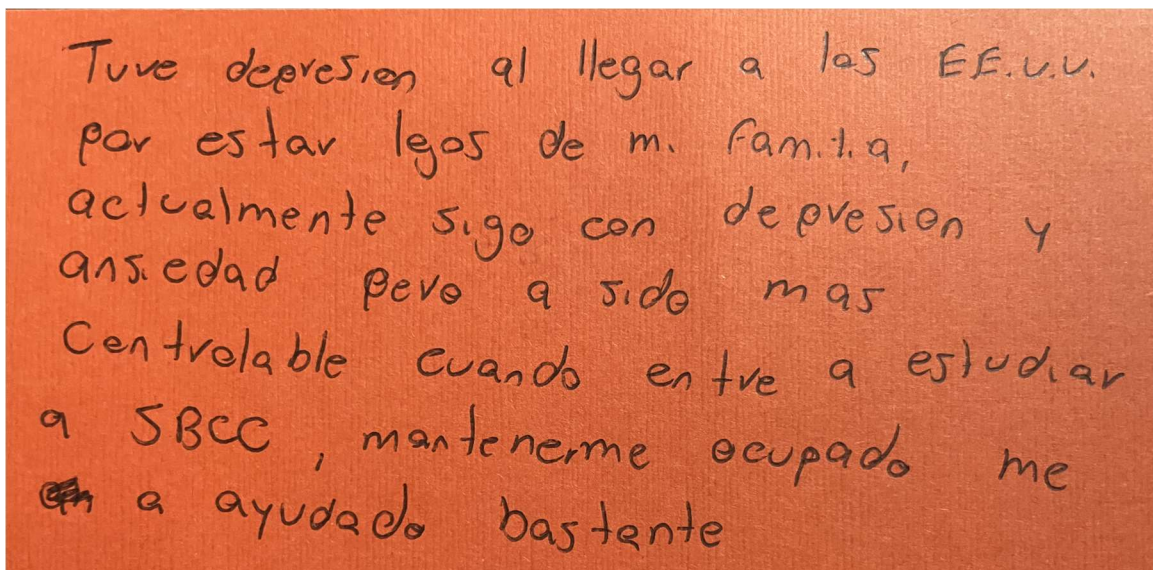
One of the exhibit attendees commented how difficult it had been to be away from their family and how they had been depressed and anxious. Coming to school and keeping

themselves busy helped. They left the comment in Spanish, which is translated into English here (see Figure 32):

I had depression when I first arrived in the U.S. because I was away from my family. Currently, I still have depression and anxiety, but it has been more manageable since I attended SBCC. Keeping busy has helped me a lot.

Figure 32

An Exhibit Attendee's Comment #1



Note. The above comment in Spanish was left by one of the exhibit attendees at the noncredit downtown campus.

In Between Cultures, Across Generations. The first-generation immigrant-origin learners also discussed how difficult it was to maintain our native culture and language while adapting to and succeeding in the new culture. Linh said, “It is not easy to keep our culture here, especially in Santa Barbara, where we don’t have Asian culture.” Joel also chimed in, “Brazilian culture is so rare here. I found a small community here like a few people.” I described the pressure to abandon my culture after immigrating in

my eBook. “To be successful here, I need to act American” “Must be social and extroverted” and “Must get rid of my Japaneseness, my accent, my grammar mistakes.” The pressure to “assimilate” into the dominant culture is unavoidable, and it makes sustaining heritage language and culture difficult. I expressed, “It’s hard. My kids, both of them, their first language was Japanese, [but] as soon as school started, it’s gone, and you know English became much stronger. . . . So, it’s a little sad.”

Related to maintaining the native/heritage culture while being pressured into “assimilating” into the local/U.S. culture, the second-generation immigrant-origin learners shared how their lives had not necessarily been easier than the first-generation immigrants’ as people may perceive. They had to navigate both worlds and process the effects of their parents’ traumas. Emma described her experience growing up:

We grew up in like two worlds, you know . . . we grew up in this world where we had to maneuver in such a weird, weird way. . . . Here’s my little bubble with my house, one life, and then the different life when I was at school. . . And a lot of kids go through this.

Emma referred to herself as the middle child of society and shared how she felt forgotten by the education system, especially after she reached secondary school:

When I was in high school, they separated the very smart kids going to college. Then they got the at-risk kids that were the little stoners, and whatever. Then there were the kids that just recently arrived from another country. But we were always the ones that were just kind of like . . . the lost middle child.

Alejandra brought up generational trauma as well as the strengths she inherited. In her poem, Alejandra expressed:

I was the product of my environment before my life began.

Every aspect of my being was formed by the trauma my mother and grandmother had.

There was pain, there was loss that they alone had to withstand.

The combination of strength and insecurities were enough to drive someone mad.

Although times were different, not much has changed.

I was dragged into the same cycle of pain, trauma, and shame.

As a woman of color, I am belittled but expected to overcome the falls,

To carry the weight of my problems while standing confident and tall.

The generational trauma I grew into has molded me, that's true, but it doesn't diminish the fact that there are things that until this day, I rue.

Later Alejandra further explained her way of thinking about how traumas can be biologically and physically passed down:

Unfortunately, with the trauma that [my grandmother] was going through while pregnant with my mom. you know that was kind of embedded in me. And then my mom, when she was pregnant with me, and the drama that she was going through with my dad created me, and the eggs that I would have, you know, created for my children.

Summary

Our stories are all different and unique, but we all have some type of trauma that deeply affects us to this day. Some experiences were related to familial and cultural expectations based on gender, other experiences were due to social exclusion and various "isms," and yet other experiences stemmed from immigration. Understanding what each

of us went through can lead to creating a safer and better learning environment for students like us.

Situational Barriers We Overcame and Strengths We Leveraged

Grandma passed away. My whole world came crashing down . . . I stopped going to school because I couldn't. I couldn't do it. It was overwhelming. I really had nowhere to go . . . My grandma was the only person in my entire life that ever motivated me and believed in me.

— Alejandra

As independent adult students, co-researchers and I all had to prioritize other things, such as our own well-being, our family's health, financial and work responsibilities, over schoolwork. It was in these areas that co-researchers encountered and had to overcome situational barriers, barriers that ensue from one's temporary situation in life (Cross, 1981). Relying on our community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) allowed us to navigate and overcome these barriers. In this section, I re-present the situational barriers we faced and the strengths we leveraged in order to persist and achieve our goals.

Life Keeps Happening

Several of us had to stop out of school multiple times and come back when we were able. The situational barriers the co-researchers faced ranged from family members' health, births as well as deaths in the family, to our own mental health, and work schedules related to financial challenges. Joel explained how he had to prioritize his and his family's health over his education at times: "My mom . . . got very very sick, and

started getting symptoms of [Multiple Sclerosis], and I stopped a little to take care of her.” For Antonia, stopping out was due to the addition of a new member to the family: “I had to stop after my baby was born. I went back and forth because it wasn’t easy for me with the baby.”

Having to prioritize paid work was common as well. Linh shared, “I had to go to work to earn money to support my family. . . in Vietnam.” Bengama did not have time for school before the pandemic. She described:

I didn’t know much about SBCC. . . . I used to work seventy hours a week, you know, up until the pandemic. It [was] still not even enough to cover living comfortably. . . . It’s not like I make tons of money, you know, just enough to get by, you know, month by month.

Joel also had to pause his studies due to financial challenges after his father’s death. At times, some of us fell off track when life became too tough, and we needed to make a living somehow. A few of us worked under the table or took part in activities that were unlawful at the time.

Community Cultural Wealth

The CPAR team members overcame many barriers and seized multiple opportunities along the way. In many cases, we were able to do so by leveraging our community cultural wealth. While all forms of capital were evident in our journeys, some of the most notable included aspirational, familial, social, and linguistic capital.

Aspirational. Across the CPAR innovation, the team shared sources of motivation and discussed our hopes and dreams. Having a goal of leading a fulfilling life, including having a meaningful career, kept many of us going even when faced with

adversities and barriers (see Figure 33). Celebrating each accomplishment and feeling proud of our achievements also helped us persist. Success led to more success and our aspirations continued to evolve. For example, Antonia described her aspirations related to earning her GED:

It was hard to stay up till midnight to complete everything, but it was worth it. I had a picture of my son taken . . . when they were giving me my GED certificate. Oh, my goodness, his face! It was worth all that I had to go through.

The success of earning her GED led to more aspirations related to her career and possible future schooling. She knew she wanted to work in the healthcare field to utilize her skills and work experience from her time in Mexico. She wrote, “After getting my GED, I got a job at the hospital, worked my way up, and . . . was able to get my California [phlebotomist] license.” Even today, she is still looking ahead, “Maybe I could still go to college, get my associate degree, . . . and one day become a Clinical Lab Scientist.” Each achievement helped rebuild our confidence and explore new possibilities. As Linh noted, “[I] noticed [that] the more I improve my knowledge, the more I feel confident.”

Figure 33

Map Extracts Under Aspirations and Fulfilling Job as Motivator

Category: Aspirations



Category: Fulfilling Job as Motivator



Note. This figure includes extracts from co-researchers' journey maps expressing our goals and aspirations. Leading a fulfilling life, having a meaningful career, and supporting our children were our sources of motivation. Each milestone, such as completing the GED, getting a job in their preferred industry, earning a promotion, and getting a state medical license, helped build confidence and set the next goal.

Familial. For many members of the CPAR team, families were our support system and our motivation. Similar to the results of the other studies on marginalized

adults (Flynn et al., 2011; Hope & Quinlan, 2021), family members were the reason for our persistence to achieve our goals. Linh expressed:

I found out that my son had autism, and I didn't know [how] to talk to the doctor. I didn't know what to do. [Now he] is the motivation for me to work on improving my English. It helps me understand him, his teacher, his doctor, and his friends.

In Antonia's case, her mother-in-law supported her in a practical way. She helped look after Antonia's two children when she could not find childcare while attending classes.

Being a role model to siblings or children was an important driving force for us. For Joel, it was critical that he became a mentor for his siblings. Joel recalled, "I started teaching my brother because my brother started doing something wrong. . . . He was involved with drugs." With Joel's support, his brother got back on track and even secured a well-paying job, which met Joel's goal of supporting his family financially.

In addition, many of the exhibit attendees also shared how their family members were sources of motivation and support. Testimonials included, "My family give[s] me strength to continue being a good example," and "My daughter looks up to me. This motivates me every day to seek new goals." One person shared their appreciation for their first-generation immigrant parents: "I was born in Leon, Mexico. . . . we all moved to the U.S. when I was three, and my younger brother was two. It was hard to see my parents work two to three jobs to get food on the table. Now that we go to college, we can help. . . . I'm forever grateful [for] their sacrifices."

Social. The CPAR team members cultivated support networks of friends, family, and colleagues and leveraged our social capital to advance our careers. As immigrant-

origin learners, we do not typically have inherited or generationally accumulated social capital as the dominant group (Bourdieu, 1986). However, we developed our own social capital. Linh described how knowing someone in the healthcare industry helped her get a job interview after being rejected everywhere without such support:

I've finished everything . . . medical assistant, medical billing and coding in 2 years. . . . by the time I finished, I was looking for a job. . . . Nobody accepted me because they were looking for a Spanish speaker, and I don't have any background in the medical field. When I [was] about to go back to my old job, I [saw] one of my old friends who was working for [the largest non-profit outpatient healthcare provider in the area]. He asked me, "Why don't you try to apply for something [at the non-profit clinic]?" . . . He connected me with human resources, and they gave me another chance to have an interview . . . I was lucky that I met the right nurse, and I was able to work with her. And here I am. I work at the clinic as a medical assistant.

Antonia also developed a new social network in order to forge a new path in the medical field when she could not start the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program at SBCC due to a waitlist:

CNA classes [at SBCC had] . . . a waiting list . . . I couldn't take those classes But I still wanted to do something in the healthcare field. And then they mentioned that [a local hospital] offered phlebotomist training, and that it was easier if you were an employee . . . so, I just wanted to get something to get in. . . . I started as a dishwasher at [the hospital]. And then they gave me the opportunity to be at the cafeteria for one day a week being a cashier. . . . I got to

know the managers for the training, so I mentioned to them that I want to do [the phlebotomy training]. And I think I mentioned that to everybody in the department. Then . . . I got an email saying that they were finally starting the training.

Linguistic. Many co-researchers, especially second-generation immigrant learners value being bilingual/multilingual, and it has become a source of pride and a reason to give back. In Emma's case, she took on the role of translator for the family at a young age. This empowered her to control the communication between the school and parents. Later as an adult, Emma felt the need to put this gift of language to use to find her calling:

I never thought education was important because I had a good-paying job, but I knew I wasn't going to be able to get promoted anymore. . . . I wasn't using what I felt I was put on this earth to do, you know, to be bilingual to help others.

Summary

As adult learners or immigrant-origin learners, we faced a multitude of challenges, and at times chose to stop out of school. However, our aspirational and familial capital kept us coming back to our goals and dreams. Our families supported and motivated us even in adverse environments. Along the way, we utilized our social and linguistic capital to make our dreams come true. Our stories have been more of resilience rather than of empowerment. As our journeys continue, we hope to slowly but surely change the narrative of immigrant-origin adult learners to one of empowerment.

Institutional and Systemic Access Issues and Support

During elementary school, we were automatically treated differently.

According to the school:

We were kids of uneducated immigrant parents.

We needed special attention.

Got free clothes and free shoes.

Attended a program for migrant children.

We got extra help.

In middle and high school, we were ignored.

No Help.

We were not the smart kids.

We were not at-risk kids.

Not the newly arrived kids. . .

We were part of the forgotten kids.

Somehow I made it.

I graduated high school.

There was no one to help with what was next.

— Emma

Many CPAR team members experienced and witnessed inequitable institutional practices and systemic access issues. However, we also experienced some programs and approaches that helped us along the way. Some of the experiences were on the college campus and others were in the local K-12 system. Some took place 30 years ago and others this year, but all of the events affected our educational journeys.

“Made to Feel Like a Pathetic Loser:” Shortcomings of the System

The college campus, as well as the education system in general, can be an alienating space for immigrant-origin adult learners. The culture/climate in educational systems along with wider systemic norms negatively affected the members of the CPAR team. We discussed issues related to the college enrollment process, the biases of educators (both implicit and explicit), and the education and workforce systems that fail to recognize the human capital immigrant learners cultivated outside of the U.S.

Not a Welcoming Place. The college enrollment process can be unwelcoming and, at times, even hostile to immigrant-origin adult learners. When Emma, who is in her early 50s, first enrolled in college courses as a young adult, the financial aid system that was supposed to help her was, instead, weaponized against her. She wrote:

My mother had just lost her job.

My father had just left.

I was co-parenting my siblings.

I was looking for help.

I was looking for guidance.

I was looking to see that I mattered.

What I got was made to feel like a pathetic loser looking for a handout.

I left, saying to myself I can take care of my own education.

