The Experiences of Low-Income, Latino/a Students at a Time of
Budget Cuts in the California Community College

by

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The Experience of Low-Income, Latino/a Students at a Time of

Budget Cuts in the California Community College

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ABSTRACT

Budget cuts have become an invasive force within the California Community College system, leading to the down-sizing of course offerings and services and the internal restructuring of how funding is allocated. This coincides with the growth of enrollment in the California Community College system, especially amongst the low-income Latino/a student population.

To address diminished funding at the state level, policymakers have had to make choices about how to continue operations with diminished capacity. Furthermore, the prospect of diminishing funds into the foreseeable future has also influenced the development of new philosophical trends seeking to re-make California Community Colleges as more economically viable within the context of the “free market.” This has influenced the cutting of needs-based programs such as the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), which disproportionately serves low-income Latino/a students.

Since the cutting of these funds directly affects this student population, it influenced the development of this study. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to analyze how low-income Latino/a students that are enrolled in needs-based programs in the community college experienced the implementation of budget cuts. It was also intended to understand student perceptions of the nature of the cuts in the community college system, including reductions in state-funded, need-based programs such as EOPS.

The study involved two sets of interviews based on student and faculty perceptions. Eleven students enrolled in Frontier Community College and also in the EOPS Program were interviewed, as well as two Frontier Community College staff
members. While the focus of the study is student perceptions, the staff members’ interviews were included to show another perspective of student experience. The research questions were: (a) how do low-income Latino/a students enrolled in EOPS perceive the affect of education budget cuts on their persistence in the community college?; and (b) how do low-income Latino/a students in the EOPS program perceive the nature of the budget cuts?

The study used the qualitative method, a phenomenological approach, and was framed using the advocacy/participatory worldview. Data were analyzed using the methods of content analysis and discourse analysis. For research question 1, analysis of the research yielded the themes of Diminished Access, Reduced Support, and Delayed Completion pertaining to student perceptions of their experiences. For research question 2, analysis of the research yielded the themes of Devaluation of Education and Race & Class Discrimination pertaining to student perceptions of the nature of the budget cuts. For the staff, the themes of Reduced Access and Services and Inequity emerged from their perceptions of student experiences and the nature of budget cuts, validating the student perceptions. Implications of the results for research and practice are discussed in the context of the budget cuts and the responsibilities of the California Community College system in providing quality education for low-income, Latino/a students.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

While the human body has an impressive capability to resist, regenerate, and recover from all sorts of external damage and mayhem, our internal organs are fragile and vulnerable. The brain, for instance, recovers from distress very slowly—if at all—and once damaged diminishes the performance and well-being of the rest of the body.

Like the human brain, the condition of the higher education system has ramifications for the social body as a whole. When the education budget is cut as it has been repeatedly in California in recent history, policymakers run the risk of inflicting long-term damage in exchange for myopic and short-sighted solutions. Budget cuts are not neutral, egalitarian, or color-blind, but rather fall disproportionately on those most in need and with the fewest alternative options. With each cycle of budget cuts and diminished public funding for California’s community colleges, an exponential number of low-income students of color are frozen out or displaced from higher education.

This study constructed an analysis of the experience of low-income Latino students in the California community college at a time of budget cuts. The first chapter begins with an introduction and overview of the dissertation that will include: the background to the problem, the problem and purpose statements, the research questions, and a thorough description of my research. The latter will include: an elaboration on the conceptual framework, the research setting, the significance of the study, delimitations/limitations, a definition of terms, and the organization of the study.
Background of the Problem

As California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the 2009-2010 budget agreement which will cut community college funding by $680 million dollars, he announced:

I know that college students will pay now higher tuitions. . . . I know that teachers will be laid off. I know that our state workers will get less money. But we have to do that. It’s the only way to solve the problem and to save our great state.

(“California Cuts Deep,” 2009. para. 4)

Both the act of education budget-cutting and the rhetoric employed to justify it violate the philosophical and legislative principles that frame the California Higher Education system.

The California Master Plan for Higher Education was enacted by the state legislature in 1960 creating the three-tiered community college, California State, and University of California system. While the latter two subsystems maintained enrollment restrictions based on grade-point average, Community Colleges were charged to “admit any student capable of benefiting from instruction” (University of California, 2002, para. 4). It also established that higher education should be tuition-free. Even though this principle has been eroded through the incorporation of fee schedules at all three levels, the Master Plan established the Cal-Grant program to ensure low-income students as a secondary means to ensure access.

The “Classroom Instructional Improvement and Accountability Act of 1988,” also called Prop. 98, was a voter-approved amendment to the California Constitution passed in 1988 that was designed to mandate a minimum level (39% of total budget expenditures)
of funding for K-14 regardless of the state of the economy. Prop 98 was in part a re-affirmation to the philosophy of the Master Plan, as well as a response to the passage of Proposition 13 a decade prior. Prop 13, officially named the “People’s Initiative to Limit Property Taxation,” was a 1978 constitutional amendment that imposed a restrictive barrier to raising education budgets by imposing a two-thirds majority requirement in the state legislature to levy new taxes and capping property taxes at 1%. The Constitutional Amendment has served as a powerful ally of anti-tax politicians in the Legislature, who even as a minority can inhibit the formation of an elusive two-thirds “super-majority” in a highly partisan environment.

The withdrawal of tax-raising power has eliminated an indispensable tool for the state to address rapid population growth or budget shortfalls during economic downturns. This has been compounded and exacerbated by tax cuts. Since 1993, tax cuts have bled the budget fund of more than $100 billion, working hand-in-glove with Proposition 13 to ensure funding disparities (Ross, 2009).

In lieu of tax restructuring to match state and student need, funding disparities are resolved by pushing the problem onto school districts that are then forced to reconcile the incongruity through program and service attrition. The resulting budget cuts—the effort to bring programming levels based on previous funding formulas in line with smaller allocated budgets—tend to disproportionately diminish access for low-income students most in need of the state-subsidized, open access classrooms of the community college system. They also impact students who once in the college, rely on state-funded assistance programs to remain in school. Latino/a students in the community college system tend to fall increasingly into this category.
Therefore, budget cuts contradict the original intention and vision of California’s modern education system. Since they reduce needs-based programs as well, they may impact the most vulnerable students whose only point of entry into higher education is the community college, combined with other forms of support. This phenomenon has been rationalized through the emergence of an ideology that re-casts education not as a democratic right, but rather as an economic commodity.

**Community College Growth**

The constriction of fund sourcing has occurred at a time when the student population has been growing rapidly in California. These two countervailing factors—more students and less funding—has produced a long arcing trend away from abundance towards a culture of scarcity. Instead of program expansion, there is program contraction and an atrophic deterioration of support services across the board. As a result, California, the eighth largest economy in the world, and which prior to 1978 ranked towards the top in funding per pupil, has since plummeted to 46th in the nation. It now spends almost $1,900 below the national per-student average in public schooling (Garcia & Sanchez, 2008).

California’s community colleges enrolled about 2.7 million, or 80% of the state’s estimated 3.3 million students in public colleges and universities (University of California, 2009). Latino students are far more likely to be enrolled in community colleges than any other racial or ethnic group due to low tuition, proximity to home, availability of evening courses, flexible schedules, remedial education, and open admissions (Martinez & Fernández, 2004). The following section will examine Latino/a enrollment in the California community college in more detail.
Income and Ethnicity

As a population, Latinos in the United States are younger than their other American counterparts and represent a growing percentage of the public school population. According to 2005 U.S. Census data, the median age of Latinos in the United States was 27.2, compared to 36.2 years for the rest of the population. Furthermore, over one-third of all Latinos are under the age of 18, compared to only one-fourth of the rest of the overall population.

The number of Latino children entering into U.S. public schools has grown to 11 million, amounting to 20.5% of all kindergarten through high-school age students by 2006. This accounts for 60% of the total growth in enrollment nationally since 1996, and if demographic factors stay constant, Latinos will constitute a larger national share of the student population than Whites (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). In California, Latino students are already a majority, representing 52% of all students enrolled in public schools.

In California, Latinos composed 33% of the state population by 2000 (Cortina, de la Garza, Bejarano, & Wainer, 2005), 35% by 2004 (Public Policy Institute of California, 2005), and are projected to be the largest ethnic group in California by 2020 and an absolute majority by 2050 (Public Policy Institute of California, 2008). As a reflection of demographic trends, Latino enrollment in higher education is on the rise, but heavily concentrated in community colleges.

As of 2005, 1.9 million Latinos were enrolled in institutions of higher education (17% of the total), although they are disproportionately concentrated in community colleges (Kohler & Lazarín, 2007). In California, Latinos comprise 30% of community college enrollment, 23% of California State University enrollment, and 14% at the
University of California; and Latinos are projected to constitute 48% of California’s
college-age population by 2015 (Chavez, 2008). According to De Los Santos and De Los
Santos (2003), Latino college enrollment is projected to increase from 1.4 million in 1995
to 2.5 million in 2015, representing a 73% increase.

**Budget Cuts**

According to a 2008 study released by the National Center for Public Policy and
Higher Education (NCPPHE, 2008a), college tuition and fees have increased 439% from
the years 1982 to 2007—adjusted for inflation—while median family income rose 147%.
At the same time, students from low-income families pay a larger percentage of their
income for college and get smaller grants from the colleges they attend than students from
more wealthy families.

For instance, net college costs as a percent of median family income for the
lowest 40% of income-earners ranges from 33-55%, making these families much more
dependent on financial aid and loans (NCPPHE, 2008a). From these ranks, roughly 80%
of Latino students apply for aid, and 63% receive some form of aid or loan (Rendón,
Nora, Cabrales, Ranero, & Vasquez, 2008).

This increases the pressure on low-income students to drop-out or not enroll;
especially in light of the fact that in California, for instance, low-income earners’ annual,
average loan amount has increased from $3,280 in 2000 to $4,437 in 2008 (NCPPHE,
2008b). This has been compounded by the fact that since 1980 federal funding has been
transformed from grant-based funding to loans (Osei-Kofi & Rendón, 2005).

For example, as cited by Osei-Kofi and Rendón (2005), “in the fall of 2003 at
least 250,000 prospective students were shut out of higher education due to rising tuition
or cutbacks in admissions and course offerings (p. 254).” At the state level, proposed education budget cuts for the 2009-2010 fiscal year threatened the enrollment of another 250,000 students in community colleges alone (Community College League of California, 2008). The result of the genetic engineering of education budget scarcity in higher education has therefore been to not only retreat from the promise of open-access, but to indirectly reintroduce patterns of racial segregation through budget cuts.

**Problem Statement**

The problem under investigation in this study is to understand how low-income, Latino/a students enrolled in the California Community College system and the Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) perceive their experience in the college and in the program at a time when budgets are being cut. The second component is to understand how they perceive the nature of the cuts. While there are other needs-based programs that could be examined, the EOPS program was selected because of its purpose of serving low-income students. This is defined by EOPS as “students who are socially, economically, and academically or language disadvantaged” (Southwestern College, 2011, para. 2). Given this broad criteria (discussed in more detail in Chapter 3), it pools a large number of Latino/a students. The population is further narrowed to identify students who have been enrolled in the community college and the EOPS program for more than 1 year, since budget cuts have occurred over that timeframe.

According to Frontier College’s website, the EOPS program “is a state-funded, special assistance program for students who are socially, economically, and academically or language disadvantaged. EOPS assists students with counseling, money for books,
emergency loans, priority registration, unlimited tutoring, and specialized support workshops” (Southwestern College, 2011, para. 2).

A body of literature has indicated that Affirmative Action programs (such as EOPS) have been diminished or abolished based on political opposition to multi-cultural education or equity-based programs (Cokorinos, 2003). For instance, Proposition 209 was passed in California in 1996, overturning race-based Affirmative Action in admissions policy in higher education. Proposition 227 was passed in 1998, leading to the dismantling of bilingual education programs in many California public elementary schools.

There is also a body of literature associated with the theoretical model of Neoliberalism, which analyzes budget cuts in the community college system as favoring market-oriented programs over needs-based programs, and which negatively impacts already disadvantaged students (Levin, 2007). The shift within higher education, from an emphasis on access and equity towards the business model that emphasizes the needs of the market, has been identified as Academic Capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a). More specifically, the theory of Academic Capitalism refers to the adaptation of corporate managerial techniques and business practices within public education in order to allocate resources and align curriculum in accordance with free market principles and in response to increased economic pressures associated with global capitalist competition (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a).

There is a body of literature linked to Critical Race Theory (CRT) that attempts to locate racially discriminatory practices embedded within the institutional structures of higher education, such as inequity in funding (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera,
Critical Race Theory advances the premise that “race and racism are a defining characteristic of American society and, by extension, are embedded in the structures, discourses, and policies that guide the daily practices of college campuses” (Villalpando, 2004, p. 43).

However, there is a gap in the literature that attempts to link the implementation of budget cuts at the community college to the institutional integration and application of Academic Capitalism; and to the dismantling of needs-based affirmative action programs (that attempt to address historical inequities) to CRT. Given the gap in the literature and the difficulty in conducting research that explores bias in budgetary decision-making, this study focused on how low-income, Latino/a students perceive their experiences at a time of budget cuts and their perceived nature of those cuts.

This approach was chosen to illustrate the actual, lived experiences of students at a time of budget cuts, with their experiences and perceptions providing insight into the affects and the nature of the cuts. The perceptions of the students regarding their experiences at a time of budget cuts, as well as their insights into the nature of those cuts, was used to validate whether the theories of Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and CRT had applicability. More specifically, student insights might contribute to our understanding of whether or not budget cuts exacerbate existing inequities in higher education (based on class and race), by reducing funding for needs-based educational programs designed to provide access for historically disadvantaged students. Since this study relied on student perceptions of budget cuts and the nature of budget cuts, a review of existing research on student perceptions of budget cuts was conducted, which revealed another gap in the literature. Therefore, this study seeks to develop a new body of
literature that links this conceptual framework to student perceptions. These theories will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze the experiences of low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the community college system and in the EOPS program at a time of education budget cuts and whether their experiences reflect the theories of Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and CRT. It is also intended to gauge student perceptions of the nature of the budget cuts.

A focus of this study will be Latino/a students enrolled in EOPS in the California Community College system. This population will be the focus for three reasons: (a) EOPS is an example of Civil Rights era reform designed to increase access and equity for historically marginalized students of color; (b) Latino/a students are the majority of the participants in the EOPS program in the California Community College system; and (c) EOPS has experienced budget cuts that have diminished the capacity of the program at a time when the Latino/a student population is increasing.

A primary role of the state has historically been to re-allocate funds to education in order democratize and desegregate access for low-income students in general and underrepresented students of color in particular. Regressive budget cuts therefore diminish the state’s role in ensuring this historic mission. As market mechanisms value performance-based outcomes over equity-based outcomes, budget cuts are affecting programs that serve those most in need. In this sense, budget cuts are creating inequities in higher education based on social class and ethnicity.
Research Questions

This study intends to address the following questions:

1. How do low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) perceive the affect of education budget cuts on their persistence in the community college?

2. How do low-income Latino/a students in the EOPS program perceive the reasons for the budget cuts?

Local Setting

For this study, I have chosen a Southern California community college situated in a large coastal county and close to the U.S.-Mexico border region (which I will refer to as Frontier College). I chose Frontier College because it has an EOPS program, a Latino/a student majority, and has recently experienced a series of budget cuts. In the following paragraphs, I will give a more thorough and descriptive account of the campus.

Frontier College is one of California’s 110 community colleges, serving over 29,620 students in all of its institutions, and offering the Associate of Arts degree in about 50 different majors; the Associate of Science degree in more than 80 different majors; Vocational Certificates in over 100 different majors; and a host of noncredit offerings for personal and professional development.

Frontier College is a “Minority Serving Institution” as defined by the Office of Civil Rights (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). According to 2008-2009 annual demographic study by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO, 2009), about 60% of Frontier Community College’s students are Latino/a, with the other 40% categorized (in descending order) as White non-Latino/a, Filipino, Unknown,
African-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and other non-White. Of the Latino/a population, 57% are female and 43% male.

In comparison, the ethnic composition of the tenured faculty Frontier College for the fall term of 2008 was: 59.19% White, 25.11% Hispanic; 4.04% African-American, 4.04% unknown, 3.14% Asian, 2.24% Filipino, 1.35% Pacific Islander, and .9% Native American.

Due to its large Latino population, the school is designated by the Federal Government as a Hispanic Serving Institution (serving at least 25% Latino/a full-time equivalent enrollment), which makes it eligible for federal grants through the Title V Program. The college ranks 11th in the nation for Hispanic enrollment, 6th in the nation for the number of associate degrees awarded to minority students overall, and 3rd overall in the nation for the number of Associate’s degrees awarded to Latinos/as.

The school offers services through the EOPS. According to the school’s website, the program emphasizes support for “economically and academically disadvantaged” students. The category “economically disadvantaged” include students whose low-income level qualifies them for the Board of Governors Fee Waiver Program (BOG), which is based upon the federal poverty guidelines as published each year by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The category of “academically disadvantaged” includes those students “assessed below Math 45 or English 114; No high school diploma or GED; High school GPA less than 2.50; Previously enrolled in basic skill courses; Is first in family to attend college; Speaks a language other than English at home” (Southwestern College, 2011, para. 6). Given these dimensions, the program serves a significant portion of the Latino/a student
population (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 3). The EOPS website is also translated in Spanish, which signifies the importance of communicating information to Spanish-speaking students and their families.

The school, like all other California Community Colleges, is facing budget cuts due to shortfalls at the state level. According to a Frontier College August 2009 budget update, the school cut $1,136,000 from its budget in 2008-2009, and cuts in the 2009-2010 calendar year are projected to be between $2,459,067 to $2,653,629. This series of budget cuts will include an estimated $1,283,877 reduction in major programs: Basic Skills, Credit Matriculation, Disability Support Program and Services, and EOPS. Furthermore, projected cuts for 2010-11 are assumed to be even larger.

In the 2007-2008 calendar year, the budget for EOPS stood at $106.786 million statewide, of which $2,383,811 was allocated to Frontier College. In 2008-2009, the statewide allocation was reduced with the Frontier College allocation reduced to $2,381,270, for a cap of 2,362 students. By 2009-10, Frontier’s allocation had been reduced to $1,436,903, with the cap of students reduced to 1,425.

**Conceptual Framework**

Academic scholars have attempted to link the trend of the defunding of public education to broader philosophical shifts in the political economy, trends which impact the most socioeconomically vulnerable students in higher education. These trends, identified in general form as “Neoliberalism,” and more specifically within education as “Academic Capitalism,” will inform my analysis of how budget cuts emerge and influence decision-making. When looking at how these trends specifically impact students of color, I will use CRT. This theory provides a useful means of analysis that
identifies structural and institutional forms of racism that influence decision-making processes, that in turn produce and reproduce inequities in society in general and within education specifically.

One prominent critic, John S. Levin (2007), has identified the general transition away from state-support for equity-based programs in government institutions as a result of the economic philosophy of Neoliberalism. In the context of education, this economic philosophy favors free-market regulation of academic decision-making over state regulation or mandates; private investment over tax-payer based, public funding; and corporate, performance-based management and efficiency models over needs-based or equity-based decision-making.

As this trend has become a more prominent feature of the economy as a whole and shapes political discourse concerning state funding, public institutions are affected. As Levin (1998) has also identified, community colleges are not static creatures, but rather organisms that make and remake themselves through the internalization of trends in its environment. In other words, as corporations become more powerful and influential within the economy and political structures at the local, state, and federal levels, they serve as conforming entities that seek to remake society in their own image.

The objective is to transform public institutions from regulatory and redistributive entities that seek to mitigate the inequities produced by free-market economics into auxiliary institutions that serve corporate interests at tax-payer expense, albeit in reduced capacity. By exerting external pressure on public institutions in various forms (including budget cuts), internal actors adapt by adapting and conforming their own behavior to the environmental reality.
Slaughter and Leslie (1997a) have termed this phenomenon specifically within education as “Academic Capitalism.” In adapting a public institution such as higher education to corporate models of performance and a reduced roll for the state in addressing inequities, the mission, programming, and behavior all change in content, if not in form. Through corporate rationalization of education, certain consequences include: increased reduction in budgets, targeting of programs not directly tied to measurable results or performances in relation to the market, the replacement of public with private funding through business partnerships, and the incorporation of performance and profit-based decision-making structures.

When these processes coincide with the targeting of needs-based programs that serve historically underrepresented and underserved communities of color, CRT provides an understanding of how unequal power relations based on historical racial inequality determines inequitable distribution of resources. The central tenet of CRT that will be the focus for this study emphasizes that “people of color still face racism at individual, structural, and institutional levels” (Bergerson, 2003, pp. 52-53), despite formal equality of access within the community college system.

This begins early into the educational process. According to Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009), Latino/a students experience inadequate conditions, segregation, and “racial micro-aggressions” (subtle and incessant acts of racism within the educational environment) throughout their K-12 experience. These inequities continue to inform their experience in the community college, where Latino/a students disproportionately depend on needs-based programs like EOPS. Inequity is maintained
or reinforced when these needs-based programs are targeted for reduction or elimination during budget crises.