She further explained the experience:

[I] did go to financial aid when my mom lost her job . . . and they were really mean to me treating me almost like I was a beggar from the street. . . . It was just a horrible experience. I walked out . . . That’s basically why I just [took] classes

as I could. Then I stopped altogether. It did not make me feel welcome . . . so I said I could pay for my own classes. When you do that, and you have a family, you have to pick [between paying for classes and paying to support the family]. It took decades for Emma to give the college another chance. In the meantime, she got a job (sometimes three jobs) and focused on supporting her family and children. Since the pandemic, she had been taking one or two classes at a time, and after the CPAR innovation concluded, she earned her Associate of Arts degree in the summer of 2023.

Linh's recent experience also illustrates how challenging the current enrollment process can be for immigrant-origin adult learners with multiple responsibilities. She recounted her experience attempting to register for classes on the credit campus:

[I] didn't speak any English at that time. And it took me almost 10 times to go back and forth to [enroll]. I worked at night. So, I . . . had just a little time in the afternoon. [I was busy] in the morning with my kids, cooking, and cleaning the house. . . . [The second time with my son at SBCC,] my son got sick. He vomited. He was scared. . . . When I got out, I got a [parking] ticket [from campus security] and I didn't even know what the ticket meant. And there was no Vietnamese speaker over there . . . I was crying . . . We didn't know what to do.

Bias and Deficit Mindset. Biases in the education system and educators' deficit mindset negatively affected our educational journeys. Emma, as a second-generation immigrant-origin student, experienced and witnessed biases in the education system and educators. She commented on her high school experience regarding college access, "Our counselors were never available for questions because we were not important enough for

them. We were never told about college because I think we were put into a separate little category.”

Emma has witnessed similar biases continue to affect the next generation. When working for the California Student Opportunity and Access Program, which supports low-income families and prospective first-generation college students’ access to information on postsecondary education and financial aid, Emma heard a principal of a local junior high school speak about immigrant-origin learners. She recalled the principal saying, “Sometimes we just know, like basically what kind of students they are going to be because we know we’re going to need our janitors and our housekeepers.” I have heard a similar comment from an educator before. In my case it was “Who would pick our fruit and vegetables?” These real-life incidents correlate with claims by Liou et al. (2016) and Carrillo (2016) that educators expressed low expectations for students of color and schools tracked certain students for trade occupations or manual labor jobs. While all of the occupations are critical and should be respected, it is problematic when educators track students for certain occupations based on their racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. One of the exhibit attendees also expressed their opinion regarding faculty and staff, noting, “I wish my high school counselor, my college professors, and just people in general had a little more faith in me beyond my immigrant background and my accent.”

Biases do not need to be so obvious or blatant to be harmful. As noted in a previous study, implicit biases can affect schools’ practices and policies (Avelar La Salle & Johnson, 2016). Practices such as inconsistent advising and inequitable information dissemination represented some of the institutional and systemic barriers the CPAR team

encountered. The college's enrollment office has multiple coordinated outreach events at local high schools for "traditional" students; however, for many of the adult students on noncredit campuses, it is often up to the students to make an appointment with a student advisor and ask the right questions (in the right language) to get relevant information.

Having worked in the food services department at the college, Alejandra witnessed prospective adult immigrant learners being sent from department to department on the credit campus to get information or not being offered the same opportunity as English-speaking/native-born students:

We had quite a few immigrants . . . wanting to enroll in culinary classes and it wasn't ever easy for them to receive that information. [The staff] would honestly just tell them. "Oh, go down there. Someone will explain it to you." But they would do tours and take [English-speaking] students to different locations and give them as much information. But when it came down to the immigrant group, because these people wanted the information in a different language, that really wasn't an option.

Inconsistent advising and inequitable information dissemination practices at the college were experiences not just in our past, some of the co-researchers were experiencing them in real-time across the innovation. During our last CPAR meeting, Bengama started telling the team about her potential next educational step, and a conversation ensued about how lack of information creates inequity and a huge barrier. Bengama shared:

I just found out they have like Japanese language [courses] . . . but I can't afford it. . . . I would like to take . . . at least one more [class]. But they said you have to pay. I said I'm sorry. My rent is already all my paycheck. So that's why I don't

want to add more.

Emma, who is a credit student, chimed in saying “Just fill out . . . the California Promise for your tuition.”

“But you have to be a full-time student,” Linh noted.

Emma interjected, “I’m only taking one class, and it covers me. . . . They did the California Promise. It’s not the City College promise.”

Linh chimed in, now confused:

I never heard anything about California Promise that I don’t know how to apply. . . . I am connected with a counselor, but the counselor never said anything about that. . . . I told him that I’m planning to go back to school. . . . I have to work, and I have kids. So, I want to take one class at a time. I cannot be full-time. And they say there’s nothing supporting you because you have to be [full-time]. They would only focus on SBCC Promise.

I found and shared a link to the California Promise page on the college website encouraging the co-researchers to bring it up to the counselors to seek further guidance about their eligibility.

Starting All Over. As co-researchers and I engaged in U.S. institutions and systems, we found it difficult to get our prior knowledge and human capital recognized and valued in new spaces (work, school, community, etc.). Foreign credentials and skills we earned through working in another country often did not translate. The CPAR team discussed how this can be lost opportunities for both learners and employers. For most of the first-generation immigrant CPAR team members, we needed to spend extra time and sometimes money to complete education and training to get certified for the skills we

already had. For example, it took two years for Linh to get on the medical career path. She described her frustration saying, “I finished college in my country. But I cannot use any of [the diploma and degree] here, so I started from the beginning to start in GED again.” Joel also observed the loss of opportunity:

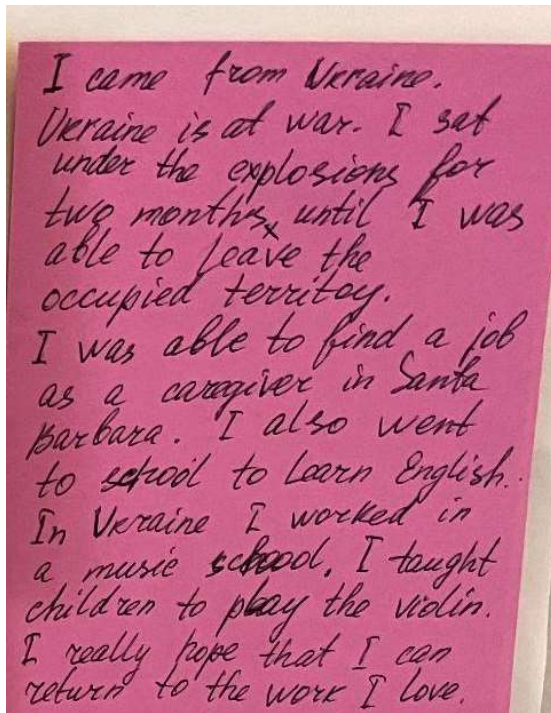
Most of the companies I have interviewed for . . . didn’t accept my background in Brazil. . . . The first question is “Oh, have you worked in the U. S. as a project manager?”. . . I had to drop down, get a lower [paying] job, and start again.

Antonia had to start as a dishwasher in the hospital cafeteria when she had experience working as a medical assistant in Mexico. I could also relate even though I understood why my credentials would not apply here. I wrote in my digital story, “Even with my law degree in Japan, the only jobs I can get are minimum wage jobs.” I also had two years of experience in teaching and school management at that point. I remember being frustrated that none of my education or work experience mattered in the U.S.

One of the exhibit attendees who emigrated from Ukraine after the Russian invasion in 2022, shared her hope to “return to the work [she] loves,” which is teaching music although she, at the time of the exhibit, worked as a caregiver (see Figure 33). Not only do these career and educational setbacks affect our financial well-being but also our emotional well-being as I discussed in the “not the American Dream” section.

Figure 34

An Exhibit Attendee’s Comment #2



Note. A Ukrainian adult learner expressed her desire to work as a music teacher again as they did in Ukraine.

“Great Support”

There were existing programs and structures that supported co-researchers, such as on-site childcare and employers who were supportive of adult learners’ education.

Antonia remembered:

One thing that personally helped me was childcare on campus, but it was limited to only one campus. . . . When I started with my GED classes [at a local Junior High School site] with my kids, . . . [the staff] would give them dinner and take care of them. So, it was a great support . . . because [childcare] was my main barrier.

Employers played an important role in some of our educational journeys. Linh appreciated her former employer for investing in her, explaining, “[The company I

worked for] gave me a good chance. . . . They supported me with money so I could learn and finish my education.” I also took part in the employee tuition reimbursement program through SBCC as well as my current employer, which was a tremendous support.

Receiving an employer’s internal certification training was also convenient and helpful to Antonia. She described:

Someone told me about the phlebotomy training program [the hospital I worked for] offered to employees. So, I started building my network and talking to everybody in the field like managers, teachers, and supervisors. . . . I would really love to do this program.

Antonia successfully completed the program, and now works as a licensed phlebotomist at the hospital that trained her.

“A Game Changer:” Instructional Approaches and Modalities

Certain approaches and modalities of instruction supported or inhibited learning for the CPAR team. Below, I re-present what worked and what did not work in terms of instruction.

Online Learning: Benefits and Challenges. Emma described, “COVID hit, and classes went online. I had time to take classes.” She continued, “I would never have been able to take any of my Chicano studies classes because they were all in person during the middle of the day.” Distance learning options supported immigrant-origin adult learners’ access to educational opportunities. While COVID-19 was devastating in many ways and revealed social and educational inequities in multiple areas, some of the co-researchers turned such tremendously challenging times into opportunities for growth. During the pandemic, some of the co-researchers were laid off or had reduced hours of work, but

that meant there was time to reevaluate their trajectory and go back to school. Bengama explained, “I had to work seventy hours a week. So, I didn’t have the time to continue studying English until the pandemic year, 2020. In June I came back and studied English because [SBCC] . . . offer[ed] online classes.”

For many of the co-researchers, the option to take classes online was a game changer. SBCC offered both synchronous and asynchronous virtual learning options. Linh chimed in saying:

It was huge. . . . I can go back and forth because I have to work, and all the classes are in the morning and in the evenings. I don’t really have time to go. So, with the online class, I’m able to jump into the class for a little bit and then come back and do my work. . . . I can study at my own pace.

She further shared a very practical study strategy that was only possible with recorded lectures:

Because sometimes I’m slow [to understand], . . . especially with English . . . but with the online [course], I pause right there, and then I go back. Make sure I understand this. And then I continue [to the] next step. But if it were in the [in-person] class, I think I would have missed a lot . . . and the lesson would already move on to the next step. So, it is hard.

However, there were challenges in online learning as well. Alejandra shared:

If I needed help with something, trying to kinda pin someone down and getting that help was hard. You know, because it’s remote. In-person, . . . I’m just gonna corner you as soon as I see you . . . [and] ask you questions. But like, yeah, getting that help right away, or while it’s still fresh [is difficult online].

Some of us also experienced the challenge of having children at home while we were trying to study. Linh explained, “After . . . COVID hit. I stayed home with the kids and struggled with being with the kids and learning.” While it is important to acknowledge the downsides and challenges of online learning, without online learning options, many of us would not be here discussing our accomplishments.

Finding Relevance and Representation. Finding relevance in the curriculum and having faculty members who share similar backgrounds supported us as immigrant-origin adult learners. Emma was excited to share her passion for Chicano Studies. “I found Chicano Studies. . . . I’ve absolutely fallen in love with that subject.” She wrote:

I slowly found myself.

I found stories about me.

I was able to follow my ancestors’ journey.

These classes are being taught by people like me.

Something unlocked in me.

I felt free.

I now finally understand at 52 years old what it means to say I found people like me to learn from.

The development of such programs, however, requires careful consideration. Emma shared her experience in the bilingual education program in her elementary school, which was a stark contrast to the Chicano studies classes in college. She noted:

They wanted to teach us bilingual education. We were the first group to do it, and they did a horrible job. I learned the Pledge of Allegiance in Spanish. [Some team members gasped.] Oh, I know, I don’t know why that was necessary.

Emma then recited the pledge of allegiance in Spanish. To this day, she remembers every word in Spanish. In a way, it was shocking to learn reciting the pledge of allegiance was a priority outcome in bilingual education, but part of me knew why. For immigrant children (and families), the pressure to assimilate and pledge allegiance to the U.S. is immense. I understand immigrant and bilingual education has evolved tremendously since then and know aspects of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching are now being incorporated. What is notable here is the importance of cultural relevancy in the curriculum. Just translating the content into another language did not necessarily support students from different backgrounds.

(Not) Understanding the Unique Needs. The importance of understanding the unique instructional needs of immigrant-origin learners emerged as a necessary condition for effective course planning. For example, one instructor's lack of understanding, deficit mindset, and insensitivity to Antonia's needs contributed to her negative experience.

Antonia recalled:

One day, one of the teachers embarrassed me in front of the class saying I cheated on an assignment. After that, I never went back to ESL, and for a while, I gave up thinking maybe my father was right that I only needed to take care of my family and the house.

She explained the background more in one of our meetings:

So, I went to [ESL] level 3, but I stopped because you know, I was with this teacher . . . There was a day when he gave us an assignment in the computer lab. He told us to write . . . about a famous person. . . . I thought he just wanted us to practice our typing, or I don't know. . . . So, I Googled some stuff about this

singer and then I wrote down my thing. When he checked, he wrote, “Did you write this?” But he didn’t tell me anything, or he didn’t ask me, “Where did you get it from?” Basically, I wrote pretty similar to what it said on the Internet. And then, a couple of days later, he was talking in front of the whole class about this . . . He’s like . . . “when this student did this [assignment], she basically copied and pasted,” which I didn’t, but he said, “She’s not even capable to write like that. So, I never thought that she did it because she’s not at that level yet. She was just cheating.” And all the class started laughing! At first, I didn’t realize it was about me. But the more he talk[ed], the more I realized he was talking about me.

The impact this incident had on Antonia’s educational journey (she never went back to ESL) as well as her self-confidence (she started believing her father was right that she did not belong in school) illustrates the enormous power and responsibility faculty members hold. The instructor in this anecdote did not handle the situation well. Instead of reflecting on the clarity of his directions as well as his preparation for the assignment, he blamed the student in a demeaning manner in public. This is an example of the manifestation of a deficit mindset.

This could have been a great learning opportunity and a teachable moment for both him and Antonia. What could have helped Antonia is explicit communication of the expectations of the assignment and instruction on academic integrity or plagiarism, in other words, the academic norms of U.S. education. Antonia would have benefited from scaffolded instruction and practice in writing summaries or paraphrasing. Whatever the intent of the teacher, the impact was severe. While Antonia never went back to any ESL

classes since the incident, she later found a bilingual GED class to continue her educational journey.

Contextualizing Math.

[I] bought books and tried to have people help me with the best way to solve this [math] problem. Because I didn't understand why, or what it meant. . . . [After graduating,] when I started working on system implementation [at work]. . . . [colleagues] came with a problem. I said . . . I can't help you. . . . My goal was to finish the [degree]. . . . I don't know how I've finished math. . . . If you're giving me some [real] problems to solve. I don't know how I'm gonna solve [them].

Joel's comment above illustrated the challenges of applying math concepts learned in school to real-life situations. Emma also expressed her feelings toward math:

I hate math. . . . I haven't done math since high school like back in 1990, and I haven't taken any math since then. . . . I don't like math, but I'm sticking with it. . . [because it is] one of the last classes I need.