A cumulative end-product of these trends in the community college system is that budget cuts can become more concentrated, impactful, and debilitating in certain geographic areas and within programs predetermined by the market to be “least rational” in raw economic terms. Under these circumstances, budget cuts are levied against equity-based programs that serve low-income Latino/a students in the community college. Since students in needs-based programs like EOPS are theoretically dependent on such programs for their continued access to higher education, cuts in such programs may impact their ability to persist.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is twofold. First, the study helped develop the body of literature examining the impact of budget cuts in needs-based programs for Latino/a students in the California Community College, and their perceptions of the nature of these cuts. As a significant percentage of the California Community College student population, low-income Latino students often depend on the support of needs-based programs to persist in higher education. Needs-based programs have supported the community college’s mission of open access and provide a mechanism for students that might not otherwise have access to higher education. By examining the experiences of low-income Latino/a students at a time of education budget cuts, it will be possible to determine whether or not budget cuts have a significant effect on this population’s ability to persist.
Second, the study captured students’ perceptions of the nature of these cuts to help determine the validity of the theories of Neoliberalism and Academic Capitalism as a means to understand how students interpret the cuts in the needs-based programs for which they are enrolled. Taken together, this study will contribute to a better understanding of those factors that affect the persistence of low-income Latino/a students in the California Community College, and whether or not the theories of Neoliberalism and Academic Capitalism are applicable in the realm of budget cuts. A practical application of the findings of this research could be to demonstrate how budget cuts undermine equity and access for low-income Latino/a students and students of color in general.

**Delimitations**

The study consisted of both Latino male and Latina female students that had been or were enrolled as full-time students at Frontier College and in the EOPS program for at least 1 year since the fall semester of 2008. The age and language of the sample was not considered as delimitation, since neither Frontier College nor the EOPS program had age or primary language requirements. The study focused on Frontier College students living in the vicinity of the college, and the data collection took place on the campus of Frontier College. The study focused on collection of data related to the experience of students currently enrolled in the EOPS program, who had been part of it for at least 1 year.

The study focused only on Latino/a students participating in the EOPS program and only those enrolled in Frontier College. Other ethnic groups were excluded from the sample to control for the Latino/a student population only. This was done to focus on the Latino/a student population as the largest population at Frontier College, and the fastest
growing sector of the California Community College population. The study’s primary concern was with the experience of Latino/as as an ethnic group, so the gender was not a research consideration. While there were other theories that might have been employed to analyze the implementation of budget cuts in the community college and EOPS program, the theoretical frameworks of this study are limited to Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and CRT. These theories were selected for their applicability in the context of budget cuts, specifically as it related to the targeted reduction of needs-based programs that served Latino/a students in the California Community College.

**Limitations**

The limitations of the study included the selection of the sample and the research design. It was conducted at only one school (Frontier College) with a relatively small number of students (11) and faculty (2) interviews. Furthermore, the study looked at only one single ethnic population amongst the different ethnic groups enrolled in the community college and participating in the EOPS program. Lastly, there is a limitation to focusing solely on interview data. Interview data are also subject to recall error and reactivity to the interviewer (Patton, 2002).

While objectivity was strived for in every element of the study, it was likely that subjectivity factored into the research processes. This included the selection of the topic, the design of the study, the interaction between the researcher and the students being interviewed, and the researcher’s interpretation of the findings and results. Furthermore, as the only observer involved in the research process, the researcher might have missed elements of behavior of the interviewees during periods of engagement in other
simultaneous activity such as asking questions, taking notes, and other unforeseen occasions in which the ability to observe might have been obstructed.

Considering the small size of the sample (11 students; 2 staff), the research might be limited in how accurately it captured the much larger overall experiences and perspectives of the population that it represents. Since the characteristics of the research sample itself are purposefully narrowed to that of one ethnic group (Latino/a) amongst a variety of different ethnic groups that rely on the EOPS Program at Frontier College, findings might be specific to the experiences and perspectives of that same group.

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic Capitalism* (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a): A theory used to describe the way in which institutions of higher education have been integrated into the new economy (corporate globalization) by adapting to, integrating or copying corporate or market-based mechanisms.

*Budget cuts*: A general reference to state-directed reductions in funding allocations specifically referenced in this study regarding education in general and community colleges in particular.

*California Master Plan for Higher Education*: Developed in 1960 by the UC Regents and the State Board of Education during the administration of Governor Pat Brown to set up a coherent system for postsecondary education which defined specific roles for the already-existing University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), and the California Community Colleges system (CCC).

*Equity-based programs*: A general reference to any publicly funded program that serves to increase access or opportunity to disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.
Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS): The EOPS program’s primary goal is to encourage the enrollment, retention, and transfer of students handicapped by language, social, economic and educational disadvantages, and to facilitate the successful completion of their goals and objectives in college. The EOPS offers academic and support counseling, financial aid, and other support services.

Hispanic: An identity term often used to denote an ethnic heritage linking a person historically or culturally to a Spanish-Speaking nation, placing emphasis on the Spanish cultural background and the Spanish language as the primary commonality between those nations. Often used interchangeably with Latino/a (see Latino/a), although there is some controversy with the term since it was created by the U.S. Government for census purposes and because it emphasizes Spanish culture over other ethnic and cultural influences in Latin American and Caribbean nations. In this study, I prefer to use the term Latino/a and only use “Hispanic” when it is part of an official title or program.

Latino/a: Most commonly used as a term of self-identity by people within the United States to denote an ethnic origin linking them to Latin America (especially from Mexico, the Caribbean, or Central America). While it is based on a shared linguistic characteristic (Latin) of Spanish-speaking peoples, the term is often used more broadly to signify a common cultural identity or the shared experiences of Mexicans, Central Americans, Caribbean peoples, and South Americans in the United States. Often used as an alternative to “Hispanic.”

Minority serving institution: An institution with an enrollment of more than 50% minority racial/ethnic students (African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders).
Neoliberalism: A view of the world based on the belief that the optimal economic system is achieved by giving free reign to market participants, privatization, minimal restrictions on international trade, and the shrinking of government intervention in the economy. Critics argue that neoliberal policies prioritize corporate profits over the welfare of the working majority and society at large.

Hispanic-Serving Institution: A Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) is defined as a nonprofit institution that has at least 25% Hispanic full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment. Used exclusively in this study in reference to community colleges.

Proposition 13: Officially titled the “People's Initiative to Limit Property Taxation,” Proposition 13 was a ballot initiative to amend the constitution of the State of California to require a two-thirds legislative majority to raise state taxes and also placed a limit on local government’s ability to increase property taxes.

Proposition 98: Also called the “Classroom Instructional Improvement and Accountability Act,” Prop 98 amended the California Constitution to mandate a minimum level of education spending on education.

Title V: A Federal grant program that helps eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) enhance and expand their capacity to serve Hispanic and low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional stability, management, and fiscal capabilities of eligible institutions.

Organization of the Study

The following chapter contains a survey of the literature that establishes the theoretical framework of Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and CRT. It will also include a survey of the literature pertaining to Latino/a student enrollment and budget
cuts in the community college. The literature review will establish the theoretical basis for the study, which will attempt to further elaborate on the theories by applying them to further research. The remaining chapters will discuss the methodology of my research, a discussion of the findings, and the conclusion.
CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Budget cuts have become a recurring feature of higher education over the last 25 years. This has been influenced by changing economic conditions associated with the end of the “Post-War Boom” and the emergent philosophy of Neoliberalism that has discouraged support for government-based wealth redistribution programs. Harvey (2005) defines Neoliberalism as a theory of political economy that proposes that human interests can be best advanced through an institutional framework characterized by corporate preeminence, strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. In power, neoliberals utilize this philosophy to dismantle or weaken existing policies that promote state intervention and regulation of the economy. Therefore, this system of thought discourages government ownership of the means of production, economic intervention, wealth redistribution, and regulation. Where these exist, it encourages privatization, deregulation, and commoditization in line with free market principles.

In higher education, neoliberal philosophy has guided the erosion of government funding for higher education and instead encouraged privatization as a means of revenue generation and market rationalization as a model for the allocation of resources. The impetus has been provided by budget shortfalls—themselves partially driven by the neoliberal emphasis on tax cuts—by which decreasing state revenues justify the search for funds outside the state. This has opened the door for the expansion of external partnerships with the private sector. Mirroring private industry itself, funding allocation to public institutions is considered an investment with an expectation of profitable return. Therefore, performance outcomes must be measured as a means of monitoring investments. This practice, along with increasing competition for private funds, has
encouraged the adaptation of corporate managerial techniques to internally allocate, 
monitor, and restructure education in alignment with increased economic pressures 
associated with global capitalist competition (globalization). With this model, higher 
education is viewed more as a commodity and less as a social good within this 
framework. This has influenced decision-making processes affecting resource allocation, 
producing a trend towards the devaluation of programs that serve low-income students of 
color (Levin, 2007). While neoliberal thought and practice is transmitted as being neutral 
and grounded in common sense, it is in fact re-fashioning the role of the community 
college so that it serves the interests of the economic upper stratum (Ayers, 2005). The 
contradiction between the dueling public/private paradigms within higher education is 
intensified during economic crisis.

Another theory, Academic Capitalism, applies this pro-market element to 
decision-making processes in higher education. Specifically, it applies to how 
administrators are increasingly linking resource allocation strategies to market principles 
and imperatives over universal access and needs-based considerations (Slaughter & 
Leslie, 1997a). As an emerging and influential paradigm within higher education, 
Academic Capitalism has induced a re-evaluation of the nature of resource allocation. 
Economic recession has accelerated the institutionalization of Academic Capitalism, 
shifting decision-making towards private sector solutions and market rationalization over 
the maintenance of state-funded, needs-based, welfare programs. A manifestation of this 
has been the implementation of social budget reductions, which, in the name of market 
efficiency and budget expediency, ignores the historical content of social programs 
designed to counter existing inequities based on social class and race. This allows for the
linking of the practice of Academic Capitalism to the application Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Critical Race Theorists advance the premise that “race and racism are a defining characteristic of American society and, by extension, are embedded in the structures, discourses, and policies that guide the daily practices of college campuses” (Villalpando, 2004, p. 43). Applying this analysis, it can be adduced that budget cuts implemented within the framework of Academic Capitalism also perpetuate racism and racial discrimination by devaluing and dismantling programs specifically created to ameliorate the inequities created by historic racial segregation.

This can be examined through an investigation of which schools and programs are most likely to be devalued and reduced or eliminated through budget cuts. Also, which populations of students are most vulnerable (based on need) and likely to be displaced from higher education through this process of market-based rationalization and education down-sizing. By surveying the two most recent epochs (1945-1973 and 1973-today) in educational history, the transition to Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and its attendant displacement of students of color can be identified and charted. These epochs have been selected based on their corresponding economic realities: 1945-1973 and the era of the “Post-War Boom” in the economy; and 1973-today signifying the end of the Post-War Boom and the increased influence of the philosophy of Neoliberalism.

Following World War II, there was an expansion of funding for higher education and an investment in growth. This was reflective of the New Deal policies that re-defined the role of government as a broker between social classes, with an emphasis towards social development serving the public good and economic development. Economic
intervention, progressive taxation, and wealth re-distribution opened up higher education to low-income students. This government-directed investment in the expansion of higher education was a response to two diverging imperatives.

The first was to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding U.S. economy through the formation of a more educated and skilled workforce. The second was the result of the increased social power of the U.S. working class which formed powerful labor unions that exerted pressure to democratize the country’s social institutions. These two elements—the macroeconomic exigencies of U.S. capitalism within the expanding global economic system and the social turbulence produced by protest movements of marginalized populations— informed the need for more active government intervention. As long as the economy was expanding and access was increasing, there was broad, public support for this arrangement.

This redefinition of the role of government was accelerated by the Civil Rights Movement, a broad and popular social movement that challenged race-based exclusion in all aspects of public life, including higher education. The pressure from the disruptive actions of the protest movement produced policy changes that ultimately allowed for some degree of integration of people of color.

This transformative constellation of events and processes helped produce the California Master Plan for Education in 1960, a comprehensive policy framework to expand capacity, facilitate access, and encourage growth of the state’s higher education system. The plan created a three-tiered higher education system (community colleges, state colleges, and universities) and attempted to meet the needs of industry and satisfy the demands of social reformers by combining both “meritocratic and egalitarian
imperatives” (Callan, 2009, p. 5). This meant that there would be “open access” for all Californians into the higher education, but placement and admission within the system would be determined by ability ranking. Community colleges were opened to “any student benefiting from instruction” (University of California, 2002, para. 4); state colleges were opened to the top third of high school graduates; and universities the top eighth. This established a matrix of higher education that mirrored the social hierarchy of broader society, but still kept open access at the base of the hierarchy. To ensure access and some mobility within the matrix, higher education was to be administered free of charge to residents of the state.

The plan did initially facilitate growth and access. For instance, there was a 300% enrollment increase in its first decade of implementation (Callan, 2009). Despite its initial success, it was gradually modified and some of its more egalitarian provisions came to be ignored. What was not anticipated in the original drafting of the plan was the role that economic instability and partisan politics would come to play in later years. According to Callan (2009), what was most problematic was the extent to which conflicts between local, institutional, and political interests emerged and impeded the realization of the Master Plan’s primary goal: universal educational opportunity through planned and coordinated growth.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) assert that education policy has always been subordinated to the priorities of the business sector, and locate the impediment to the realization of educational equity in the very nature of the U.S. capitalist system. “Equal access” coincided with the era of managed economic growth but became less desirable as corporations came to exert more influence in domestic politics and international markets.
Education discourse shifted in tandem, with Neoliberalism, and by extension Academic Capitalism, increasingly replacing a state-centered approach.

Today, much of the egalitarian content of the California Master Plan has withered. According to Douglass (2010b), the state has moved away from its commitment to maintain free or low-cost access and to fund actual growth rates. This has allowed the education sector to go into decline, “buffeted by large-scale decreases in public funding, [and] rising tuition and fees” at a time when there is continued growth of student enrollment (Douglass, 2010a, p. 12). There is a correlation between the demise of the democratic intention of the California Master Plan and the imperatives of the capitalist system.

Following the end of the post-war boom with the onset of economic recession in 1973, philosophical and ideological trends emerged that emphasized the downsizing of federal spending on higher education along with a host of social welfare and other public programs. In proportion to decreased funding, institutions of higher education were encouraged to seek private funds through research grants and contracts, external partnerships, technology transfer, and the recruitment of higher fee paying students (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a).

Most recently, the net effect of budget cuts has been to reduce overall funding in California higher education by a total of 14% from 2007-2008 to the 2009-2010 school year, with community colleges in particular absorbing a 10% cut in general fund appropriations (Taylor, 2010). The cuts have diminished enrollment and have also led to a reduction in the funding for categorical, needs-based programs. This directly effects California’s growing Latino student population. In 2009, Latinos comprised 30% of
California Community College student enrollment (CCCO, 2009), 25% of CSU student enrollment (CSU, 2009) and 22% of UC student enrollment (University of California, Office of the President, 2009). Since community colleges account for about two-thirds of California’s postsecondary students, this means that Latino community college students comprise the largest pool of Latino students in higher education in the state (California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC], 2007). Furthermore, needs-based programs that serve low-income Latino students in California Community Colleges have also been cut. Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, for instance, has also had its budget reduced 14% over the same period (Taylor, 2010).

This chapter will examine the changing philosophy and practice regarding the funding of higher education, paying special attention to the theories of Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and CRT. It will also include an analysis of how budget cuts are affecting Latino/a student enrollment, the fastest growing student population within the California Community College system. There is a gap in the literature that links the nature of the budget cuts to Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and their affects to CRT. These three theories were applied as the conceptual framework for this study. This was done as a means to develop an understanding of the convergence between how budget cuts are determined and implemented, and how they affect low-income students of color in particular. While the Critical Race Theoretical framework includes other racial groups within its purview, Latino/a students are the focus of this study.

Given the gap in the literature and the difficulty in conducting research that explores bias in budgetary decision-making, this study focused on how low-income, Latino/a students perceive their experiences at a time of budget cuts. This approach was
chosen to illustrate the actual, lived experiences of students at a time of budget cuts, with their experiences and perceptions providing insight into the nature and impacts of the cuts. The perceptions of the students regarding their experiences at a time of budget cuts, as well as their insights into the nature of those cuts, could be used to validate whether or not the theories of Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and CRT have applicability.

More specifically, student insights can contribute to our understanding of whether or not budget cuts exacerbate existing inequities in higher education (based on class and race), by reducing funding for needs-based educational programs designed to provide access for historically disadvantaged students.

Since the focus of this study is to understand how Latino/a students perceive their experiences as students in the community college at a time of budget cuts and their perceptions of the nature of those cuts, a review of existing literature was conducted. After an exhaustive search for existing literature on the subject of student perceptions of budget cuts using Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) FirstSearch and Academic Search Premier, no literature on student perceptions of budget cuts could be found. Therefore, this study seeks to develop a new body of literature that links this conceptual framework to student perceptions.

**Ideology in Higher Education Funding**

Policymaking in higher education is influenced by political doctrine. This is reflected in the platforms of political parties and their electoral representatives and is also a manifestation of larger trends taking place in society. These trends are demonstrative of the changing equations and balances of power between different social forces, different political agendas, and different epochs of history. The following section will examine the
evolution of political ideology as it influences policymaking in U.S. higher education after World War II. This will include a discussion of the Post-War Boom in education, Civil Rights and Affirmative Action Programs, and an historical examination of the experiences of Latino/a students and inequities in higher education.

**The Post-War Boom in Education**

The post World-War II period of sustained economic growth (what is known as the “Post-War Boom” of 1945-1973) witnessed the increased role of government as guarantor of a “social wage” with massive infusions of funds to expand social services, including access to higher education (Clawson & Lieblum, 2008). An example was the creation of the G.I. Bill, a government-financed, “single-payer” system to subsidize higher education that allocated $14 billion for over 7 million lower-income veterans to access higher education for the duration of the first program (1944-1956; Williams, 2006). Williams (2006) has referred to this philosophical approach as “welfare-state education,” a phenomenon which produced an exponential increase in enrollment in higher education: “from 1.5 million in 1940 to 2.7 million in 1950 to 7.9 million by 1970, and whereas 12% of the population passed through the university in 1930, 30% did so by 1950, 48% by 1970, and over 60% by 1990” (p. 192).

**Civil Rights and Affirmative Action**

Another catalyst for the dramatic growth was the Federal government’s re-orientation of research projects away from private laboratories and towards universities, opening the door to the largesse of Federal research grants and the formation of corporate-academia alliances (with consequences of this explored in more detail later; Mendoza & Berger, 2008). Coinciding with the dramatic growth of the U.S. economy,
investment of public funds in education, and the need for a more highly skilled and technical workforce, the Civil Rights movement and the consequent overturning of formal segregation also played a role in democratization and increased enrollment (Williams, 2006).

The introduction of affirmative action programs to actively overcome institutional racism and informal exclusion greatly increased African-American enrollment. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1995), affirmative action is defined as:

Any measure, beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, that permits the consideration of race, national origin, sex, or disability, along with other criteria, and which is adopted to provide opportunities to a class of qualified individuals who have either historically or actually been denied those opportunities and/or to prevent the recurrence of discrimination in the future.

(para. 1)

Affirmative Action programs were incorporated into higher education as a result of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 and various executive orders, which formalized the illegality of racial and gender discrimination and segregation in public facilities, employment, housing, and in the education system. The legislative and executive orders contained language which encouraged agents within government to take proactive measures to diversify opportunity and placement. Universities and colleges followed suit (de la Garza & Moghadam, 2008).

The significance of these laws laid the basis for Affirmative Action—as there would now be legal recourse to hold public and private institutions accountable if they
did not desegregate and develop new models to diversify that could counteract any lingering “institutional” resistance. According to Marable (2005):

Desegregation led to the unprecedented numbers of African-American students who entered white academic institutions during the period of Civil Rights and Black Power. In 1960, there were barely 200,000 African Americans enrolled in college, and three-fourths of that number attended historically black universities and colleges. By 1970, 417,000 black Americans between ages 18-24 were attending college. Three-fourths of them were now at predominantly white institutions. Five years later, 666,000 African Americans age 18-24 were enrolled in college, more than one out of every five blacks in their age group. Similar gains occurred at every level of education. The percentage of all African Americans completing four years of high school more than doubled in only 15 years, from 20 percent in 1960 to 43 percent in 1975. The total number of African Americans under age thirty-five who held college degrees more than tripled in these same years from 96,200 in 1960 up to 341,000 by 1975. (p. 36)

Accompanied by the structural dismantling of legal segregation, enrollment increased precipitously for traditionally underrepresented populations (i.e., low-income, people of color, women) in higher education (Leiter & Leiter, 2002). For instance, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Brown v. Board of Education ruling (1954) that laid the basis for the desegregation of education could be applied to all ethnic minorities in higher education (MacDonald, Botti, & Clark, 2007).

Affirmative Action began as a juridical philosophy that influenced the creation of variegated institutional mechanisms designed to catalyze diversity and establish
accountability within the slow bureaucratic wheels of public and private enterprise (and the attendant social attitudes of their personnel) hardened by years of legal discrimination and segregation. Changing the structure would ultimately change the culture within those institutions, according to the theory. Affirmative Action philosophy also posited that diversity would have a positive multiplier effect on society as the talent pool would increase, the standard of living would increase, and social problems would diminish.

Overall, Affirmative Action programs did produce palpable results. Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of Black men in professional and managerial positions doubled and for Black women it tripled (with similar results for Latinos); while between 1980 and 1990 the proportion of women overall in managerial positions rose 37% (Norton, 1996). Modest gains were made for Latino teachers within higher education, where in the University of California system, their percentage increased from 2.7% to 4.1% (more of a testament to the inadequacy of implementation than the effectiveness of these programs; Pachon, 1996).

For students in higher education, this meant finding ways to overcome the traditional cycles of exclusion and underdevelopment. Efforts at outreach and enrollment programs for Latinos in high school, bilingual education and language access programs, and the active promotion of Latino educators have all withered as a result of the legislative and cultural assault on diversity.

For most of history, higher education has been reserved for the White elite. Amongst other means of democratization, Affirmative Action policies in the University system through enrollment programs produced great strides towards diversifying the student population. While Affirmative Action programs in the University of California
produced modest results for African-Americans, Latino enrollment increased from 5.6% in 1978 to 16% by 1994 (Valle, 1996).