Math can be a barrier to certain adult learners. Jameson and Fusco (2014) discussed adult learners' math anxiety, low self-efficacy, and low self-concept. As an adult learner, I also remember panicking when my SBCC academic counselor mistakenly told me I needed to take math after not touching math for almost a decade since my high school calculus class in Japan, which I remember nothing about. I was relieved when I found out that the counselor was wrong. It was not required for my certificate program. Part of the reason why math seems irrelevant and difficult to adult learners is that we do not see immediate real-life applications or connections.

Summary

The CPAR team members' lived experiences revealed many institutional shortcomings as well as some helpful support systems. In our journeys, the unwelcoming campus climate, inaccessible and stigmatizing support as well as the biases and deficit mindset of educators were major barriers to our success. As well, foreign credentials and prior learning not being recognized was a barrier. Employer and state-funded tuition aid programs, on-site childcare, and job-embedded training helped dismantle some of the barriers we encountered.

On the instructional side, while there were downsides, expanding online options to diversify the modalities of instruction supported us as immigrant-origin adult learners. Cultural relevance and applicability of the learning content to students' lives influenced our motivation and success. Some faculty members' deficit mindset and inability to cater to ELLs and immigrant-origin adult learners' unique needs had devastating effects.

Long Story Short

What are the lived experiences of immigrant-origin adult learners centered around their education? Throughout this chapter, I re-presented the CPAR team's lived experiences by sharing quotes and excerpts from our artifacts organized by the themes I constructed through the analysis process. Co-researchers and I encountered traumatic experiences that impacted and continue to affect our educational journeys at the dispositional level. We faced various barriers at the situational and institutional levels. We leveraged our community cultural wealth as well as institutional support programs to achieve our goals. On the one hand, parental beliefs, familial expectations, and abuse

contributed to our trauma. On the other hand, family members were often our major support and motivational sources. In Chapter 7, I continue to discuss how these findings connect to existing theories and literature, and the issues I grappled with during the analysis process as part of the implications of the nested CPAR study.

CHAPTER 6

RE-PRESENTATION OF DATA: CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot un-educate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.

— Cesar Chavez

You and I are close, we intertwine; you may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be me while remaining what you are and what I am not.

—Trinh T. Minh-ha

In this chapter, I present the analysis of the Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) innovation and its impacts on the participants' critical consciousness as a way of addressing RQ3: What are the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants' critical consciousness? Part of the goals of this nested CPAR was to raise participants' critical consciousness to build their capacity for implementing change. I also used my evaluation of the CPAR innovation to address catalytic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005) for empowering the participants. Catalytic validity focuses on the transformative impact of innovations in action research.

Unlike data collection for RQ1 and RQ2, which followed the CPAR's collaborative approaches, I derived the findings for RQ3 mainly from the last two meetings with the CPAR team, one in which we reflected on our counterstory development and exhibit preparation processes. The other was a debriefing meeting, in which I used semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix G) to facilitate a discussion around participants' experiences during the innovation. The debriefing meeting took the form of more traditional research, in which I acted as the researcher and the participants, as traditional research participants. Thus, in this section, I refer to the

innovation participants as participants, rather than co-researchers and present the data anonymously.

Analysis Process (RQ3)

As stated above, the main source of data for my analysis of the participants' critical consciousness development and the impacts of the CPAR innovation was the recordings of two CPAR team meetings in April. In my data analysis for RQ3, I also included other data sources such as participants' emails, text messages, and the open-ended online questionnaire responses collected at the end of the CPAR innovation.

While I had already read and coded the transcripts from both meetings as part of my analysis for RQ1 and RQ2, I began my analysis for RQ3 by re-reading and re-coding the transcripts. As RQ3 refers to a specific concept, critical consciousness, and is a targeted inquiry, I decided to use deductive coding and analyze the data through the lens of critical consciousness. Critical consciousness represents the capacity to critically reflect and act upon one's sociopolitical environment (Diemer et al., 2006). As I re-read the transcripts, I categorized relevant participants' comments into two main categories: Capacity to Reflect and Capacity to Act. To provide more concrete constructs, I further separated the two categories into the four components of the sociopolitical (=Critical consciousness) development model (Watts et al., 1999; Watts & Flanagan, 2007): (a) Worldview and Social Analysis; (b) Sense of Agency; (c) Opportunity Structure; and (d) Societal Involvement (see Figure 35).

The first component, worldview and social analysis, encompasses awareness of injustice and inequity in society. I found in participants' responses both micro and macro

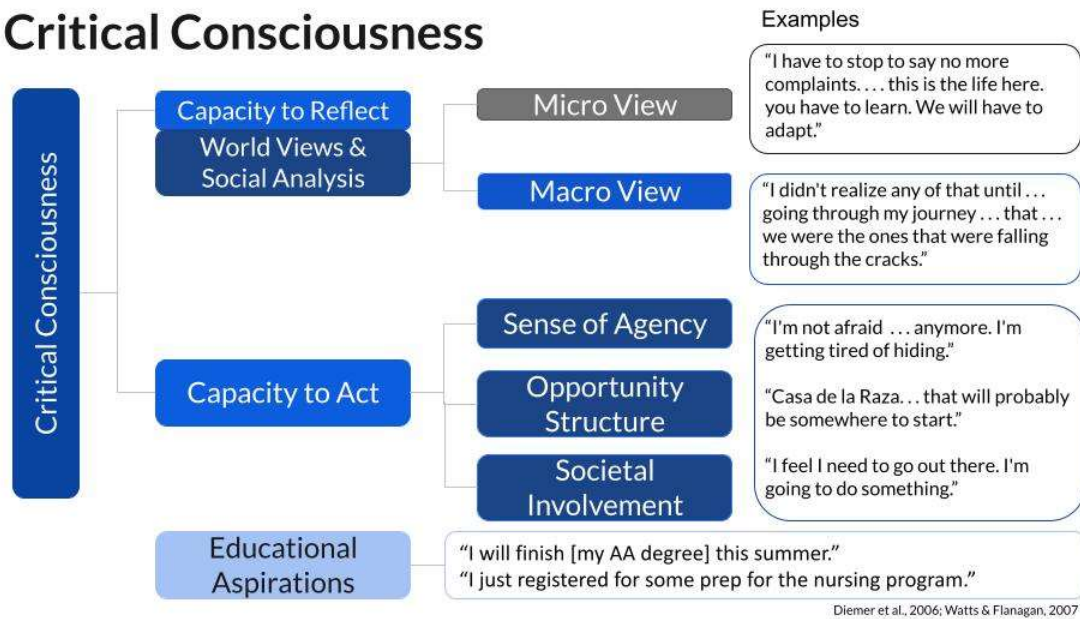
views of the world based on the *Just World Belief* in which individuals assume that personal behaviors largely contribute to what happens to them in terms of their social conditions (APA Dictionary of Psychology). As Watts and Flanagan (2007) explain, “A micro view attributes social conditions to the talents or shortcomings of individuals. A macro view emphasizes the influence of ineffective or oppressive social institutions on social conditions” (p. 785). The second component, sense of agency, comprises personal and collective empowerment and the sense of belonging to a group. The third component, opportunity structure, refers to opportunities to be involved in affecting change. Finally, societal involvement means understanding the importance of engagement in civic and community actions (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

In addition, I re-coded Impacts on Educational Aspirations because the idea was prominent as part of the effects found through the open coding process for RQ1, and it relates to the findings of other studies on the development of critical consciousness (Diemer, 2009; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer et al., 2010, as cited in McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016).

Figure35

Critical Consciousness Code Samples

Critical Consciousness



Note. The figure shows a sample quote for each of the prescriptive codes as well as two examples for the impacts on educational aspirations.

Impacts (RQ3)

What are the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants' critical consciousness? My deductive coding process revealed how the CPAR innovation provided time and space for participants to engage in social analysis. The participants critically reflected on their experiences even though they still expressed both micro and macro worldviews. The CPAR innovation also ignited the participants' sense of agency through personal empowerment and collective efficacy (Bandura, 2001; Sampson et al., 1997, as cited in Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The CPAR innovation itself acted as an opportunity structure that offered a meaningful platform and support for action in their community, which led to their societal involvement through the exhibit on campus. As a result of the CPAR innovation, the participants recognized their shared commitment to a

common cause, started exploring other opportunity structures that exist in the community, and expressed their intent to get further involved in improving immigrant-origin learners' access to and experiences within higher education. Two of the participants have impacted their family members' trajectory as well. Finally, the participants expressed their new career and educational aspirations and their plans for taking courses at SBCC. In the sections below, I describe my sense-making process and how I relied on existing literature as I grappled with some of my findings.

Capacity to Critically Reflect

Several participants described how they reflected, for the first time, on their experiences in a structured way to investigate the role of the system(s) through the CPAR innovation. Everyone identified how familial, cultural, and societal norms as well as the educational and political systems influenced their educational journey (the Macro view). Some of participants' critical revelations related to the macro view were, "There are a lot of issues . . . [in] the educational system. . . I didn't realize any of that until going through my journey. . . . We were the ones that were falling through the cracks" and "Life is not equal."

There were a few participant comments connected to the micro view of the world, which places the responsibility or blame on individuals. Such comments were mostly about participants' own struggles or events that happened to them rather than about judging others' conditions or actions. The sentiments expressed included, "I have to stop to say no more complaints. . . . This is the life here. You have to learn. We will have to adapt." The feeling of guilt was also shared:

I feel bad for my kids that . . . the first few years I did not know how to talk to their teachers. I didn't understand what the teacher said . . . I didn't know how to go to an assembly in school. And now I look back . . . I feel so bad for my son that I missed a lot to support my older son.

Critical Hope

Part of my intent with the CPAR innovation was to raise participants' critical consciousness, ideally fostering macro views and challenging micro views of the world. As I grappled with the fact that both micro and macro views of the world were evident in my data, the principles of critical hope helped me understand how conflicting ideas can be part of the critical consciousness development process. As Grain (2022) described, "Critical hope is messy, uncomfortable, and full of contradictions" (p. 51). Even though the CPAR team acknowledged what we need is NOT the false forms of hope or what Duncan-Andrade (2009) calls hokey hope, the stronghold of the meritocratic myth was evident in the debriefing meeting. The meritocratic myth implies students just need to "work hard . . . and play by the rules, then they will go to college and live out the American dream" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 182). One participant shared:

Everything's a struggle. . . . In terms of education, it's not easy to try to balance life, and being a parent and whatnot, but you're struggling . . . but it's like that good burn, you know, you're having something spicy. . . . It's good. It's not something you want really, you know, you can feel it in your ears and whatnot. But it's good. You're gonna keep doing it. . . . It's a good feeling because regardless, you're growing. You're gonna grow, you're gonna learn from it.

Furthermore, in response to the idea of Not the American Dream, another participant expressed:

Oh, for me, . . . you know, I really love this country. . . . I think [some hardships] are a part of our life, you know with our education. . . . I think this country is open for everyone to welcome everyone. Even though I am struggling, I fell, you know, my life upside down. But I think it's very good. . . . But I'm sorry that you feel that way . . . Hopefully, soon you'll adapt completely like me.

This comment triggered the CPAR team to acknowledge there are both positive and negative elements to the education system and the campus culture. As I analyzed this comment, I thought of a few possible reasons behind it.

This particular participant missed most of the evening group meetings due to their work schedule. They attended only two out of ten group sessions including the debriefing meeting between December 2022 and April 2023. I met with this participant separately one-on-one monthly to go over the same, yet condensed, content. Needless to say, the CPAR innovation experience was different for this participant, and I believe that due to their limited experience with the group, there were fewer opportunities for them to build collective efficacy.

The same participant repeatedly mentioned how grateful they are for the “very good opportunity” they received, and the college is doing “quite good already” even though their conversations revealed many systemic barriers. Gawayed (2022) reported in her book about research on/with refugees from Syria that “the pressure to appear grateful” (p. 82) is ingrained in many of the refugees as well as in the receiving communities. While all of us have a lot to be thankful for, perhaps the political and social

pressure of having to be grateful to be in the U.S. also affects our ability to critically reflect as immigrants.

The path to critical consciousness and improvement of the current systems can be a winding road with many twists and turns, bumps and potholes. All of the statements the participants shared during the debriefing meeting were real feelings and their truths at that moment while other contradicting sentiments and events were also shared. According to Grain (2022), “Critical hope is not something you have; it’s something you practice” (p. 38), and we have to continue practicing.

Capacity to Act

The concepts related to the participants’ capacity to act such as the sense of agency, opportunity structures, and the intent for societal involvement were also evident in the CPAR team’s conversations. For all of the participants, it was the first time to collaboratively reflect on their personal experiences, and many of the participants expressed their surprise at how they were “not in [their] own bubble.” This revelation through reflection, and the collective action the CPAR team took through the exhibit, correlated with the development of a sense of agency. The participants expressed, “I’m not afraid . . . anymore.” “And I feel I need to go out there. I’m going to do something.” The participants identified a few on-campus groups and local organizations they may work with in the future, shared concrete ideas on what they can do, such as facilitating more storytelling sessions, and expressed their commitment to act. One participant claimed, “I would love to help. . . . I’m busy. I work 6 days, but I will make time.”

Nos/Otras (Us+Others=We)

Across the CPAR innovation, through sharing their stories and listening to the experiences of their co-researchers, the participants realized that they were not alone and that there was power in the collective. As one participant noted, “I learned that life is not equal, but we can see your life in others as well. . . . and we have to join this battle.” By sharing their experiences, they gained a new community. This made the participants hopeful that the actions of the CPAR team had an impact on the campus community.

Mirroring the composition of the Spanish word, *nosotras*, which consists of *nos* (us) and *otras* (others), Anzaldúa’s (1987) *nos/otras* theory explains how differently situated people can share commonalities and collaborate for a common cause from their respective positions. Like the word *nosotras*, “[j]oined together, *nos+otras* holds the promise of healing” (Keating, 2006, p. 10). One participant described:

I’m not in my own bubble like I always thought I was. There are others walking with the exact same, you know the path that either I’m going through or I’ve been through. What I learned from everyone here is everyone’s going through their own little life. Our own little struggle, their own little path. Everybody needs to be loved, understood, and appreciated.

This understanding of shared experiences and hope for being understood gave the CPAR team a sense of agency to collectively act to share our stories with the campus community.

When the CPAR team shared our stories, we found a community around us on campus. Many attendees commented on how our stories resonated with them and they told similar stories of their own. One takeaway for the participants was they have a

community around them and allies on campus, and they felt more empowered to continue sharing their stories as well as to support others. The CPAR innovation supported the increased sense of agency and collective efficacy through a sense of belonging. Several participants expressed their desire to take further action, and my hope is that they will individually or collectively continue the work we started through the CPAR innovation.

Impacts on Educational Aspirations

Aligned with the claims that the development of critical consciousness correlates with positive career development and school engagement (Diemer, 2009; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer et al., 2010, as cited in McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016), the participants expressed their intent to further their education. “I’m trying to get some classes at SBCC for project management.” “I will finish [my AA degree] this summer.” “I just registered for some prep for the nursing program.” The participants also spread their passion for learning to their family members:

My sister in Mexico . . . is about to graduate from high school, [I] wonder if she starts the university over there, . . . [the] credits [she will earn in Mexico will be] valid in SBCC once she is able to come here. We are in the process [of bringing her to California] already.