This resulted in a period of remarkable expansion in public higher education, where the total number of earned degrees conferred (from Associate’s degrees to Doctorates) increased by 249% from 1960 to 1975 (Clawson & Lieblum, 2008). Furthermore, the total share of students in public higher education increased from 50% in 1950 to 80% in 1970 (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a). Public institutions of higher education have been more likely to incorporate Affirmative Action programs than their private counterparts (Grodsky & Kalogrides, 2008). The egalitarian restructuring of higher education found resonance in public sentiment, where by 1970 there was broad support for the idea that low income people and people of color should have access and that the government should intervene to ensure its fulfillment (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997b).

Increased access to higher education for low income students and students of color became incorporated into the concept of the “American Dream,” that is, as universally accessible and a vehicle for social mobility (Reed & Szymanski, 2004). Furthermore, as a pillar of American society funded and protected by the Federal Government, higher education would be insulated from the fray of partisan politics and the volatility of financial markets and speculation. Through to the 1970s, policymakers viewed the health of higher education as a measurement of the health of society and economy as a whole and continued to commit vast resources to its growth (Losco et al., 2005).
Latino/a Students and Inequity in Higher Education

Like their African-American counterparts, Latino/a students have also had to overcome great obstacles to obtain higher education as a result of racial segregation and marginalization. For example, the Latino/a experience in higher education was not even researched prior to 1970, since Latinos were not categorized by federal and state governments as a distinct ethnic group. It took a 1970 Supreme Court ruling, *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi*, to “constitute” Latinos as a unique ethnic category (González-Sullivan, 2007). This means the data on Latino/a higher education enrollment and graduation is limited, much of it subsumed into the statistics for White Americans. Nevertheless, there is evidence that most Latino/a students were prevented from obtaining access to higher education as a result of racial segregation. While Latinos are heterogeneous in racial terms, Latinos of color have faced various forms of segregation that derailed their educational advancement for much of the 20th century (González-Sullivan, 2007).

Before *Brown v. the Kansas Board of Education* there were concerted efforts to place Latinos into separate elementary and high schools—and after the historic ruling—into separate and internally segregated classes that de-emphasized college preparation. As González-Sullivan (2007) concludes about the pre-Brown era, school officials often used the pretense of “language deficiency” as a means to disqualify Latino/a students for educational advancement. MacDonald (2004) expands on this by describing the pipeline to higher education for Latinos as having been “choked off” by “the lack of enforcement of attendance laws, language difficulties, classroom harassment, and racism” which resulted in scarce numbers of Latino/a children advancing past the eighth grade (p. 121). Even after systematic efforts were made to integrate public education during the years
1968-1975, Latino students were not viewed as a primary target for desegregation policy (Arias, 2005). This sets the context for Latino/a participation in the Civil Rights Movement. Social protest against lack of educational equity and access served as a catalyst for reform (MacDonald et al., 2007).

As a result of student protest, the Johnson Administration (1963-1969) instituted a variety of affirmative action programs, some designed specifically to address racial and socioeconomic disparities in education. Through the aegis of the “War on Poverty,” a federal policy initiative comprised of several pieces of legislation intended to ameliorate the structural roots of poverty; the “Trio Programs” were created. Among other things, these programs offered a variety of services designed to aid low-income students of color obtain educational access, including: subsidized child-care, college outreach programs, and direct financial assistance (MacDonald et al., 2007). These federal efforts were duplicated at the state level, where the bulk of educational resources are collected and allocated. In California, the EOPS program was created as a result of this historic process.

An outcome of the Civil Rights Movement and reforms of the era included affirmative action programs designed to increase the enrollment of underrepresented students in higher education. The EOPS program in the California Community College system was established in 1968 with the passage of Senate Bill 164. This affirmative action program was created to facilitate open access for students affected by language, social, and economic disadvantage through the procurement of financial and technical support through the completion of their educational goals (Leon, 1980). It continues to provide pivotal support for students, especially low-income, Latino/a students, who have
the highest percentage of enrollment in the program. As the Latino/a college-age population continues to grow and enrollment in the community college increases, cuts in education funding in general, and in the EOPS program in particular, may undermine student access based on these historical and political factors.

Theoretical Models

The following section examines the three theoretical models used to frame this research study. These are the theory of Neoliberalism, the theory of Academic Capitalism, and Critical Race Theory.

Emergence of Neoliberalism

Resource scarcity and the practice of budget-cutting in higher education have become more commonplace since the early 1980s. This has coincided with philosophical shifts amongst policymakers regarding the role of government and the method of allocation and distribution of funds to higher education, gradually shifting the financial obligations away from the state and onto the individual student. Since 1982, the absolute share of federal and state funding for higher education has declined precipitously in relation to increase student population and enrollment costs. For instance, tuition and fee costs for higher education nationally have increased 439% between 1982 and 2007 (NCPPHE, 2008a). This has produced a “quiet revolution” in which the decline in public funding is inducing adaptation in institutions of higher learning through increased budget cuts, incorporations of market mechanisms, and partnerships with private industry (Awbrey, 2002). As Levin (1998) has identified, the forces of rapid Neoliberal economic globalization has transformed and co-opted higher education into the corporate managerial paradigm (also called Total Quality Management). This external force, in
turn, induces the internal development of new leaders that become facilitators of a restructuring process that follows that mirrors the behavior of market-driven, private industry.

As previously mentioned, one reason for the expansion of higher education sector reflected the growth of the economy and the need to attract, train, and employ a larger pool of skilled workers. As a result, the notion of education funding as a budgetary priority has dissipated at the federal and state level in relation to economic stagnation that followed the end of the “Post-War Boom.” This coincided with the emerging philosophy that market-based mechanisms should supplement or supplant state-led efforts predicated on government-funding through progressive taxation, which became associated with inefficiency and oppressive for tax-payers in the higher tax brackets. A new ideological framework (referred to as Neoliberalism or free-market capitalism) emerged within the political structures of academia (mirroring concomitant shifts taking place within the political parties and agencies of government) which accommodated to criticism of the active redistributive mechanisms of the Federal and State governments associated with education funding (Levin, 2005).

Beginning in the late 1970s, during the Carter Administration (1976-1980) and into the Reagan Administration (1980-1988), there is a departure from the structure of funding of higher education in both rhetoric and in policy and a period of lax enforcement of Civil Rights policies pertaining to education (Grodsky & Kalogrides, 2008). In accordance with the emerging doctrine of fiscal conservatism, the new administrations emphasized that “taxes and the size of government should be reduced and as much as possible and markets or market-like mechanisms should replace government funding and
social services that attempt to equalize incomes and opportunities” (Clawson & Lieblum, 2008, p. 13).

Slaughter and Leslie (1997b) contend that this transition emphasized three new approaches for managing higher education: government deregulation, privatization, and commercialization. As Williams (2006) has concluded, the university system has become incorporated as “part of the strategic defunding of the welfare state from the Reagan Era onwards, and universities have come to operate more as self-sustaining private entities than as subsidized public ones” (p. 195).

According to Levin (2005), the emergence of this “business culture” within community college has followed suit and specifically affected decision-making as the result of two concurrent factors. The first has to do with “increasingly aggressive student recruitment efforts at four-year colleges and universities and the rise of for-profit postsecondary institutions, contemporary community colleges face significant competition” (Levin, 2005, p. 11). The second element is the need to increase enrollments to receive government funds, provoking an entrepreneurial culture, which in turn encourages a number of market-oriented institutional and organizational adaptations designed to chase funding as opposed to meeting student need, and thus moving away from their traditional community college mission (Levin, 2005). Harbour and Jacquette (2007) have referred to this as “marketization,” referring to the “adoption of state policies explicitly designed to create a competitive market in public higher education in order to secure state priorities” (p. 199).

Competition combined with lower resource pools in the form of state support has also produced a shift towards more profitable academic areas (and student populations).
For instance, Levin (2005) points out that the evidence suggests that contemporary community college strategies are based on “adaptation to corporate and consumer demand at the expense of liberal arts programs, transfer functions, and citizenship development” (p. 14). Programs that are de-emphasized, de-funded or excluded in this model tend to be those that serve low-income and disadvantaged students (Levin, 2007). Examples include financial discrimination of undocumented students (who have to pay exorbitant, out of state fees), developmental courses serving underprepared students and others least prepared to either enter the labor market or transfer on to further education (Levin, 2008).

Neoliberalism has led to the restructuring of higher education in a way that has redirected resources away from the students with the most need, as certain populations and some forms of knowledge are less valued than others. According to Manteaw (2008), those academic areas least tied to economic or technological progress in relation to the capitalist market are de-prioritized in the formulation of funding schemes. Furthermore, according to Webb, Briscoe, and Mussman (2009), this process circumscribes lower-performing and less-prepared students since “performance-based funding” and the “ethics of competition” create, legitimate, or sustain inequalities that are then self-perpetuating.

Therefore, market-based approaches to the organization of educational access and success tend to favor “privileged populations” (Levin, 2008). This is exacerbated and made more acute when state funding is diminished through budget cuts. According to Dowd and Grant (2006), colleges serving wealthier communities tend to be more
successful in obtaining revenues from “performance funding” and private fundraising, creating inequity in proportion to a decline in State funding.

A culture of business-modeled decision-making, which ties funding to profitability, rationalized production, and measurable outcomes, gradually penetrated into the public sphere. Furthermore, as education becomes increasingly market-based, the notion of universal accessibility and education having intrinsic and immutable value has waned as an educational ethic (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a).

**Academic Capitalism**

The emergent philosophy of Neoliberalism in higher education has found resonance in the theory of Academic Capitalism, the process by which public research universities have integrated corporate practices, partnerships, and structures into academics (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a). With diminished funding through smaller state block grants and tax caps, administrators, private institutions, and education policymakers have sought to generate new sources of funding. This includes partnering with private capital, incorporating a competitive, cost-benefit analysis model, and re-orienting academic programs increasingly towards the needs of international business trends (also generally referred to the “global economy”; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a). According to Slaughter and Leslie (2001), this transformation of higher education entails substantive organizational changes such as reduction or closure of departments, expansion or creation of other departments, establishment of interdisciplinary units; associated changes in internal resource allocations; substantive change in the division of academic labor with regard to research and teaching; the establishment of new organizational forms such as arms-length companies and
research parks; and the organization of new administrative offices or the streamlining or redesign of old ones. (p. 158)

As more universities move towards a market-based approach, in which the funding is heavily dependent on the specific outcomes, assessment increasingly follows the “performance measurement” model to secure funds, while at the same time minimizing expenditure (Ho, Dey, & Higson, 2006). Harbour and Jacquette (2007) have identified three kinds of performance accountability measurements that in part determine state funding allocations, performance funding, performance budgeting, and performance reporting. As the business model becomes more present, university presidents increasingly resemble corporate CEOs. “They expect faculty members to produce more research, especially funded research, and engage in more service, which is increasingly interpreted as economic development” (Slaughter, 2001, p. 23). This trend is accelerating, especially in private universities. According to a report published in the Chronicle of Higher Education,

More and more boards are made up of businesspeople, who are adopting practices from the for-profit sector, such as incentive bonuses. Businesspeople . . . are more likely to treat colleges like corporations, and can get “carried away” in establishing pay and generous retirement plans. (Fuller, 2010, para. 30).

In a later re-assessment of the Theory of Academic Capitalism, Mars, Slaughter, and Rhoades (2008) modified their earlier, more critical analysis by observing that students are not simply “commodified victims of academic capitalism” (p. 639) but rather can become entrepreneurial agents able to “identify and capitalize on opportunity structures that emerge out of entrepreneurial environments” of the university (p. 644).
Critical Race Theory

While the theory of Academic Capitalism has advanced the understanding of the economic nature of education budget cuts, CRT adds another dimension to explain how the effects of budget cuts impact students of color. It provides a means to contextualize how students of color experience budget cuts differently based on existing inequities that are the result of institutionalized racism. According to Solórzano and Yosso (2001), “Critical race theory (CRT) challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to education by examining how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (p. 2). Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, and Lynn (2004) further articulate a framework for applying CRT to higher education that includes an analysis of the structures, practices, and discourses that maintain class, race, and gender-based discrimination. It is in this matrix where we see Academic Capitalism and racism converging in the form of budget cuts that undermine racial equity.

Critical Race Theorists posit that community colleges offer both a gateway and a barrier to higher education for students of color. They are attractive to students of color for the following reasons: proximity to low-income communities, the ability for students to attend part-time, open accessibility, the diversity of students, and the low cost (Pérez & Ceja, 2010). As a reflection of this allure, 80% of all college-bound Latino/as in California begin their higher education by enrolling in community colleges (Pérez & Ceja, 2010). Community colleges, like other institutions of higher education have also attempted to meet the academic and social needs of the Latino/a population by “adopting traditional institutional responses, such as providing special college outreach and
transition programs, enhancing academic support services, and involving Latino college graduates as mentors and role models” (Villalpando, 2004, p. 41).

Nevertheless, community college campuses are not “politically neutral, color-blind institutions that benignly serve their underrepresented students of color while ignoring labor market influences” (Jain, 2009, p. 81). Located at the lower end of the higher educational hierarchy, they tend to reflect the class and racial inequalities of larger society, and by extension project low academic expectations on students of color (Jain, 2009). Solórzano et al. (2005) expand on this concept by asserting that the smaller resource base, lower academic standing, and overall low university transfer rates already puts this population at a disadvantage in achieving their educational goals. They state that community colleges contain “institutional structures that fail to support their academic needs and professional goals and aspirations [and] . . . often lack academic guidance or clearly defined transfer procedures” (Solórzano et al., 2005, p. 282). The dismantling of affirmative action programs has already dealt a serious blow against efforts to end segregation within higher education, contributing to the process of re-segregation (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The cutting of community college budgets, and the downsizing of needs-based programs designed to counter the deleterious effects of institutional racism, will likely accelerate the process.

Budget Cuts and Latino/a Students in Higher Education

Budget cuts in higher education are occurring at a time when Latino/a students are becoming a larger share of the total student population. The following section will explore the intersection of these two phenomena, increased Latino/a enrollment and budget cuts in higher education, and illustrate the consequences that are emerging as a
result. This will include a discussion of the emergence of budget cuts, the state of Latino/a student access today, budget cuts and the challenges to Latino/a student access, and the impact on Affirmative Action Programs.

**Budget Cuts Emerge**

While the 1950s and 1960s were periods of mass investment in education, the 1970s and 1980s saw a transition towards budget reductions as a result of shifting governmental priorities. Kissler (1997) cites a study by Mortenson (1994) that identifies the erosion in state support for public, higher education funding. The study shows that higher education’s share of state government expenditures had declined from an average of 22% (1966 to 1975) to 20% (1976 to 1985). Following that period, there was a steady decline to approximately 17% in 1992.

As a reflection of this trend, college tuition and fees have increased 439% from 1982 to 2007 (adjusted for inflation), while median family income only rose 147% (NCPHE, 2008a). The increase in tuition and fees can be understood as the decrease in the rate of funding in proportion to the growth of the student population and increased enrollment rates. As a result, there is increasing demand for access to higher education, estimated to rise 25% between 2003 and 2012 (Kissler & Switkes, 2005; Shulock & Moore, 2005). These countervailing tendencies are creating a crisis of access for the student population.

For example, as cited by Osei-Kofè and Rendon (2005), “in the fall of 2003 at least 250,000 prospective students were shut out of higher education [nationally] due to rising tuition or cutbacks in admissions and course offerings” (p. 254). This trend has occurred even more acutely at the California state level. The state’s general fund
investment in community colleges decreased by 2% from 2001-2002 to 2003-2004, while student fees were increased by more than 60%, from $11 to $18 per unit.

This led to substantial reductions in course section offerings and a 5% decline in enrollment since the fall of 2002 (a reduction of 175,000 students from the projected enrollment level prior to the budget cuts and related schedule reductions; Shulock & Moore, 2005). It was estimated that at least 20,000 Black and Latino students were shut out of California’s 108 community colleges because of cuts in state spending (Evelyn, 2003). Following the onset of recession in 2008, proposed education budget cuts for the 2009-2010 fiscal years threatens the enrollment of another 250,000 students in California’s community colleges (Community College League of California, 2008).

According to a 2004 study by the NCPPHE (as cited in Hayward, Jones, McGuinness, & Timar, 2004), another consequence of budget cuts has been to squeeze out more vulnerable students unable to navigate and persist in the community college system at a time of increased competition and declining support. The study identifies students that are low-income, first-generation, and underprepared as being the most vulnerable, with the end result being diminished access for these student populations.

**Latino/a Student Access Today**

Latinos are both the fastest growing and the youngest segment of the population in the United States. By 2007, the Latino population had grown to 45.5 million (about 15.1% of the total U.S. population), accounting for 50.5% of U.S. population growth since 2000 (Fry, 2008). By 2050, Latinos are projected to comprise 24% of the labor force (González-Sullivan, 2007).
In California, Latinos comprised 33% of the state population by 2000 (Cortina et al., 2005), 35% by 2004 (Public Policy Institute of California, 2006), and are projected to be the largest ethnic group in California by 2020, and an absolute majority by 2050 (Public Policy Institute of California, 2008).

As a population, Latinos in the United States are younger than their other American counterparts. According to 2005 U.S. Census data, the median age of Latinos in the United States was 27.2, compared to 36.2 years for the rest of the population. Furthermore, over one-third of all Latinos are under the age of 18 compared to only one-quarter of the rest of the overall population.

As a result of these factors, the number of Latino children entering into U.S. public schools grew to 11 million, amounting to 20.5% of all kindergarten through high-school age students by 2006. This accounts for 60% of the total growth in enrollment nationally since 1996, and if demographic factors stay constant, Latinos will constitute a larger national share of the student population than Whites. In California, Latino students are already a majority, representing 52% of all students enrolled in public schools (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Nevertheless, only 52% of Latinos complete high school, compared to 72% of Blacks and 84% of Whites, and only 27% of Latinos go on to college immediately after completing high school, compared to 49% of Whites (González-Sullivan, 2007).

A large population of high school-aged Latinos is undocumented, especially in California. The U.S. Census Bureau (2005) estimated that in the year 2000, approximately 2.5 million undocumented youth under age 18 lived in the United States. Migration patterns from Mexico, for instance, has resulted in about 2 million of its
citizens entering into the United States between 2000 and 2005 (Brooks & Amador, 2007). While the transitory and subterranean nature of unauthorized immigration makes it difficult to cull precise numbers (National Education Association, n.d.), between 50-60,000 undocumented high school students graduate in the United States each year. It is estimated that 40% of undocumented students at all levels attend California schools (Rincón, 2007).

Latino enrollment in higher education is also on the rise. As of 2005, 1.9 million Latinos were enrolled in institutions of higher education (17% of the total), although they are disproportionately concentrated in community colleges (Kohler & Lazarín, 2007). In California, Latinos comprise 30% of community college enrollment, 23% of California State University enrollment, and 14% at the University of California; and Latinos are projected to constitute 48% of California’s college-age population by 2015 (Chavez, 2008). According to De Los Santos and De Los Santos (2003), Latino in college enrollment is projected to increase from 1.4 million in 1995 to 2.5 million in 2015, representing a 73% increase. In California, Latinos comprise 30% of community college enrollment, 23% of California State University enrollment, and 14% at the University of California; and Latinos are projected to constitute 48% of California’s college-age population by 2015 (Chavez, 2008). Despite being the fastest growing sector of the eligibility pool for higher education, they have the lowest rate of enrollment of all ethnic groups in all three California systems (CPEC, 2007).

**Budget Cuts and the Challenges to Latino/a Student Access**

While Latino enrollment (and demand for enrollment) increases as a proportion of the nation’s prospective college students, public funding diminishes in tandem. The
attendant increases in tuition and fees have impacted low-income Latinos in two specific ways: Increased out-of-pocket costs for low-income Latino families and increased reliance on loans. In California, these factors result from two types of budget cuts: gradually diminished funding streams through restrictive tax structures and periodic budget reductions. Taken together, these cuts negatively affect Latino students in the California Community Colleges, where they are concentrated as the largest percentage of Latinos student in higher education.

Latino students tend to come from lower-income families and attend inner-city public schools. According to Fry and Gonzalez (2008), Latino students enrolled in public schools on a national level are more likely than their non-Latino counterparts to reside in households at or below the poverty level—28% versus 16%. Furthermore, “the median household income of non-Hispanic public school students is $60,372, and of Hispanic public school students it is $40,248. While 59% of non-Hispanic public school students live in households whose income exceeds $50,000, only 38% of Hispanics do” (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008, p. 13).

While Latino children account for more than 50% (1,603,952) of California’s child population under the age of 6, 6 in 10 reside in low-income households. According to a study of poverty amongst Latino school children by the National Council of La Raza (2007), “economic hardship can adversely affect a child’s development in domains that are fundamental to school readiness. In California, 953,045 (60%) young Latino children live in families with income levels below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level” (para. 2). With regards to funding, 94% of California’s students attend schools in school districts that spend less than the national average, disproportionately affecting the lowest
income-earners (Rogers, Terriquez, Valladares, & Oakes, 2006). As a result of these trends, it has been revealed that the higher the proportion of Latinos/as in a particular school, the lower the rate of funding overall (Rogers et al., 2006).

Budget reductions in California can be linked to Proposition 13 tax restrictions, which have systematically diminished state resources, and periodic legislative cuts within budget development. The result has been diminished allocation of resources overall, as well as targeted reductions. Within the context of an existing socioeconomic inequality in California schools, budget reductions exacerbate inequities. This is further compounded how increased fees and tuition provide a greater burden for low-income students, leading many to have to depend on loans.