Another participant shared, “I have gotten my older daughter . . . [to start] taking classes at the city college in Chicano studies.”

Long Story Short

What are the impacts of the CPAR innovation on the participants’ critical consciousness? While it is not possible to measure exactly how much the participants’

critical consciousness improved due to their involvement in the CPAR innovation, it is evident that the participants' perspectives shifted. The CPAR innovation provided the participants with opportunities to reflect on their past experiences and to gain awareness of the role of familial and cultural expectations, institutional practices, and the sociopolitical systems in their educational journey. While the path to critical consciousness development may not always be smooth or straight, with steps back and forth, the participants realized they were not alone on their life journeys and felt encouraged to have found a community through the collective action. Many of the participants have renewed enthusiasm for improving the campus climate and education system for immigrant-origin adult learners. They are also ready to further their own education to achieve new career and educational goals.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Going in circles
a promising journey
without end.

— Charlie Lawler

The light of a candle
is transferred to another candle—
spring twilight.

— Buson Yosa

As I shared in Chapter 1, adult learners, especially, immigrant-origin learners are a key constituency in higher education. Recently, the population has gained significant attention in the national conversation as higher education institutions recover from the enrollment decline during the COVID-19 pandemic (Knox, 2023). Part of the conversation among the “experts” highlights the need for colleges to realign their approaches to better serve their future populations: adult students, immigrant-origin students, and students of color.

This nested Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) explored this timely topic by amplifying immigrant-origin adult learners’ voices. The purpose of this nested CPAR study was to examine a California community college’s practices and campus climate for more equitable access and success of immigrant-origin adult learners. In this chapter, I summarize the findings, connect the findings to existing theories and literature, and suggest recommendations for higher education institutions based on the findings. As a bricoleur, I present the ideas below for more feedback looping (see Chapter 3). Finally, I share one of the issues I grappled with during the study in relation to future considerations and address the limitations and transferability of this study.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The CPAR innovation generated a sense of community among the participants and a deeper and broader understanding of our lived experiences as immigrant-origin adult learners. The analysis process also revealed the CPAR innovation had an impact on participants' critical consciousness and that the path forward to academic access and success for immigrant-origin adult learners in higher education is complex. To summarize, the findings include:

- Traumas affected the CPAR team's access and success throughout our educational journeys. Such significant events in our lives included feelings of abandonment or abuse in childhood, grappling with cultural and familial expectations, social exclusion, the negative impacts of immigration on self-confidence, and transgenerational traumas.
- The CPAR team managed situational barriers including balancing family, work, and school responsibilities, our own and our family's physical and mental health issues, and financial concerns.
- The CPAR team leveraged community cultural wealth to persist through challenges. While all forms of capital were evident, some of the most notable included aspirational, familial, social, and linguistic capital.
- The CPAR team faced institutional barriers such as navigating the college processes, implicit/explicit biases in the education system, foreign credentials and experiences not being recognized, tuition and fees, lack of (correct) information, and inadequate support.

- Helpful resources and support programs the CPAR team utilized included on-site childcare, multiple levels of tuition assistance programs (state, local, and employer-led), and free employer-provided training programs.
- CPAR team members connected to content and classroom environments that were representative of our culture and experiences. Content and learning spaces where we were represented (i.e., Chicano Studies) supported our motivation and academic success. On the other hand, decontextualized instruction and knowledge assessment that disregard the unique needs of immigrant-origin adult learners, or mere translation of the curriculum content were not helpful.
- Distance education options played an important role in making college accessible to the CPAR members.
- Informed by critical pedagogy, this CPAR innovation provided the participants with opportunities to critically reflect on their past experiences and examine the events in their lives in a larger cultural and sociopolitical context. The CPAR innovation offered an opportunity structure for societal involvement and supported the development of a sense of agency through collective efficacy. The experience inspired them to support others and further their own education.

Back to the Theories

The three major theories I used to guide this nested CPAR study were: critical pedagogy, social and cultural capital theories, and adult learning theory. Below, I describe how the findings from this study relate to each.

As the findings of this study indicate, the approaches of critical pedagogy can support the development of critical consciousness; however, the myth of meritocracy still had a stronghold in many of the participants' minds. Through problem-posing questions, dialogue, and praxis, the CPAR innovation provided an opportunity structure for participants' societal involvement. A diverse group of co-researchers working collaboratively cultivated the macro view of the world and developed a sense of agency towards societal involvement. The results of this study and the evidence of the micro view demonstrate that critical pedagogy/andragogy while keeping critical hope, must continue to be incorporated into curricula to reach true mutual liberation.

In line with the results of existing studies (Diemer, 2009; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer et al., 2010, as cited in McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016), the development of critical consciousness correlated with the participants' intentions for higher educational attainment and their future career outcome expectations. While the participants continue to seek success within the current system, the CPAR team explored different ways to express knowledge (oral, visual, and written) and demonstrated different types of knowledge (counterstories centering our hybrid identities) through problem-posing and praxis. While institutions of higher education are still far from fully acknowledging and leveraging new types of intelligences such as Carrillo's (2016) *Mestiz@ Theory of Intelligences*, the CPAR team found hope and encouragement through the exhibit attendees' supportive comments.

In terms of social and cultural capital, this study found that as immigrant-origin adult learners, we were successful in leveraging our own unique capital. We also found it difficult to get our human capital and prior learning recognized in the current education

and employment systems. Many of the institutional barriers stemmed from the college's centering of White middle-class and youth-centric cultures. Such practices manifested in preferred treatment of full-time, traditional-aged students, information access gap for noncredit and adult students, and instructional practices that ignored the unique needs and strengths of immigrant-origin learners. Unless educators and policymakers recognize the inequity in the current system and start making changes, the education system will continue to be complicit in the reproduction of oppressive social structures, which only endorse the cultural capital of the privileged (Darder et al., 2017).

Finally, many of the principles of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984) were confirmed in this nested CPAR study. The CPAR team's learning needs, motivational factors, and barriers mirrored the findings of other studies discussed in Chapter 2. The co-researchers had prior knowledge and experiences that could be better leveraged through contextualized and culturally relevant learning. The co-researchers' main motivators included elevated self-esteem, a fulfilling career, and an improved quality of life for their family. The barriers co-researchers faced included the self-concept affected by trauma, inaccessible opportunities and resources, and competing responsibilities.

Limitations and Challenges

In order to affect change in a specific local context, the purpose and focus of this nested CPAR were empowered and collaborative participation among members of the impacted community. As such, the local participants in this study do not fully represent the diverse immigrant-origin adult learner population in adult and postsecondary education. As I described in Chapter 1, the immigrant population is heterogeneous. Thus,

it would be important to conduct similar studies in varied contexts to further examine immigrant-origin adult learners' lived experiences. Future research may include more diverse participants, contexts, and solution proposals. Different types of results would likely be observed in four-year university settings, other community colleges that serve different groups of immigrant-origin adult learners and other locales.

One of the obstacles I faced in conducting this study at a more granular level was the participants' busy schedules mirroring the barrier for adult learners. I tried my best to find times when all co-researchers could meet; however, one of the co-researchers had to miss many of the Tuesday evening meetings when others could meet. We also scheduled two of our meetings on Sundays. I met with the co-researcher who missed Tuesday meetings separately. I leveraged Web 2.0 tools, such as Jamboard and Padlet, to work collaboratively asynchronously. I recorded our synchronous Zoom meetings and shared the recordings with the co-researchers. This way, co-researchers had the opportunity to listen to the team conversations even when they were not present in the meetings. However, as explained in Chapter 6, not being able to meet with everyone at once did affect our community building and critical consciousness development.

Another challenge I faced in implementing this study was technology access. One of the co-researchers did not have a Google account/app and accessed the innovation materials strictly on their smartphone. The eBook program we used for digital storytelling did not work on smartphones. Once I learned that access was an issue, I made modifications to the communication methods and activities to ensure everyone's active participation. For example, I shared Google Slides in a PDF format and pasted the content of Google Docs in the body of emails. I also met with the co-researcher with

technology access issues separately to develop their eBook together on my laptop. It was important to be flexible with my CPAR innovation plans.

Implications for Research

The findings of this study generated future considerations for research. Future research in the adult education field focusing on immigrant-origin learners is necessary. Action research that generates empirical data regarding critical andragogy, culturally and linguistically responsive concepts, and trauma-informed practices in adult and higher education could provide further insight into the issues I explored in this study. I also would like to advocate for humanizing and decolonizing ways of research. On a personal level, there were philosophical and moral issues I grappled with through the CPAR process. I found a way forward by leaning on research in cultural and gender studies.

Critical Andragogy for New Forms of Knowledges, Intelligences, and Capital

Utilizing critical/anti-oppressive pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2014; Kumashiro, 2015), future studies can further reevaluate the reproduction process of social and cultural capital and the role of education in the reproduction process. Future research must include adult learners. There are many studies on critical consciousness development in youths, especially with adolescents of color; however, there are fewer studies on critical pedagogy/andragogy with the adult learner population. Considering the historical and current marginalization of immigrant-origin adult learners in higher education and the workforce, critical andragogy can be utilized not only as a vehicle for promoting immigrant-origin adult learners' academic success within the current education system

but also for redefining valuable knowledges, intelligences, and forms of capital (social, cultural, etc.). Future research should be done with, not just on, immigrant-origin adult learners to examine the impact of critical andragogy on adult learning and the immigrant population. While this study focused on a specific local context, similar studies can be conducted in various educational settings with adult learners with diverse backgrounds.

Future research can support operationalizing culturally and linguistically responsive and affirming concepts in diverse contexts. While my CPAR innovation focused on exploring the participants' community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and critical consciousness development (i.e., world views and social analysis, sense of agency through collective efficacy, societal involvement, and educational and occupational aspirations), I also reviewed other potential concepts such as funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), and *Mestiz@* Theory of Intelligences (Carrillo, 2016). Future studies can explore how educational institutions can utilize such concepts and theories to support immigrant-origin adult learners. For example, Garcia (2019) advocates for Hispanic-serving institutions to recognize students' nonacademic outcomes, including "the development of academic self-concept, leadership identity, racial identity, critical consciousness, graduate school aspirations, and civic engagement" (p. 3). While many of the examples I explored in this dissertation are proposed by Latina/o/x scholars about Latina/o/x learners, future studies can include a more diverse group of scholars and participants. Researchers could operationalize culturally affirming concepts by implementing innovations around varied forms of capital, intelligences, and nonacademic outcomes with immigrant-origin adult learners to potentially uncover new insights and deepen our understanding of such concepts.

Trauma-informed Practices in Adult Immigrant Education

Recognizing the process of immigration can be distressing and considering all participants in this study, irrespective of their backgrounds, encountered trauma in their lives, there's an opportunity for further investigation into how trauma affects immigrant-origin adult learners. Empirical action research with trauma-informed interventions in adult and higher education settings can provide additional evidence and directions for more effective instructional and communication approaches for adult learners with trauma.

Humanizing and Decolonizing Research with CPAR

I would also like to advocate for future research which humanizes and decolonizes the “traditional” educational research processes and mediating the power imbalances between “researchers” and “research subjects.” This nested CPAR set out to honor and value the expertise and lived experiences of immigrant-origin learners. Thus, the co-researchers were included in decision-making during the research process. I also found it critical to demonstrate practical respect for the co-researchers' time and expertise by providing honoraria for their work. Fine and Torre (2022) argue that “CPAR projects should subsidize ... labor as acts of respect, dignity, and care” (p.42). I was fortunate to secure grants from Arizona State University to do so. The CPAR team generated and utilized forms of data we felt most appropriate including art-based, verbal, and digital media. To make the research process and results truly meaningful and empowering to the impacted communities, future researchers must amplify marginalized voices through ethical, equitable, and mutually respectful participation. While researchers can have

different positionalities, it was important for me to do research with and for the community I belong to, immigrant-origin adult learners. As research can inform policy, humanizing and decolonizing research is critical for driving social change that accurately reflects the realities of the impacted communities.

Nepantla: Multiple Dimensions of Our Identity

Another area of implication for future research is educational access in relation to the intersections of identities, specifically, cultural and gender identities. Doing CPAR was not easy, and throughout the study, I faced a few conflicting ideas. One of the biggest points of contention was how to present the events in our lives that were at the intersection of gender and culture. Co-researchers raised the concepts of *machismo* and *misogyny* during the analysis of our journey maps. While it was important to present our truth, I was concerned we may be perpetuating negative cultural stereotypes if we framed certain events as cultural issues. There exists a generalized narrative in education where the privileged groups blame the minoritized cultures and practices of people of color for absenteeism in school and disparities in academic success. This tension triggered me to explore research in cultural studies and the current global gender equity issues, especially in education and the workforce. This feedback looping process led me to *nepantla* (Anzaldúa, 1993) and cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2001).

The concept of *nepantla* helped me work through my points of contention and come to terms with telling our stories of marginalization based on gender within the marginalized communities from our transnational multicultural perspective. “Nepantla”

means “in-between space” in Nahuatl and is an Aztec concept of the duality or multiplicity of our existence (Keating, 2006). Anzaldúa (2015) coined the term “nepantleras” as people who move within and across multiple worlds, cultures, and diverse groups of people. Being able to see things from divergent perspectives, nepantleras have the potential to offer innovative and transformative ideas. As demonstrated in my struggle with this dilemma, the state of nepantla can be confusing, painful, and messy as our old worldview collides with often contradictory viewpoints or frameworks. Anzaldúa (2004) emphasized that nepantla encompasses “overlapping and layered spaces of different cultures and social and geographic locations, of events and realities- psychological, sociological, political, spiritual, historical, creative, imagined” (p. 176). My interpretation is, as transnational multicultural individuals, the participants and I are nepantleras who experience nepantla as we live in two (or sometimes more) cultures simultaneously as insiders/outsideers. Our identities also include multiple dimensions such as race, gender, sexuality, and social and economic standing, to name just a few. We, as immigrant-origin adult learners, can see and acknowledge multiple aspects of our two, or more, cultures and where they intersect with other identities. We are well-positioned to compare and critique both cultures from our unique vintage points, and we should be the ones to tell our stories from where we stand.

Another theory helped me view gender issues globally as the experiences of the co-researchers spanned beyond international borders. Hofstede’s (2001) cultural dimensions theory suggests that certain countries have high masculinity, and/or high-power distance acceptance, meaning the tendency for society to accept the power hierarchy. Different places and cultures fall under varied categories in the continuum

(Hofstede, 2001). While the areas and the severity of challenges for gender equality may vary from culture to culture, it appeared as a rather ubiquitous issue in our stories. Further exploring the intersections of gender and cultures in relation to immigrant-origin adult learners' educational access and success was beyond the scope of this nested CPAR; however, the results of this study point to this issue as a potential area for future research.

Implications for Practice

When the CPAR team was given a platform to share our counterstories, the campus community responded with empathy, ideas for improvement, and their own stories. The CPAR innovation demonstrated one way to improve the campus climate and practices is to start by listening to the impacted students. When a college can create an environment where historically underserved students' voices are represented, this can lead to changes for more equitable access and success. Just like the CPAR participants expressed their interest in taking further action, when students are empowered through critical pedagogy/andragogy, they can become change agents within their communities to create a lasting impact.

As I discuss implications for practice, I would like to start by sharing the ideas of the co-researchers in this study through the pre-innovation questionnaire. The co-researchers responded to the question, *What are some ways SBCC can improve to support adult immigrant students' educational goals?* with some practical ideas such as offering "flexible time to fit busy schedule" and "childcare [on] campus." The responses also included deeper issues and insights such as "Treat [us] like humans," "Including different programs that are part of the American culture [e.g., Chicano studies and other ethnic

studies programs],” and having “multilingual employees and sociolinguists because it’s not just about speaking the language but knowing how to communicate beyond words.” With the stories that the co-researchers shared, it is apparent that these recommendations are rooted in their lived experiences.

Below, I present implications for SBCC as well as the broader higher education community by connecting the findings of this nested CPAR study to existing theories and literature. I first list the implications for practice. Then I explain each item by drawing on the findings of this study and/or existing literature. Here are what higher education institutions can do to support immigrant-origin adult learners:

1. Train faculty and staff on trauma-informed communication and teaching methods.
2. Implement culturally responsive practices:
 - a. Provide resources and opportunities for faculty and staff to routinely reflect on their positionality, biases, and mindset.
 - b. Honor and leverage learners’ prior knowledge.
3. Make adult-focused support programs easily accessible and stigma-free. College departments should collaborate and coordinate to disseminate program information equitably.
4. Honor and leverage students’ community cultural wealth by creating learning communities, supporting students’ goals, inspiring new dreams, and celebrating every accomplishment.
5. Offer quality distance learning options with robust support systems.

Trauma-informed Communication and Teaching Methods

Just like all the CPAR team members, college classes are likely to include trauma-impacted students as traumatic experiences are prevalent. Furthermore, immigrant-origin adult learners can have elevated levels of trauma exposure (Davidson, 2017; National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2012). The CPAR team's traumatizing experiences included the act of immigrating. As Morrice (2013) posited, migration can interrupt identity development and create conflict between the immigrants' native culture and the receiving culture, including loss of professional/family roles and social standing. With the realization the act of immigrating itself can be traumatizing and all of the participants of this study, regardless of their background, experienced trauma in life, it is critical educators understand how trauma affects learning. Training on trauma-informed teaching should be incorporated into educators' professional development.

Understanding the effects of post-traumatic stress on our brains can help educators better support learners with trauma. Navigating college environments and requirements can present stress and mental strain, especially for students with a history of trauma exposure, and can lead to higher dropout rates (Boyratz et al., 2013; Read et al., 2011). Post-traumatic stress can also affect learning (Buzick, 2022; Wilson, 2020), and educators can benefit from training on the science behind trauma and adverse childhood experiences (Buzick, 2022; Dube et al., 2023). Recognizing how post-traumatic stress can affect learning and being reflective of the impacts can benefit educators. For more detailed action items, I refer to the recommendations presented by experts in the field for

trauma-informed practices for postsecondary and distance learning education. (Davidson, 2017; Pate, 2020).

From Reflection to Relevance and Representation

To develop a campus culture and learning environment where all students feel valued, respected, and represented, colleges can provide resources and opportunities for faculty and staff to routinely reflect on their positionality, biases, and mindset. Offer training on how to incorporate culturally and linguistically responsive approaches that honor and leverage learners' prior knowledge into their routine.

As the findings from this study illustrated, biases (implicit and explicit) and deficit thinking can negatively impact immigrant-origin adult learners. Biases affected educators' expectations for adult learners and adult learners' access to critical information on educational pathways and support services. Everyone has biases and blind spots, and it is important that we constantly reflect on the impact of our positionalities and our membership in different social groups based on race, ethnicity, social class, gender, etc. on our decisions and behaviors.

Emma's (a participant in this study) experience with finding Chicano Studies illustrates what is known in the literature, finding relevance and representation in instructional materials can boost immigrant-origin adult learners' motivation (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paris, 2012). Emma discussed how learning from someone who looked like her inspired her. Antonia also mentioned how having an instructor who learned English as a second/additional language helped her relate, even though their racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds were different. Other studies have found similar

effects of ethnic studies and curricula that students can see themselves in as well as the positive impacts of educators of color who share the same backgrounds as students (Annamma, 2017; Avery et al., 2018; Banerjee, 2018; Cabrela et al., 2014). The importance of relevance also correlates with the findings from earlier cycles of this study: relevance and application of the curriculum to their lives were critical for adult learners' motivation.

Based on culturally and linguistically relevant/responsive/sustaining approaches (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paris, 2012) as well as adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984), instructors can make their materials contextualized and culturally relevant. Educators should incorporate diverse groups' experiences into their class content and include opportunities for learners to connect new information to culturally relevant examples and their prior knowledge. ELLs and other diverse students may benefit from scaffolding and explicit expectations on assignments. Providing opportunities to demonstrate learning in multimodal and multilingual ways can facilitate empowered participation and self-direction in class, which supports adult learners (Knowles, 1984).

Even math classes could be more relevant, meaningful, and digestible when the content is contextualized. Adult learners tend to be problem-oriented rather than content (subject) oriented and learn more efficiently when they can apply new knowledge immediately to real-life situations and problems (Knowles, 1984). For example, students could earn math credits by utilizing math concepts in engineering, manufacturing, nursing, or another career-related context. Contextualization can also be achieved through making explicit connections to adults' daily lives, such as financial, housing, consumer

economy, or healthcare-related topics. Even for advanced-level math, educators can “revolutionize math instruction” by making “math more culturally responsive and inquiry-based” (Mollenkamp, 2023). In the summer of 2023, Harvard University trained college professors on this culturally responsive math framework to scale up the change.

Accessible, Stigma-free, Adult-Focused Support Programs

As immigrant-origin adult learners can face a multitude of barriers, robust support services that cater to their unique needs are necessary. This study revealed multiple layers of barriers. Similar to the studies mentioned in Chapter 2 (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Housel, 2020; Patterson et al., 2016), the situational barriers co-researchers faced ranged from family members’ health, births as well as deaths in the family, to our own mental health, and work schedules related to financial challenges. Understanding the obstacles adult learners face is key to developing and maintaining support programs and community partnerships for wraparound services. Also, it is important to acknowledge immigration-origin adult learners may need to stop out at times. They should feel supported when they do, and they should feel welcome when they are ready to resume their studies.

Tuition and the financial burden of attending college, including time away from paid work, were some of the major barriers the participants faced. While there already exist tuition aid programs for full-time students, such as SBCC Promise, there appears to be room for improvement with regard to similar programs for supporting part-time adult students. Financial aid to help not only with tuition and school-related expenses but also to supplement income to compensate for the time away from paid work, such as the use

of the Pell Grant, would be beneficial to working adults. Ability to Benefit (ATB) through the Higher Education Act provision expands eligibility to the Pell Grant to learners on a career pathway who are yet to earn their high school diploma/equivalency (World Education, 2023). Utilizing inclusive funding opportunities like ATB can support adult learners with delayed entry into postsecondary education. Employers can also play a critical role in workforce development and adults' upskilling or reskilling, especially by offering internal training opportunities and tuition aid programs. Leveraging all available financial aid opportunities can help immigrant-origin adult learners.

Other support needs encompass childcare, language translation, and academic support for ELL's specific needs. Some of the co-researchers had small children and discussed the importance of childcare. Childcare was one of the three biggest barriers for immigrant workers, along with high housing costs and lack of transportation (Bernstein & Vilter, 2018). Collaborating with organizations that provide free or affordable childcare can increase adult learners' engagement in education. As Linh and Joel discussed, for first-generation immigrant learners, it is critical learners have access to language translation and interpretation to make informed decisions on their education and to fully understand college rules and regulations. Making it easy to request language translation through partnering with other organizations and utilizing evolving technology can support institutions in this effort. Access to explicit instruction or academic support on English language conventions and academic norms and expectations can help immigrant-origin students like Antonia succeed in higher education settings.

To support those who bring rich prior experience, in coordination with the directed self-placement through AB705/1705 (Cal. Legis. Assemb. AB 705. Reg. Sess.,

2017; Cal. Legis. Assemb. AB 1705. Reg. Sess., 2021) and the credit for prior learning (California Code, Education Code § 66025.7) initiatives, colleges can take steps to recognize and articulate relevant experiences. For instance, one California community college district implemented portfolio assessments for some of its Health Science, Welding, and Culinary Arts courses (West Hills Community College, n.d.). Students can submit a narrative essay and other documentation to demonstrate their knowledge and competencies. Through this type of acknowledgment, students can get their previous learning validated, and those initial credits can propel them forward on their educational journey.

Aligned with adult learning theory's principle that adults bring rich prior experience for learning (Knowles, 1984), many of the CPAR members (Antonia, Joel, Linh, and I) brought foreign diplomas, degrees, and/or work experiences when we moved to the U.S. However, as the findings of this CPAR innovation demonstrate, foreign credentials and skills earned through working in another country often do not translate, and subsequently, workplaces are often not leveraging the talents and skills of immigrant-origin adults. This can amount to lost opportunities for both learners and employers. College career services can include specialized services for Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs) or can partner with other organizations, following the examples of some adult education agencies and governmental programs that found creative ways to support immigrant-origin adult learners and ITPs. For example, a community-based adult education and workforce development agency in Boston, Massachusetts provides translation services as well as foreign credential evaluation referrals (Nash & Hewett, 2017). They also work with local employers to waive some of the requirements when

their clients/students are not able to present their transcripts due to war or other turmoil in their native countries. Synergy Texas is another example where adult educators in Texas collaborated to address the academic and employment barriers that ITPs face (Scherer & Stadd, n.d.). The Portland of Opportunity program in Maine connects ITPs with local professionals so ITPs can expand their social capital and professional networks to maximize their career potential in the U.S. (Scherer & Stadd, n.d.). As SBCC's vision states, to be "dedicated to the success of each student" and to "provide opportunities for students to advance their careers" formally recognizing prior learning would be a great next step.

Providing convenient access to support services and normalizing the act of requesting help, including financial, basic needs, academic, health, and mental health support, is necessary to create a more welcoming campus climate. As demonstrated in Emma's story, being shamed for accessing support programs on campus can have a lasting negative impact. As we learned from Linh's struggles enrolling in classes at the college, access to services on campus for adults with busy schedules should be made as easy as possible. In addition, immigrant-origin learners are found to be less likely to access formal mental health services (Dias, 2019; Qiao, 2017). Stereotype threats and self-stigma can also negatively affect historically underrepresented students' tendencies to access academic support services (Winograd & Rust, 2014). Offering accessible and stigma-free support should be prioritized.

Part of making support programs accessible is to make sure the information is equitably available to all students including immigrant-origin adult learners. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the issue of inequitable information dissemination unfolded

during our debriefing meeting. Linh and Bengama did not get the same financial aid information Emma received as a credit student. As tuition and fees continue to be one of the major obstacles for adult learners, a lack of information, especially about financial aid opportunities, can be detrimental to adult learners' goal achievement. Service and program information need to be actively disseminated throughout campus and to the community. Staff in different support departments (e.g., financial aid, academic counseling, mental health, and immigrant support) should be aware of what other departments offer, and the departments should have streamlined referral processes.

Some forms of the above services may already exist, and colleges can build on and improve their existing practices. To summarize, the following are the recommended services.

- a. Tuition assistance and other financial aid options (inclusive of part-time students)
- b. On-site childcare options for students/child-friendly campus.
- c. Language translation/interpretation services
- d. Targeted academic support services for multilingual/cultural learners.
- e. Affordable diploma/degree/credential translation and articulation and recognition of prior learning for school and career.
- f. Stigma-free and inclusive services that are accessible to working adults with children.
- g. Coordinated services and referrals and equitable dissemination of information.

Leveraging Community Cultural Wealth

One thing that was noticeable through this nested CPAR was the co-researchers' strong motivation to achieve their goals (aspirational capital). Across the CPAR innovation, the team shared sources of motivation and discussed our hopes and dreams. Having a goal of leading a fulfilling life, including having a meaningful career helped many of us persist even when we were faced with adversities and barriers. This correlates with the findings of other research studies on adult learners (Kim & Baker, 2015; Kimmel et al., 2016; Osam et al., 2017; Snyman et al., 2018).

Celebrating each accomplishment and feeling proud of our achievements also helped CPAR team members persevere. Each accomplishment helped rebuild our confidence, positive identity, and sense of belonging. Educational opportunities and expanded social networks inspired new dreams. In order to leverage immigrant-origin adult learners' aspirational capital and motivational factors, take every opportunity to celebrate students' achievements no matter the size or level (e.g., class promotion, certificate ceremonies, graduation/commencement). As part of students' social capital, educators play an important role in helping students believe in themselves and igniting passion by communicating high expectations and acting as role models.

Even though adult learners must juggle multiple responsibilities and may not have extra time to spend on campus, it is important they have opportunities to meet other (immigrant-origin) adult learners, cultivate their social capital, share information, and develop a sense of belonging and community. As it happened in our debriefing meeting with financial aid information for part-time students, the learner community can offer what Ball et al. (2000) call "hot knowledge," which social networks and community

members possess as opposed to the “cold knowledge” colleges officially provide. Other studies found identity-based programs can help students connect to mentors and role models as well as useful information and resources, which support the development of students’ social, navigational, and resistant capital (Bañuelos, 2021). Making those networking opportunities family-friendly is also critical for adults with young or school-age children.

Distance Learning

Through the participants’ stories, it is clear distance learning options provided great opportunities for adult learners to participate in education. While there are some downsides to remote learning, it helps dismantle some of the biggest barriers to adult learners’ access to education: time, schedule, and transportation. Carlsen et al. (2016) posited that online distance education opens higher education to adult learners. However, they recommended that colleges ensure technology access and provide adequate support.

Distance learning accommodates busy adult learners’ scheduling needs, eliminates the challenges around transportation, and alleviates some of the childcare challenges. Through a literature review on distance learning, Sadeghi (2019) listed the following as the benefits of distance education: (a) Study from Anywhere, Anytime; (b) Saving Significant Amount of Money (lower tuition/fees); (c) No Commuting; (d) Flexibility to Choose (flexible schedule and program); (e) Saving Time (no wasted time waiting for the bus, etc.); and (f) Earn While You Learn. Considering the results of this nested CPAR study, as well as adult learners’ needs and barriers found in other studies, these benefits support adult learners’ access to higher education.

The nested CPAR study participants also discussed challenges to distance education. As Carlsen et al. (2016) noted, we must ensure students' equitable access to technology or be ready to make modifications and accommodations. Providing technical support as well as academic support that is easily accessible is also critical for the successful implementation of distance education. Colleges can continue offering accredited quality distance education options while strengthening the support elements in distance education.

Summary: Thoughts on Changes

In summary, recommendations for educational institutions include (a) trauma-informed approaches; (b) culturally and linguistically responsive and contextualized instruction; (c) adult-focused and stigma-free support programs; (d) community cultural wealth acknowledgement; and (e) distance learning opportunities. I recognize changes are difficult, especially for large organizations like a community college with a long history and established culture and processes. Meaningful improvements take time and often cost money. While it is the institution's decision on *what* to prioritize and *how* to achieve the recommendations above, some overarching concepts I would like to communicate include: (a) changes require leadership, strategic planning, and coordinated efforts (Kotter, 2012); (b) establishing an organizational culture that puts students at the center of every decision and action is vital; (c) partnerships become critical as community colleges are part of a larger ecosystem of education and workforce development.