While California’s student population continues to grow, funding has not increased in parity, rather it has decreased overall in proportion to population growth. This is due to two factors: an arcane funding regime which has stifled local government’s ability to increase revenue to fund local schools and ties funding to local property taxes (Proposition 13), and secondly, the tendency to cut budgets rather than raise taxes or shift revenues from other sources during economic recession. Proposition 13 has its origin in the “Tax Revolt of 1978,” in which California’s voters implemented a new reshaped school funding regime through a proposition that created a state constitutional amendment (13a). This amendment capped the rate of property taxes and re-directed them to the state level, which were hitherto set by local governments, with the assessments collected and distributed directly into the local education fund. The new change—with only a fraction of property taxes making it back into local coffers—resulted in the evaporation of $6 billion dollars in the following year. With an abrupt 57%
reduction in property tax income (Eatman & Kiefer, 1984), the State government was forced to step in to prevent the financial collapse of the school system, allocating personal income taxes and other taxes back to the locales vis-à-vis block grants (Chapman, 1998).

Furthermore, the proposition mandated that the state legislature require a two-thirds majority to pass a state tax increase, further hamstringing funding since achieving this “super-majority” is virtually impossible in the realm of partisan politics. This has led to the gradual atrophy of the rate of school funding with its concomitant deterioration of services that support students in need. As a result, California—which prior to 1978 ranked towards the top in funding per pupil—and is the eighth largest economy in the world, has since plummeted to 46th in the nation, spending almost $1,900 below the national per-student average (Garcia & Sanchez, 2008). When this decreased funding allocation is met with economic recession, direct budget cuts result.

With the onset of economic crisis in 2008, the California education budget has been targeted for reduction. In the fall of 2008, the state treasury was in a deficit of 11.2 billion dollars for 2008-2009 and 28 billion by the close of the fiscal year 2009-2010. Amongst the variety of proposals to ameliorate the shortfall is the proposal to cut 2.5 billion dollars in K-12 education funding and nearly 300 million from Community Colleges, or 5% of funding overall (Community College League of California, 2008).

Furthermore, the California State University’s 23 schools are facing $66 million dollars in funding cuts which will eliminate 10,000 admission slots for the 2009-2010 academic year—on top of a preexisting $215 million dollar budget deficit (Goodwin, 2008). The University of California, for its part, is scheduled to distribute $240 million dollars in cuts across its 10 campuses statewide (University of California, 2009).
Adjusted for inflation and enrollment growth, state funding on a per-student basis at UC has already fallen about 40% since 1990 (Douglass, 2008).

It is through these cuts that the burden of pay is shifted to the individual student. As a result, students from low-income families have had to pay a larger percentage of their income for college. For instance, net college costs as a percent of median family income for the lowest 40% of income-earners ranges from 33-55% making these families much more dependent on financial aid and loans (NCPPHE, 2008a). From these ranks, roughly 80% of Latino students apply for aid, and 63% receive some form of aid or loan (Rendón et al., 2008).

Financial stresses associated with high costs or the fear of debt accumulation can pressure low-income students to drop-out or not enroll. This reflects a larger shift in federal funding away from grants and towards loans, where students become increasingly saddled with long-term debt (Osei-Kofi & Rendón, 2005). In California, for instance, the average annual loan amount for a low-income student has increased from $3,280 in 2000 to $4,437 in 2008 (NCPPHE, 2008b). Some scholars attribute decreasing enrollment rates of students of color to this costly transition (Grodsky & Kalogrides, 2008). As a result of disparities in allocation of resources and diminishing resources overall, lower-income students in general, and Latino students in particular are increasingly priced out of the education system.

**Impacts on Affirmative Action Programs**

The institutional disruption of Latino student access through chronic underfunding has also been compounded by the dismantling of Affirmative Action programs that were created to overcome historical, systemic barriers. As the Latino population increases in
U.S. schools, old challenges have re-emerged and new challenges have arisen that deny an equal playing field, requiring special attention and remedy. The erosion of affirmative action programs in enrollment, college outreach programs to Latino high school students, bilingual education programs in the classroom, and access for out-of-status students contribute to the 21st century barriers for the new Latino majority.

According to the research of Affirmative Action historian Lee Cokorinos (2003), the dismantling of Affirmative Action was a coordinated effort beginning (in earnest) from within the Republican Administration of Ronald Reagan. The effort received ideological support from a well-funded coterie of partisan think tanks (such as the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute) and continued through the Bush Administration of 1988-1992. The intention was to use the Federal government to weaken or dismantle the enforcement of civil rights legislation and to marshal the forces of the conservative electorate at the state and local level to uproot Affirmative Action programs.

Through this coordinated effort, programs to diversify the campus were dealt a severe blow with the passage of Proposition 209 in California, which outlawed pro-active Affirmative Action programs in the state, leading to a decline in Latinos and African-Americans in higher education. According to University of California at Berkeley historian Carlos Muñoz, Jr. (2007), a year after its passage, admissions of underrepresented groups declined by 55%—66% fewer Blacks, 54% fewer Latinos, and 61% fewer Native Americans. The legislative victory inspired efforts to dismantle Affirmative Action across the country.
At the high school level, chronic, historical, and cyclical inequalities are reflected in the fact that to the present day Latino/a students have the highest dropout rates amongst all students. This has reached the alarming rate of 50% nationally (Pizarro, 2005). According to Vásquez (2007), 30% of Latinos 16-24 years of age have not graduated from high school, and dropout rates at some schools approach 70%. Into higher education, their representation diminishes rapidly. In prestigious 4-year institutions, and their low numbers in graduate school (4%; as opposed to African Americans [6%] and Whites [73%]) foreshadows more of the same in positions within the economic and political architecture of society. At 13%, Latinos have the lowest rate among all ethnic groups in the United States to have a college degree or higher, compared with 41% for White adults (Weisberg, 2008). The potential for this disconnect is illustrated by the fact that at the California state level, Latinos are projected to account for 80% of the increase in high school graduates, beckoning an urgent need to strengthening the means of transition to college (Chavez, 2008).

As a consequence of the aforementioned inequities, Latino youth are proportionately less likely than African Americans and Whites to be at grade level, enroll in college preparatory classes, or finish high school (Vásquez, 2007). One measure of reaching at-risk Latino students (through Affirmative Action) has been the creation of high school outreach programs.

High School Outreach programs are designed to offer “cultural, institutional, relational, and personal bridges” that increase student succession to college (Denner, Cooper, Dunbar, & Lopez, 2005, p. 22). State and federal efforts include programs such as AVID, Puente, the Early Academic Outreach Program, Upward Bound, Talent Search,
and GEAR UP. Local and privately funded programs have offered services such as mentoring, test preparation, efforts at family involvement, and scholarships. These programs, the result of civil rights efforts to fund Affirmative Action, are not viewed as fixed, integral components of the education budget and are made superfluous and expendable during shortfalls.

For instance, when Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger took office in California in 2004 amidst a budget deficit of $1 billion dollars, his first impulse was to virtually eliminate university outreach programs (Jensen, 2004). California’s budget shortfall of 2008-2009 once again raised the specter of cuts to outreach programs. State legislators and the Governor implemented a series of mid-year cuts that included a 10% cut across the board for the California Student Opportunity and Access Program. As a state funded Affirmative Action program, Cal-SOAP serves students from low-income families, first-generation college students and students from schools or geographic areas with documented low college eligibility or participation rates. According to the Guardian Newspaper (University of California, San Diego), Cal-SOAP, which serves all schools within the San Diego Unified School District and a few schools from Imperial County, lost 25.7 percent of its annual budget this year, cutting $325,000 from its funding. Its current budget sits at $938,000, which may decrease by another $94,000 next year. (Cheng, 2008, para. 2)

Another contributing factor to the lack of transfer/outreach support for Latinos has to do with the ratio of counselor to student. According to Rogers et al. (2006) “the average high school counselor in California is expected to serve 790 students, almost
three times as many students as the average high school counselor nationwide who serves 284 students” (p. 4). Furthermore,

92% of California high schools have more students per counselor than the national average for high schools. Intensely segregated minority schools are 4 times more likely than majority white schools (24% to 6%) to experience all of the counselor, teacher, and coursework roadblocks. (Rogers et al., 2006, pp. 9-10)

The lack of adequate personnel is further exacerbated by the lack of Latino educators within the existing pool. According to Osei-Kofi and Rendón (2005), Latino educators make up only about 3% of fulltime faculty nationwide. When it comes to administration, this is a power structure where Latinos are for the most part absent. When present, their location not surprisingly mirrors the racialized hierarchy of American higher education. Latino presidents, for example, serve primarily in public institutions and in 2-year colleges, while having no visibility in private and doctoral granting universities. Illustrating a similar pattern of hierarchical segmentation, Latino administrators work in lower ranked administrative positions such as student services, while making a poor showing in the academic-faculty sphere. (Osei-Kofi & Rendón, 2005, p. 256)

The lack of Latino educators is also reflected in the California Community College system, where although Latinos comprise 28% (projected to reach 48% by 2015; Chavez, 2008) the percentage of total Latino Administrators was 15.99%, full-time faculty 12.17%, and adjunct faculty 10.15% in 2007 (California Community Colleges Systems Office, 2007). This disparity—the lack of Latino faculty in proportion to students—works against student success.
A proportionate faculty of color not only increases the talent pool, but teachers and administrators who share the cultural background of an (increasing) portion of the student population enter the classroom with the skills and sensibilities necessary to recognize learning styles, gauge student understanding, and make cultural connections to the curriculum. In addition, faculty of color model success, academic achievement and leadership which cuts against the racial stereotypes or absence of role models that occur in other spheres of society. Latino teachers and administrators can effectively model successful teaching styles, demonstrate understanding of the cultural and socioeconomic challenges facing Latino students, and communicate a respect for cultural differentiation that can benefit the rest of the faculty who share in a commitment to Latino student success.

As a result of both budget cuts and the elimination of programs designed to bridge access to Students of Color, Affirmative Action programs in higher education have been steadily declining. As identified by Grodsky and Kalogrides (2008), about half of the comprehensive 4-year colleges and universities in the United States engaged in affirmative action between 1972 and 1994. On the state level, Affirmative Action programs have been dismantled wholesale or piecemeal since the height of implementation in the late 1980s. Using 18 years of data from more than 1,300 4-year colleges and universities in the United States, Grodsky and Kalogrides (2008) have identified that all have reduced or eliminated Affirmative Action programs since 1995.

Therefore, the proportion of underrepresented students of color relative to White students applying to college probably declined over time, even as the share of Black and Hispanic students applying increased. On average, Black students (around 7%) and
Latino students (around 5%) are underrepresented in colleges relative to their share of the college-aged state population (Grodsky & Kalogrides, 2008). The experience of students of color in the University of California system has been demonstrative of this process.

Before University Board of Regents issued special resolution SP-1 in 1995 which banned consideration of “race, religion, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin” students of color made up 21% of UC’s systemwide entering class, having risen from about 10% in 1980. After SP-1 there was an immediate drop in the enrollment of freshman students of color, which reached a low point of 15% in 1998, far less than their representation in the state (Atkinson & Pelfrey, 2006). The enrollment increased back to 18% in 2004 only after new outreach programs were designed that reached out to these same communities using criteria other than race such as income levels and school performance (Atkinson & Pelfrey, 2006).