Higher education professionals and even students can be stuck in the "bootstrap mentality that reinforces social inequity" (Giroux et al., 1996, as cited in Herrera et al.,

2019, p. 143). When colleges fail to adjust their policies and cultures that do not value immigrant-origin learners' community cultural wealth and rely on students' grit, persistence, and resilience, they uphold systemic inequities (Almeida, 2016; Kundu & Noguera, 2014, as cited in Herrera et al., 2019). Only when students' lived experiences are acknowledged and the systemic inequalities are addressed, will immigrant-origin adult learners' experiences on college campuses begin to improve.

Personal Lessons: Looking Back, Looking Forward

As a doctoral student, it was not easy to conduct critical bricolage and use decolonizing or humanizing approaches in my research. The power of the system and the pull of the mainstream is very strong. From the design of the nested CPAR to the analysis and re-presentation of the data, I constantly felt the need to balance my innate epistemological and ontological needs with the way things are dominantly done in the academe. While I truly appreciated the support for critical research and innovative methods at ASU, including the generous grant funds, there were times I felt I had to compromise to be accepted within the system. Some of the dilemmas stemmed from my own understanding of what research should be, influenced by my socialization in the dominant positivist workplace, and my insecurities about how I construct knowledge. For example, at the beginning, I felt utilizing a "validated" survey to quantitatively measure critical consciousness would strengthen my method even though I was skeptical about quantifying "consciousness." Rather than truly believing the instrument to be the best tool for my research, I planned to include the instrument to make others in my work circle see my study as more valid. However, in the end, I was encouraged and

empowered by all the critical theorists, bricoleurs, and art-based researchers as well as my committee to stay closer to what I believe.

I remain committed to continuing my research and analysis as no knowledge is all-encompassing. I will continue advocating for and advancing research in the adult education field, especially with immigrant populations and students of color. I aim to promote more humanizing and decolonizing ways to pursue research and education. Finally, I will continue to mobilize and empower adult learners to build capacity in broader areas to scale up equitable access to and success in higher education.

Transferability and Significance

I believe this dissertation research adds vital insight to the existing literature regarding adult learners, especially those with immigrant-origin backgrounds in adult education and community colleges. While this nested CPAR was a small-scale study in a specific context, findings echo many ideas in the existing literature and past studies. The results may be transferrable to comparable settings with similar populations even though the purpose of this study was to empower a small group of immigrant-origin adult learners and to initiate change at the local level. Education institutions can take the implications for practice and implement suggested changes where they apply.

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APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT TEXT

Hello. Are you an adult learner currently taking class(es) at Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) or another community college? Have you taken classes at a community college including its noncredit courses (noncredit ESL/GED/Adult High School) in the past? If so, I am hoping you can help. My name is Sachiko Oates, and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU) working under the direction of Dr. Amy Markos, a faculty member in MLFTC.

We are doing research with adult learners with immigrant backgrounds (first- and second-generation). If you were born outside of the US or if (at least) one of your parents was born outside of the US, please consider responding to this message. We hope you will join the team. Your input will help us propose plans to improve adult immigrants' experiences in post-secondary education. Please also let me know if you know someone who may be interested in participating. Feel free to forward this message to the adult immigrant learners you know.

Our plan is to meet via Zoom twice a month for 1-1.5 hours between January and April 2023. There will be one introductory meeting in December 2022 and a debriefing meeting in May 2023. We will decide the dates and time of the meeting together once the group is formed. We will also work on creating our educational journey map and audio-visual stories about our strengths asynchronously (like homework) in between meetings. It will take about 2-3 hours in each 2-week period for this (home)work. Together, we will decide if or how we would like to share our work with the campus community.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question or do any activity, and to stop participation at any time. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

If this sounds good, please reply to this email.

If you have any questions, please also contact me or Dr. Amy Markos at ampost@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Sachiko Oates, Doctoral Student

Dr. Amy Markos, Clinical Assistant Professor, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College,
Arizona State University

APPENDIX B

CONSENT DOCUMENTS

Hello, my name is Sachiko Oates and I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Amy Markos in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College EdD in Leadership and Innovation program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore adult first- and second-generation immigrant learners' lived experiences around education, and to collectively present recommendations for the improvement of the local community college in Santa Barbara.

I am inviting you to participate in the study. You must be 18 years or older to participate. The study will be conducted between December 2022 and May 2023. Participation in the study will include attending synchronous Zoom meetings and engaging in individual or small group (home)work between the meetings. In total, I am asking for a maximum 25-hour time commitment in the 5-month period. Please see the details below.

Research Timeline

Timeframe	Action	Total Time
December 2022	Initial Zoom Meeting (1.5 hours) ● Get to know the team members ● Introduction to the study Individual work (Up to 1 hour) ● Zoom tutorial (Optional) ● Pre Questionnaire (30-40 minutes)	2.5 hours
January 2023	2 Zoom Meetings (1 hour each) Individual work (up to 3 hours) ● self-exploratory exercises	Up to 5 hours
February 2023	2 Zoom Meetings (1 hour each) Individual or small group work (up to 3 hours)	Up to 5 hours
March 2023	2 Zoom Meetings (1 hour each) Individual or small group work (up to 3 hours)	Up to 5 hours
April 2023	2 Synchronous Meetings (1 hour each) ● Presentation and action during our last meeting in April Individual or small group work (up to 3 hours)	Up to 5 hours

May 2023	Zoom Meeting (1.5 hours) • Debriefing Meeting Individual work (Up to 1 hour) • Meeting prep-preview questions • Post Questionnaire (20-30 minutes)	2.5 hours
Total Time		Maximum 25 hours

Through our Zoom and individual or small group work, we will create our educational journey maps and tell our life stories around education to examine and confirm our strengths as adult immigrant students. I will walk you through the exercises in our Zoom meetings, and some of the tasks can be done collaboratively with other members. In our meeting in April, we will present our stories and analysis of our experiences to a larger (campus/Santa Barbara) community. Together we will decide what and how we share. I will also ask you to take a survey/questionnaire about your educational experiences at a community college and your opinions on societal structures in the U.S. before we start our activities. You will take another similar survey after our last April meeting. In May, we will meet as a group one last time via Zoom to debrief our experiences. I will ask questions about your participation in this study. Depending on all the participants' availability and preferences, we may have one in-person event, but we will decide together once the participant group is complete.

You have the right not to answer any question or do any part of the project, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

The goal of this research is to lift and amplify learner voices through empowered participation in the study and collective advocacy efforts. You will have opportunities to reflect on your educational journey so far and on your future. You will have an opportunity to express your recommendations for the college. There are no foreseeable risks to your participation. However, we will examine the current situations critically, and your way of thinking may shift. When this happens, you may feel different or have many questions. I will answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability. Please review the attached norms and expectations for our meetings. Again, your participation is completely voluntary.

Data collection for this study will include pre and post surveys/questionnaires, observation notes taken during our synchronous meetings, the artifacts you create during the synchronous and asynchronous work (for example, journey maps and audio/visual stories, and documentation of our presentation (photos, screenshots, etc). Data collected for this study will only be shared with the research team. Data will not be shared with others and will not be used for other purposes beyond this study. Your survey responses will be confidential. On the pre-survey, you will be asked to create a unique identifier

using a specific formula. It will be known only to you to protect your confidentiality. You will use the same unique identifier on the post-survey. We will use the unique identifier to compare your first and second survey responses.

To protect your privacy, all other data collected, such as your journey map and interview responses, will be de-identified, meaning your names or anything connecting you to your work will be removed. In place of your names, we will assign each participant a Participant ID number. While the research will create and maintain a master list of participant names and corresponding ID numbers, once all the data has been de-identified, this list will be destroyed. The list may be kept for up to a year in a password-protected computer separate from the data.

Your comments during our meetings will be anonymous outside of the participant group. The work you generate in our synchronous meetings, the work you generate for your ‘homework’, and the ideas you share during our debriefing conversation will be de-identified, meaning your names or anything connecting you to your work will be removed before findings from this study are shared publicly. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used unless you want it to be used. Even though I will encourage every participant to maintain confidentiality, due to the nature of group activities, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

I will video-record our synchronous meetings. You may turn off your camera. Your voice will be recorded if you ask a question or comment during the meetings. The video recording of the meetings will be used so that all participants can access the materials and (re)view them while working individually. While the research team may review the meeting recordings during the analysis process, no audio or video files will be used in the presentation of findings from this study.

Photos or screenshots may be taken during our collective action/presentation in April. These images may be used in a dissertation as well as in presentations or publications. Only photos of participants who have given consent will be used.

Our debriefing meeting in May will be video recorded. The recording will be used for transcription and data analysis purposes only. No videos will be used in the presentation of findings from this study or shared otherwise. The meeting will not be recorded without your permission.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me at sooates@asu.edu or Dr. Amy Markos at 602-543-6624 ampost@asu.edu If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Please indicate your preference below regarding the photography part of the study.

☐ I agree to provide permission to the inclusion of photos or screenshots taken during the collective action/presentation in publications or presentations

☐ I do not wish to provide permission to the inclusion of photos or screenshots taken during the collective action/presentation in publications or presentations

Study Participant Consent Form Addendum

You will receive an honorarium up to the amount of \$183 for your time and participation. If and when the honorarium amount, including the amount received in the form of a gift card, exceeds \$100, The recipient names and their U.S. residency status will be submitted to the ASU Tax Services department. You will have a choice to decline the payment or a portion of the payment if you would rather not share your name and U.S. Residency status.

By signing below you are agreeing to receive the honorarium and share your name and U.S. residency status with ASU Tax Services Department.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Study Participant Consent Form Addendum II

During the research meeting sessions in April 2023, the idea of using participants' real names in publications related to this research study was raised. Participants may be identified in any report or publication about this study and attribution can be made to them for their work.

Please check the line that best matches your choice:

- I would like my real first name only to be used in reports and publications
- I would like my real first AND last name to be used in reports and publications
- I would like to be assigned a pseudonym

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX C
MEETING NORMS

An Invitation to a Brave Space by Micky Scottbey Jones

Together we will create brave space
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world.
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be.
But
It will be our brave space together,
And
We will work on it side by side.

(Optional) Listen to the CTZNWELL Podcast where Micky Scottbiy Jones speaks about the concept of brave space on the link below. At the 18.07-minute mark, Micky will read the poem above.

<https://www.ctznwell.org/ctznpodcast/brave-space-not-safe-space-micky-scottbey-jones>

Guidelines and Expectations for Meetings

Bring your authentic whole self.

In this brave space, we ask each other to be open and honest. Be yourself. Mistakes are OK. No one is perfect. You do not need to “perform” to “seek “authority’s” acceptance.

Commit to learning from each other.

We will listen to each other and acknowledge that we all come from different backgrounds, skills, interests, abilities, and values. We realize these very differences will increase our awareness and understanding. We value everyone’s voice, and everyone has a valuable voice and a contribution to make. (Adapted from the SBCC Advancing Leadership Association Committee Meeting Guidelines and Expectations for Participatory Governance)

Provide constructive feedback and be open to receiving one.

When you do not agree with certain ideas other members present, have questions, or wish to present a different perspective, please share them with the group. Constructive feedback is always welcome and appreciated. Even though we have a facilitator, they are not the authority and their ideas and perspectives can also be challenged. Let's comment on what we actually observe or hear. If we are not sure about something, we will ask questions. We will focus on the idea or action and not the individual who presented the idea/action. We will seek specific solutions or recommendations. We will also be open to receiving feedback. We learn and grow through courageous and sometimes difficult conversations.

“Anger and grief have a seat at the table” (Grain, 2022 p. 84).

We will be exploring our past experiences and future aspirations in our meetings. Speaking about certain events in your life may be difficult for some. Please share what you feel comfortable sharing. We acknowledge that all ranges of emotions are acceptable in our meetings. Often our emotional reactions to authentic exchanges can offer valuable learning opportunities. We will support each other in staying with and getting through some of the challenging feelings.

References

- CTZNWELL (2020). *Brave Space: Micky ScottBey Jones*.
<https://www.ctznwell.org/ctznpodcast/brave-space-not-safe-space-micky-scottbey-jones>
- Grain, K. (2022). *Critical hope: How to grapple with complexity, lead with purpose, and cultivate transformative social change*. North Atlantic Books.

APPENDIX D

PRE_QUESTIONNAIRE

Adult Learners' College Experiences and Critical Consciousness Inventory

Introduction

Hello. Thank you for your participation in the study with adult immigrant-origin learners in postsecondary education. This survey will take 30-40 minutes to complete. Please begin the survey, and tell us about you, your experience at the college you attended, your educational goals, and how you feel about the educational and social systems in the United States.

If you have any questions, please contact me at sooates@asu.edu or Dr. Amy Markos at ampost@asu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey.

Sincerely,

Sachiko Oates, Doctoral Student

Dr. Amy Markos, Clinical Assistant Professor, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University

Section 1 Introduction

In the next section, please respond to the questions about Santa Barbara City College's credit programs (on the credit campus on Cliff Drive). If you are not sure, you may choose "I don't know." There are 9 multiple-choice questions in this section.

College Experience

Q1 Credit classes (on the credit campus on Cliff Drive) are scheduled at times that are convenient for adult learners at this college.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q2 I receive(d) enough information on the available pathways and degree options to make informed decisions on course registration.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q3 I receive(d) enough information on the availability of financial aid and scholarship opportunities to make informed decisions on credit course enrollment. (e.g. SBCC

Promise, California College Promise, Federal Financial aid, Pell Grant, Federal Work-Study, etc.)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q4 Adequate financial aid is available for most adult students who need it.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q5 I receive(d) comprehensive and relevant information on the available support services.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q6 Business office hours on the credit campus (Financial Aid, Student Support, etc.) are convenient for adult students.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q7 Registration processes for credit courses are reasonable and convenient for adults.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q8 Career counseling and job placement services are adequate and accessible for adult

students.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q9 Academic support resources and services (e.g. library, tutoring, math/computer labs) are adequate for adult students.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Section 2 Introduction

In the next section, please respond to the questions about life in the U.S. There are 36 questions in this section.

Critical Consciousness

Questions 10-45 utilized the validated critical consciousness inventory developed by Thomas et al. (2014). See the original article for the content of the inventory.

Section 3 Introduction

In the next section, please respond to the questions about you. There are 8 questions. Some are multiple-choice, and others are open-ended questions.

Demographic Items

Q46 Gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to respond
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Genderqueer; neither exclusively male nor female
- ☐ Other

Q47 Age Group

- ☐ 24 and younger
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 and over

Q48 What is Your Ethnicity? (for example, Asian, Japanese, Multi-racial)

Q49 Are you a first-generation immigrant (you were born outside of the US) or a second-generation (at least one of your parents was born outside of the US) immigrant?

- ☐ First Generation
- ☐ Second Generation
- ☐ Other

Q50 If you answered "first-generation" in question 67, how many years have you lived in the United States?

Q51 Current Enrollment Status at the college- Select all that apply

- ☐ Full time (12 units or more) Credit Student
- ☐ Part-time Credit Student
- ☐ Noncredit Student
- ☐ Former Credit Student
- ☐ Former Noncredit Student

Q52 Educational Goal- Select all that apply

- ☐ HS diploma/equivalency (GED)
- ☐ Certification (initial or renewal)
- ☐ Vocational/technical program
- ☐ Self-improvement / pleasure
- ☐ Job-related training
- ☐ Entrepreneurship/Start Business
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Transfer to a 4-year institution (UCSB/CSU, etc)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctorate or professional degree
- ☐ Undecided on goal at this time
- ☐ Other educational goals

Q53 Employment Status

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Not employed, seeking employment
- ☐ Not employed, not seeking employment

Section 4 Introduction

In this section, please answer a few open-ended questions that summarize your opinions.

Q 54 Do you think adult students are made to feel welcome at the college in the credit programs? Why or why not?

Q55 Do you think students with immigrant backgrounds are made to feel welcome at the college in the credit programs? Why or why not?

Q56 What are some ways SBCC can improve to support adult immigrant students' educational goals?

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.

*Questions 1-9 on adult learner experiences are inspired by Ruffalo Noel Levitz' (2022) *Adult student priorities*. Questions 10-45 utilize the validated critical consciousness inventory developed by Thomas et al. (2014).

References

Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2022). *The Adult Student Priorities Survey*.
<http://www.RuffaloNL.com>

Thomas, A. J., Barrie, R., Brunner, J. Clawson, A., Hewitt, A., Jeremie-Brink, G., & Rowe-Johnson, M. (2014). Assessing critical consciousness in youth and young adults. *Journal of research on adolescence*, 24(3), 485-496.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12132>

APPENDIX E

COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH CONVERSATION STARTER

Introduction

Hello. Thank you for your continued participation in the study for adult immigrant-origin learners in postsecondary education.

As we discuss our community cultural wealth, I would like to invite you to take a short survey to reflect on your experiences at the community college you attended (credit and noncredit).

This survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete. The surveys will be anonymous, and your names will not be used. As an innovation team, we can review the aggregated results later to start planning our improvement plans. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

If this sounds good, please begin the survey and tell us about you, your experience at the college you attended. Completing the survey and submitting it will be considered consent.

If you have any questions, please contact me at sooates@asu.edu or 805-451-4503 or Dr. Amy Markos at ampost@asu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey.

Sincerely,

Sachiko Oates, Doctoral Student

Dr. Amy Markos, Clinical Assistant Professor, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College,
Arizona State University

Q1 What program are you evaluating in this survey?

- ☐ Noncredit Program (Noncredit ESL/Adult High School/GED/Career Skills Institute)
- ☐ Credit Program (Credit/Main Campus on Cliff Drive)
- ☐ Both

Q2 The college supports students' goals and inspires students to realize their dreams.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q3 Faculty and staff encourage me to persist in my education.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q4 I have a mentor or mentors on campus (faculty, staff, peers, etc.)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q5 The college makes it easy for adult students to find the resources they need.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q6 My home culture is valued in classrooms and on campus.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q7 My multilingual skills are valued and utilized in classrooms and on campus.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q8 Students are encouraged to express their learning in multiple ways (through visual/digital art, music, poetry, etc.)

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q9 I have opportunities to share stories from my family or community in class.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q10 This college creates environments where students can stay connected to their families.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q11 This college creates environments where students can stay connected to their home communities (neighborhood, religious communities, etc.)

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q12 Students who share my social identities (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability) face microaggressions or discrimination on my campus.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ I don't know

Q13 I have had opportunities to critically analyze social and educational inequity in class or on campus

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q14 Students have opportunities to express their ideas on how to create a more just or equitable society for the campus community.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q15 Adult students are made to feel welcome at the college.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q16 Please provide any additional comments regarding question 15.

Q17 Students with immigrant backgrounds are made to feel welcome at the college.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I don't know

Q18 Please provide any additional comments regarding question 17.

Q19 What are some ways the institution can improve to better serve adult learners like you?

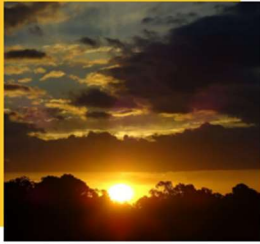
*The questions are inspired by Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model as well as ideas on quantitatively measuring CCW (Hiramori et al., 2021).

References

- Hiramori, D., & Knaphus-Soran, E., & Litzler, E. (2021, July), Critically quantitative: Measuring community cultural wealth on surveys. Paper presented at 2021 ASEE Virtual Annual Conference Content Access, Virtual Conference. 10.18260/1-2—36880
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91

APPENDIX F

COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH STORY PROMPTS



Michelle Obama
[Becoming: A Guided Journal for Discovering Your Voice: Obama, Michelle, 9780593139127, Amazon.com, Books](#)

Aspirational

- ★ "What skills or lessons have you sought to learn as an adult? How does learning bring about change in your life today?"
- ★ "What inspires you? List the first 10 things that come to mind."
- ★ "What helps you keep going when it is hard to continue?"
- ★ "What are your dreams? How do you keep them alive?"
- ★ "Who looks up to you? How does that affect your own goals?"

Familial

- ★ "Where did your ancestors come from? What challenges did they face?"
- ★ What do you remember about your grandparents? "How have the elders left a mark on your life?"
- ★ "What does family mean to you?"
- ★ "How do you connect with your community?"
- ★ "How do you give back to your community?"
- ★ "Where we come from has such a strong effect on the person we are. Think of the neighborhood you grew up in. What was special about it? What was challenging? How did it shape who you are today?"



Michelle Obama
[Becoming: A Guided Journal for Discovering Your Voice: Obama, Michelle, 9780593139127, Amazon.com, Books](#)

Social

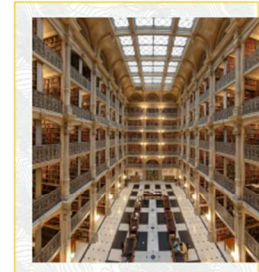
- ★ Think of people who believed in you and invested in you. "How did [their] support manifest in your accomplishments today?"
- ★ "Who was the most influential teacher...? How did this person leave such an impression?"
- ★ Do you have a mentor or teacher who helped you?
- ★ "Who is your role model? How has that person shaped you?"
- ★ "Who looks up to you? How do you nurture that person's spark?"



Michelle Obama
[Becoming: A Guided Journal for Discovering Your Voice: Obama, Michelle, 9780593139127, Amazon.com, Books](#)

Navigational

- ★ How have you navigated the education (and other) systems in the US?
- ★ Were there people who helped you? When you are not sure how to do something or how to get support, what strategies do you use to overcome it?
- ★ How did you navigate being in a new place (country, state, city, institutions)?
- ★ "When were you last flung into new or uncomfortable terrain? How did this sudden change affect you? What value did it bring to your life?"



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[Becoming: A Guided Journal for Discovering Your Voice: Obama, Michelle, 9780593139127, Amazon.com, Books](#)

Resistant

- ★ Describe a time when you had to speak up for yourself? What gave you the courage? What stood in your way?
- ★ "[Think] about a specific experience when someone dislodged a dream of yours by trying to lower your expectations. How did it make you feel? How did you try to overcome that obstacle? How was that person wrong?"
- ★ "Changes [can] happen from the ground up. What is one small thing you can do to bring about new change in your life or in the lives of someone else?"
- ★ Describe the world of your dreams. What changes- whether on a local, national or global level- do you wish to see?

Linguistic

- ★ What communication skills do you utilize daily?
- ★ In what ways do you communicate best? (writing, visual, speaking, by giving examples, or telling stories)
- ★ What languages do you speak? Have you ever helped translate things for others? Who did you help? What skills do you use?
- ★ "How do you bring your own history, culture, and experiences into spaces where they never existed?"
- ★ "How do you balance competing worlds of your home life" [and the outside world?]



Michelle Obama
[Becoming: A Guided Journal for Discovering Your Voice: Obama, Michelle, 9780593139127, Amazon.com, Books](#)

Reference

Obama, M. (2019). *Becoming: A guided journal for discovering your voice*. Clarkson Potter

APPENDIX G

DEBRIEFING INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Through participation in this research project, what new insights did you gain, if any?
- What exercises or activities helped you get new insights? (If any?)
- Looking back, how did your understanding and perception of your own history and experiences change during and after the project?
- How did your attitudes towards college or education in general change?
- How do you feel about the opportunity gaps in education? (Does it exist?)
- What would you like to learn more about?
- How do you feel about the overall experience?
- Anything else you would like to share?

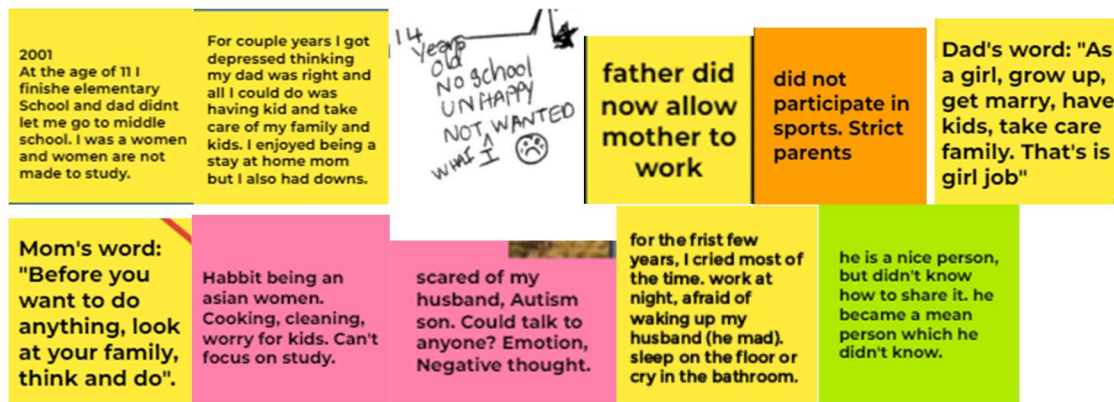
APPENDIX H

ONLINE RESPONSES FROM EXHIBIT ATTENDEES

Questions	Comments
What part of the immigrant-origin adult learners' stories resonated with you the most?	The perspective of student's struggles, we all follow our own perspective, and hearing similar stories was heartwarming
	The immigrant part, being a woman of color, taking Chicano Studies courses and understanding the injustice, 3 out of 5 college students are over the age of 25. upward trend of immigrant students who are 2nd and 3rd generation.
	Former first lady Michelle Obama's quote there is power in owning your unique story. I love the quotes. Ms. Brene Brown "Our wholeness..actually depends on the integration of all our experiences, including the falls.
	All of them
What was surprising to you?	The stories ... I am the daughter of immigrant parents and found myself crying reading the quote and bawling when reading the stories
	I am not alone, although I feel alone. We all have similar backgrounds
	the population trends in higher education.
	We all do have a story
What do you think SBCC can do to support and honor immigrant-origin adult learners?	sadly - none of it though I was beyond inspired by individuals
	Continue spreading messages and stories of my peers
	More events like this and have these students go and see the exhibits. Empower the students more by proactively informing them of theirs resources and options.
	Create communities
	I think your exhibit should find a more permanent home at SBCC to help continually keep that awareness up.

APPENDIX I
FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

Category: Family & Cultural Expectations



When I turned 14 years or so . . . my family said . . . I cannot go to school anymore. But what happened was they tried to teach me like . . . cooking to do the housework. . . . So they [thought] that's more important than go[ing] to school . . . So I was very, I don't want to say depressed, but I was just disappointed, I think.

I think I'm 20. I'm not sure. 20, 21. And then I told my family. Okay, I'm going to California. And then they said, "No, you're not going to" because they are looking for someone to marry me, which is like a match [arranged] marriage. So I said, "No, I don't want to." And then they said, "No, but you have to because you don't have any education. So I want you to marry someone who can bring you, you know."

I, like many other women in Hispanic culture, was born with an invisible tag, and label; women are made to take care of homes and families, therefore there is no need for them to study. I barely finished elementary school because my dad didn't feel I needed more than that.

My dad didn't allow my mom to work. It was kind of like a macho thing. My mom was a very hard worker, and they could have succeeded very, very well, but because he didn't let her work. We were very limited in the income.

Category: Abuse



“I fell hard because I was blinded by a vision of me being with a father . . . because I got daddy issues. But . . . he was abusive, alcoholic. I ended up leaving when I was 17. . . Oh, that’s in the street!”

Category: Exclusion



Throughout all grades of high school, I experienced bullying, which led to feelings of depression, frustration and resulted in frequent fights.

Bullied in School 2003-2005

Pre-school: Bullied- 2nd Grade: Shy, Scared at school, not many friends

My husband has polio and people laugh at him and name him at a handicap and bully him. He likes to be himself and avoid making friend with anyone.

My son has autism that make me felt bad. Other name him as a crazy boy beacuse he talked to himself most of the time.

I became like him and put myself in the conner of the world and afraid making friend with other.

I had ... my first depression because no one in Brazil ... even my family, knew about my sexual orientation ... so I had to solve this problem myself . . . when I realized that I was emotionally abused.

I was called a wetback, a beaner, because I spoke Spanish.

This bully pushed me to a breaking point, where basically I got expelled from the district, and I started continuation school.

He had polio, and he has one leg small and one leg big . . . And people bullied him a lot. . . . when I married him, they put me into that group . . . So that’s why I didn’t really have good support from them. The people laugh at me and talk bad about me.

Category: Feeling Lost, Scared, Not the American Dream

2018



Feeling lost about who I am... NO job, new language, new culture

After relocating to the United States, I tied the knot and began the journey of learning a second language. Scary; Challenge after thinking that my life was already stable.

Culture shot when came to US. afraid, scare, lose all confident. Depend 100% on my husband.

Came to US unprepare. Homesick, Culture shock. Searching for comfort (the old enviroment) that not belong to me.

It's not [the] American dream. You come over here. You pass through difficult things, too. . . I have a friend [who] came to the United States just visualizing money. But forgot who they are.

There is no rush to try to be the American Dream. I mean it's all at your time, your expense. your mental capacity, your emotional capacity.

I fought my whole life and went through difficult things, you feel like I'm good in the position right now . . . independent emotionally independent financially, and you can do it yourself. And you'll come to another country, and I'm totally dependent for everything, the language, financially. The job doesn't match with that what I did [back in my country], and the language I have to learn, and what? . . . It's stressful.

I totally forgot that I got educated in my country. I thought I [went] backward. I'm a low-level person. I don't have anything. I don't have a language . . . when I was in my country. I finished high school. I finished college . . . and I was like a middle classes person supporting my older sister, who didn't finish high school, and I felt proud of myself . . . But when I came to this country . . . I completely forgot where I was before and I feel . . . I'm a stupid person. I don't know anything, and I got upset easily I got mad easily, and I forgot where I was."

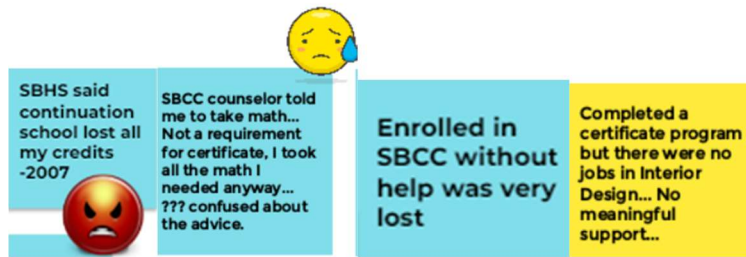
I'm scared of going outdoors. I'm scared to see all the people. I was scared of using my English and talking to other people. I'm afraid that people don't hear . . . they don't hear my pronunciation. And I told him . . . it's not because I don't [want to practice] English but because I'm afraid to go out and talk.

It's a very destabilizing feeling, and it's a big blow as an adult, you know, to have to feel like you are almost like a child like you can't communicate as well as you did before in your country. You were not able to figure out the systems as well as you were able to before, and I think that kind of for me was a big blow to my self-confidence.

Category: Insensitive Instructor

Some faculty members at SBCC were dismissive and not helpful.	I was not going to give up! I started my classes again 1 year later (pregnant again) One day the teacher embarrassed me in front of the whole class and I quit ESL for good. I got level 3	For couple years I got depressed thinking my dad was right and all I could do was having kid and take care of my family and kids. I enjoyed being a stay at home mom but I also had downs.
--	--	--

One day, one of the teachers embarrassed me in front of the class saying I cheated on an assignment. After that, I never went back to ESL, and for a while, I gave up thinking maybe it was right that I only needed to take care of my family and the house.



My mother had just lost her job
My father had just left
I was co-parenting my siblings
I was looking for help.
I was looking for guidance.
I was looking to see that I mattered
What I got was made to feel like a pathetic loser looking for a handout.
I left, saying to myself I can take care of my own education

[I] did go to financial aid when my mom lost her job and I was taking classes, and they were really mean to me treating me almost like I was a beggar from the street. . . . it was just a horrible experience. I walked out . . . That's basically why I've been just taking classes as I could. Then I stopped altogether. It did not make me feel welcome . . . so I said I could pay for my own classes. When you do that, and you have a family, you have to pick [between paying for classes and paying to support the family]

Our counselors were never available for questions because we were not important enough for them. We were never told about college because I think we were put into a separate little category.

We had quite a few immigrants and it just like older adults . . . coming in to look for a job at the cafeteria, or students wanting to enroll in culinary classes and it wasn't ever easy for them to receive that information. [The staff] would honestly just tell them. "Oh, go down there. Someone will explain it to you." But they would do tours and take [English speaking] students to different locations and give them as much information. But when it came down to the immigrant group, because these people wanted the information in a different language, that it really wasn't an option. . . . I felt like there could have been more done. . . . Why couldn't they bring a bilingual person to come in [for the campus tour]? You know they're obviously working towards the goal . . . and then it gets cut short because they don't have . . . the staff to inform these people.

[I] didn't speak any English at that time. And it took me almost 10 times to go back and

forth to [enroll]. I worked at night. So I . . . had just a little time in the afternoon. [I was busy] in the morning with my kids, cooking, and cleaning the house. [The second time with my son at the college] my son got sick. He vomited. He was scared. . . . When I got out, I got a [parking] ticket [from campus security] and I didn't even know what the ticket meant. And there's no Vietnamese speaker over there . . . I was crying . . . we didn't know what to do.

But you know, I just found out they have like Japanese language [courses]. They have other languages, but we have to pay. . . . but I can't afford it. . . . I would like to take . . . at least one more. But they said, you have to pay, I said, I'm sorry my rent is already all my paycheck. So that's why I don't want to add more. I mean I appreciated what they are doing right now. But no, I don't want to take it.

I never heard anything about California Promise that I don't know how to apply . . . I am connected with a counselor, the counselor never said anything about that. . . . I told him that I'm planning to go back to school. . . . I'm working. I have to work and I have kids. So I want to take one class at a time. I cannot be full-time. And they say there's nothing supporting you because you had to be [full-time]. They would only focus on Santa Barbara City College Promise.

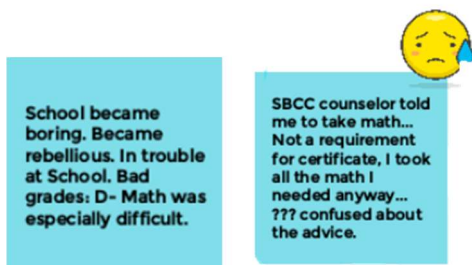
Category: Job Search Challenges



. . . The first question is “Oh, have you worked in the U. S. as a project manager?” . . . I had to drop down, get a lower [paying] job, and start again.

Even with my law degree in Japan, the only jobs I can get are minimum wage jobs.

Category: Math (Academic Challenges/Navigation Challenges)



I hate math. . . . I haven't done math since high school like back in 1990, and then I haven't taken any math since then. . . I always send an emoji of somebody throwing up. . . . I don't like math, but I'm sticking with it. . . one of the last classes I need.

[I] bought books and tried to have people help me with the best way to solve this [math] problem. Because I don't understand why, or what it means, and people ask me, "Don't give up don't give up." . . . Of course, I still hate math definitely. When I started working on the system implementation, I got the department finances to implement the system. . . . But when they came with a problem, I said . . . I can't help you. . . . my goal was to finish the [degree]. . . . I don't know how I've finished Math, I don't know if you're giving me some problems to solve. I don't know how I'm gonna solve [them].

Category: Stopping Out



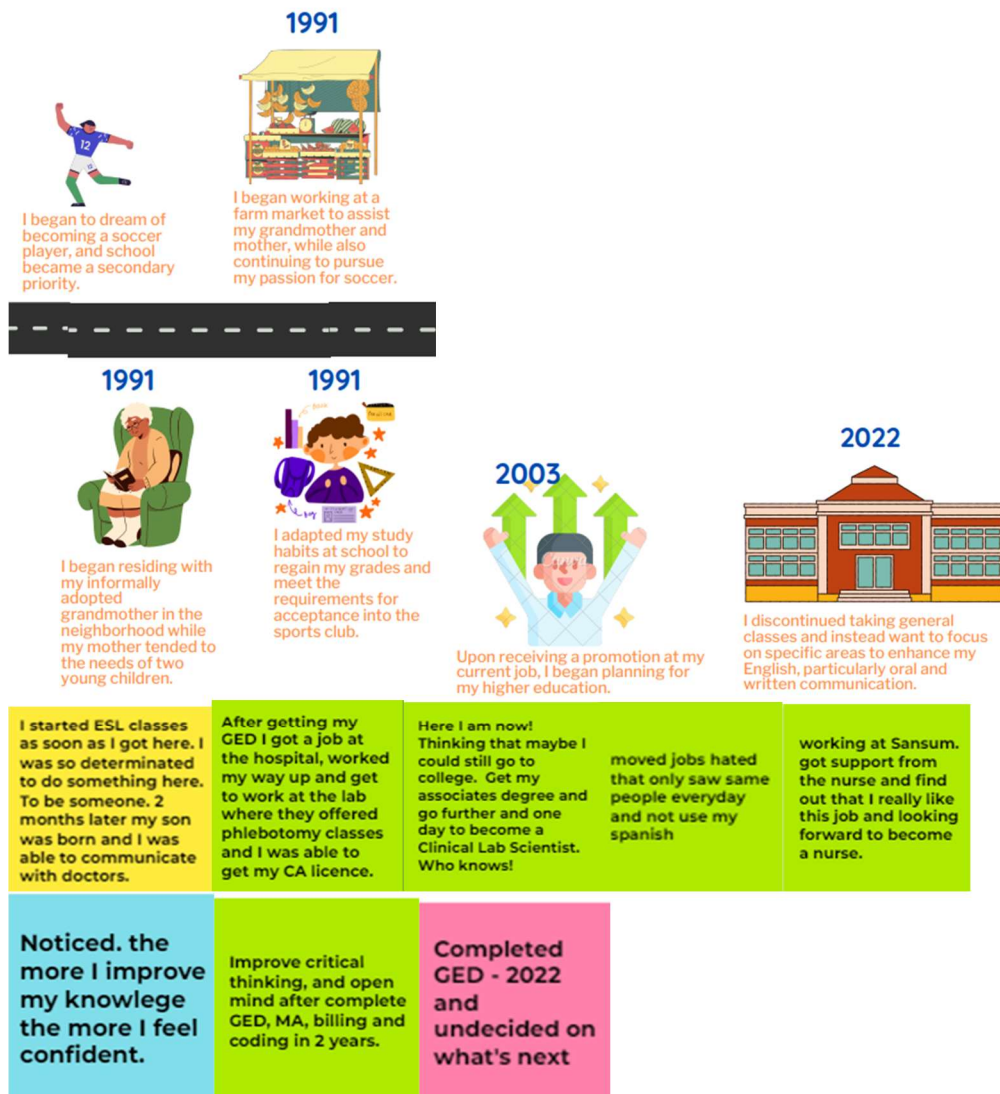
I stopped going to school because I couldn't. I couldn't do it. It was overwhelming. I really had nowhere to go. . . My grandma was the only person in my entire life that ever motivated me, believed me . . . when grandma passed away, my whole world came crashing down.

My mom . . . got very very sick, and started getting symptoms of MS, and I stopped a little to take care of her.

I had to stop after my baby was born. I went back and forth because it wasn't easy for me with the baby.

I had to go to work to earn money to support my family . . . in Vietnam.

Category: Aspirations



I was so determined to do something here. To be someone.

After getting my GED, I got a job at the hospital, worked my way up and . . . was able to get my CA [phlebotomist] license. . . . thinking that maybe I could still go to college. Get my associate's degree and go further and one day become a Clinical Lab Scientist.

Category: Fulfilling Job as Motivator



Category: Familial Capital



I started teaching my brother because my brother started doing something wrong. . . . He was involved with drugs.

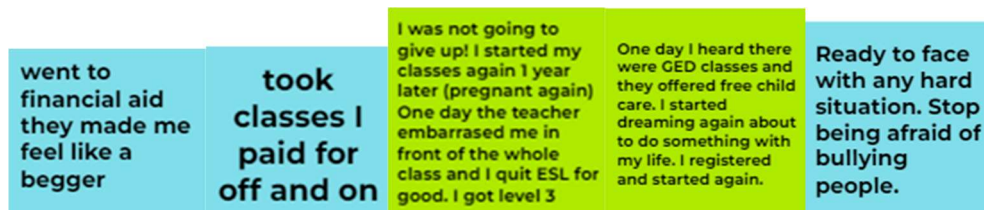
It was hard to stay up till midnight to complete everything, but it was worth it. I had a picture of my son taken . . . when they were giving me my GED certificate. Oh, my goodness, his face! It was worth all that I had to go through.

I found out that my son had autism, and I didn't know [how] to talk to the doctor. I didn't know what to do. [Now he] is the motivation for me to work on improving my English. It helps me understand him, his teacher, his doctor, and his friends.

My daughter looks up to me. This motivates me every day to seek new goals.
My little brother. . . . inspires me to speak English.
My family affect[s] my goals. Affect[ed] [my] [im]migration to the U.S.A.

I was born in Leon, Mexico. . . . we all moved to the U.S. when I was three and my younger brother was 2. It was hard to see my parents work 2-3 jobs to get food on the table. Now that we go to college we can help. . . I'm forever grateful of their sacrifices.

Category: Resistant Capital



Then Trump administration happened. So much hate.
attack against my culture
my identity
my people
I found myself lost again in between worlds. Lost in identity. My bubble has been broken. All I feel is sadness.
I am mad. I am angry.

While living in the U.S. and learning and working at [the college], I faced and witnessed elitism, disrespect, microaggressions, racialized misogyny, racism, and harassment. The antidote was to learn from and with my diverse students.

While I received tremendous opportunities and support, many of the difficult events fueled me to accomplish more. Those challenges helped me develop and foster my racial identity. Having children also helped me reaffirm my cultural identity. I stand up for what is right and I have the power to remove myself from a toxic environment.

Category: Navigational Capital

First I didn't speak English at that time, and they weren't prepared to understand me, or [have] people to translate for me . . . , so I had to invite my husband. . . . the process took a while because I didn't know, and they couldn't show me exactly when it's gonna start, or which class I will start. I took the test. I was level one, and the [advisors] decided, to learn English quickly, go to level 5, and I was totally lost there because it was too advanced to learn. So my first experience was like no, there's something wrong over here. . . . I talked with friends, and I made this plan, but it didn't come from [the college]. So I had to do it by myself. I decided to replan and start correctly but I lost about 7 months. I didn't have any support from the building.

Category: Social Capital

I was lucky to meet few good people around me, encourage and support me. I looked up to them, try to get out my comfortzone and go out there explore the world around me.

I completed my GED with help of a really good teacher who supported me all the way and cheer me up. At the same time I did my test to get my citizenship.

I've finished everything . . . medical assistant, medical billing, and coding in 2 years. . . by the time I finished, I was looking for a job. . . Nobody accepted me because they were looking for a Spanish speaker, and I don't have any background in the medical field. Then I'm about to go back to my old job, I [saw] one of my old friends who is working for [the largest non-profit outpatient healthcare provider in the area], he asked me, "Why don't you try to apply for something?" . . . He connected me with human resources, and they gave me another chance to have an interview . . . I was lucky that I met the right nurse and I was able to work with her. And here I am. I work at [the local] clinic as a medical assistant.

CNA classes [at the college had] . . . a waiting list for it and . . . I couldn't take those classes . . . But I still wanted to do something in the healthcare field. And then they mentioned that cottage offered phlebotomist training, and it was easier if you were an employee . . . so, I just wanted to get something to get in. Two years ago I started as a dishwasher at [a local hospital]. And then they gave me the opportunity to be at the cafeteria for one day a week being a cashier. And then they totally transferred me from the dish room to the cafeteria. . . .When I was at the Cafeteria it really helped me because I knew a lot of people, and I got to know the managers for the training, so I mentioned to them that I want to do [phlebotomy training]. And I think I mentioned that to everybody in the department. Then a couple of months ago I got an email saying that they were finally starting the training.

I completed my GED with [the] help of a really good teacher who supported me all the way and cheer me up.

I found people like me to learn from.

Category: Linguistic Capital



It was a requirement that I....

Be my parent's translator in elementary/middle/high school

A translator everywhere

I never thought education was important because I had a good-paying job but I knew I wasn't going to be able to get promoted anymore. . . . I wasn't using what I felt I was put on this earth to do, you know, to be bilingual to help others.

Speaking English, I can't communicate, and we start talking Portuguese, English, and Spanish.

APPENDIX J

ASU IRB APPROVAL



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Amy Markos
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - West Campus
602/543-6624
Amy.Markos@asu.edu

Dear [Amy Markos](#):

On 10/27/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Post-Traditional Immigrant Learners in Postsecondary Education: Critical Participatory Action Research for Equitable Access and Success
Investigator:	Amy Markos
IRB ID:	STUDY00016847
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent_Form_Post-Traditional Immigrant Learners in Postsecondary Education, Category: Consent Form; • OATES_IRB Social Behavioral, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment_Material_Post-Traditional Immigrant Learners in Postsecondary Education, Category: Recruitment Materials; • SBCC IR Process, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • SBCC IR Tentative Approval, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • supporting documents 10-20-2022, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 10/27/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Sachiko Oates
Sachiko Oates