**Summary**

In summary, funding regimes for Higher Education has undergone transition from the period of the “Post-War Boom” to the era of capitalist globalization and its ideological counterpart in Neoliberalism. This refers to the shift away from publicly funded higher education with an emphasis on equity through the subsidization of disadvantaged students. Instead, the gradual incorporation of market-mechanisms, business practices, and private-partnerships has become the dominant mode of education administration. Referred to as the theory of Neoliberalism, this transition has produced budget shortfalls across the board which has resulted in budget cuts. Academic Capitalism, as an extension of Neoliberalism, attempts to show how administrative decision-making processes in higher education increasingly mirror that of the private
sector. As a result, resource allocation in education favors programs and populations more directly linked to the market and profitability.

While budget cuts affect all students and institutions, they do not affect all equally. Cuts disproportionately affect those institutions with the least amount of funds overall (Community Colleges) and students with lower incomes whose persistence may depend on access to needs-based welfare programs like EOPS. Within the low-income student population, students of color are disproportionately concentrated due to the legacy of institutional racism and marginalization resulting from racial segregation and educational and economic underdevelopment. Using CRT, budget cuts influenced by Neoliberalism and Academic Capitalism can be shown to undermine racial equity in higher education.

In California, with the largest population of Latino/a students and largest community college population in the nation, budget cuts have been devastating. Furthermore, within this framework, programs targeted for elimination have been directly or indirectly selected based on their perception of expendability, which often includes Affirmative Action programs that were designed to improve access for low-income students of color. This has not only diminished access, but has set back efforts to overcome historical inequalities that continue to shadow progress in higher education into the 21st century.

However, previous studies on the budget cuts tended to lack a well-defined theoretical framework, and there was no published studies exploring low-income Latino students’ perceptions of the budget cuts. Using a combination of Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism, and CRT, this research focused on low-income, Latino/a student
perceptions at a time when funding for community colleges and the EOPS Program was being cut. Since these students have been pursuing an education before and after budget cuts are implemented their perception of the effects will be essential in understanding the overall experience. This will help illustrate how the students analyze the relationship between budget cuts and their daily experiences, as well as shed light on how they understand the nature of the budget cuts.
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter, the methodology of this research project will be articulated. The scientific architecture that frames the research method of this dissertation will include: (a) the research design; (b) the research questions; (c) the participant selection strategy and description of participants; (d) participant recruitment strategies; and (e) data analysis strategies. Upon completion of this chapter, the reader should have a clear understanding of why and how this methodology will best guide the research.

Research Design

The following section will define and describe the research design components of this study. This will include a discussion of the Qualitative Method, Phenomenology, the Advocacy/Participatory Worldview model, Critical Race Theory (CRT), a layout of the specific methodologies for data collection, and the research questions.

Qualitative Method

This study was conducted using the qualitative method, a phenomenological approach, and was grounded in the advocacy-participatory worldview. Theoretical perspectives, such as CRT also informed the research design. The research attempted to understand the significance that a group of low-income, Latino/a students ascribe to their experience with budget cuts in the community college system and in the EOPS program. This also included interviews with EOPS staff to add their perspective on student experience. Data were collected in a school setting that was familiar to the student and staff, and information gathered was analyzed in order to identify for the possibility of commonality of perception and experience.
Qualitative research involves the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from discourse. It is used in the exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced and articulated by research participants themselves, based on their observations in the natural context (Malterud, 2001). The process of research involves data collection based on emerging questions and procedures and data analysis using an inductive method to identify and construct themes based on emerging patterns (Creswell, 2009). This allows the researcher to make interpretations of the meaning and significance of the data.

For this study, the qualitative method of research was preferred over the quantitative method. The quantitative method seeks to test objective theory and construct generalizations about experience through a deductive examination of the relationship between predetermined research variables (Creswell, 2009). Statistical analyses are conducted to identify patterns and extrapolate meaning independent of the research participant’s individual interpretation. Since the purpose of this project was to develop understanding of the lived experience of the students based on their own perceptions and unique insights, it would be loyal the inductive style of qualitative research.

**Phenomenology**

The research was based on a strategy of inquiry. “In this situation, the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the view of the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 16). The research attempted to capture the lived experience of low-income Latino students as they encounter the implementation of budget reductions that directly affects their academic experience. Through direct and extensive interaction with
a small group of students, the research attempted to identify their experiences and perceptions of the experiences.

**Advocacy/Participatory Worldview**

The worldview that contextualized the research design was the advocacy/participatory worldview. This perspective identifies that research be used to address the experiences of historically marginalized or underrepresented people and that it be “inter-twined with politics and a political agenda” (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). Since the impact of the budget cuts are being applied without concern for opportunity, access, and sustainability for the most economically vulnerable and marginal students, historical inequities may be perpetuated with across-the-board reductions. Budget cuts can then subvert educational reforms that have tied equity to funding for needs-based programs.

If low-income Latino/a students in needs-based programs are affected by the budget reductions, they are in a position to help the researcher develop meaning from the questions and analyze their experiences with the researcher. Furthermore, this advocacy research sought to give a voice to the subjects, where their voice was often excluded or overlooked. Ideally, the research would be useful for not only the researcher, but also for the participants themselves. Data collected and analyses developed would raise consciousness and help empower students to self-advocate and participate as agents for reform.

**Critical Race Theory**

Lastly, the research design employed critical race theory in the analysis. Critical Theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to challenge and transcend social constraints imposed on them through race, class, and gender oppression
(Fay, 1987). In this sense, the research employed critical race and class theory both in the choosing of the participants (low-income, Latino students) and in the attempt to investigate how these students might be negatively affected based on their race, ethnicity, and income status.

**Specific Methodologies for Data Collection**

The specific methodology to be used was individual face-to-face interviews. It was the perception of this researcher that the individual face-to-face, open-ended, and semi-structured interviews would yield the most information. A semi-structured interview refers to the aim of the researcher to keep focus on the research questions while allowing for the possibility of unanticipated follow-up questions. Open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to introduce unanticipated concepts, go on tangents, or otherwise go off the track of the current question in a way that may still provide relevant data to the researcher.

Since reliance on social services often stems from reasons an individual might want to keep confidential, a discussion of the personal effects of budget cuts on an individual might also be a personal or sensitive issue. Meeting alone in a secure and familiar setting might provide more comfort and assurance for the interviewee.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that drove the data collection were as follows:

1. How do low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) perceive the affect of education budget cuts on their persistence in the community college?
2. How do low-income Latino/a students in the EOPS program perceive the reasons for the budget cuts?

The Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) program “is a state-funded, special assistance program for students who are socially, economically, and academically or language disadvantaged. EOPS assists students with counseling, money for books, emergency loans, priority registration, unlimited tutoring, and specialized support workshops” (Southwestern College, 2011, para. 2). The program offers a number of services to students, such as:

- Academic, career, and personal counseling.
- Transfer/Career assistance.
- Student Educational Plan (SEP) and Semester-by-Semester Plan for each student.
- Tutoring.
- Academic follow-up of students.
- Progress reports—to provide information to students as to how they are doing in their classes.
- Emergency Loans.
- Book Service.
- Cultural enrichment activities.
- Workshops in personal development, study skills, career, and majors.
- Leadership development activities.
• CARE Program—Grant and additional services for EOPS students who are single parents, have a child 13 years or younger and have an open case number with the Department of Health and Human Services.

• Priority Registration.

• Student Employment Services (Job Prep and Job Placement).

• Cap and Gown for graduation. (Southwestern College, 2011, para. 2)

According to school requirements, only students who are considered “educationally disadvantaged” are eligible to participate in the program. This is determined by meeting at least one of the following requirements:

• Assessed below Math 45 or English 114.

• No high school diploma or GED.

• High school GPA less than 2.50.

• Previously enrolled in basic skill courses.

• Is first in family to attend college.

• Speaks a language other than English at home. (Southwestern College, 2011, para. 5)

In the 2007-20088 calendar year, the budget for EOPS stood at $106.786 million statewide, of which $2,383,811 was allocated to Frontier College. In 2008-2009, the statewide allocation was reduced with the Frontier College allocation reduced to $2,381,270 for a cap of 2,362 students. By 2009-2010, Frontier’s allocation had been reduced to $1,436,903 with the cap of students reduced to 1,425.

The first research question was designed to identify the specific impact that the budget cuts had on the EOPS program that serves the students, and to identify if there
were specific and recognizable consequences for the students as a result. The question also explored the perceptions of the experiences of the participants in relation to how they understood the nature and impact of the budget cuts on their ability to persist.

Consequences that may result from budget cuts in the EOPS program could include: Diminished funds to cover rising tuition costs leading to attrition for Latino students, increased competition between students for fewer resources leading to more program application denials for Latino students, or Latino students having less persistence as a result of being removed from the program. There is also the possibility that students will not be disproportionately affected or feel the budget cuts.

The following questions will be used in the interview process. See Appendix A for a full list of the student interview questions and Appendix B for a full list of the staff interview questions. The following analysis of the student interview questions is structured to pertain to the two research questions. Since the first 10 questions pertain to question 1, they will be designated 1-1, 1-2, and so on. The next 5 questions will pertain to research question 2, so they will be designated question 2-1, 2-2, and so on. Since the staff questions were derived from the student interview questions, they will be not be analyzed separately. The following 10 interview questions draw out the student perceptions of their own experiences and those of their peers.

1-1. How long have you been enrolled in the EOPS program?

1-2. What has been your experience as a participant in the EOPS program?

1-3. What has been your experience as a student in the community college at a time of education budget cuts?
1-4. What has been your experience as an EOPS student at Frontier College at a
time of education budget cuts?

1-5. Has your experience as a student changed in any way as a result of
education budget cuts?

1-6. Do you have a job?

1.7 How do you think budget cuts affect your family?

1-8. If budget cuts continue, how do you think this will affect your education?

1-9. Regarding your education, where do you see yourself a year from now?

1-10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the subject?

The questions 1-1 and 1-2 were designed to encourage the students to consider
their participation in the EOPS program in a holistic manner. This way, they would be
able to consider, analyze, and contextualize any significant change or modification in the
program that might have affected them directly. They were also designed to get an
overall first-hand sense of the student experience, independent of sentiments that might
influence perception once the subject of budget cuts was introduced.

Questions 1-3, 1-4, and 1-5 introduced the issue of budget cuts and were designed
to encourage the student to explore their own perceptions of the budget cuts as they had
experienced them throughout the community college and within EOPS. Question 1-4
invited the student to consider their own experiences in relationship to changes in the
EOPS program and the potential for these changes to have some direct or indirect affect
on the student. Question 1-5 did the same, but within all aspects of the community
college. These questions also provoked a wider or more tangential discussion, since the
students had a lot to say on the subject, and brought out information that needed more
clarification. Questions 1-6 and 1-7 explored for possible secondary effects of the budget cuts as students negotiated between multiple obligations including school, family, and work schedules.

Questions 1-8 and 1-9 allowed the students to explore their perceptions of how future cuts might affect them and how they might be affected in the future by recent budget cuts. These questions allowed for more clarity about the effects of the current budget cuts, since their frame of reference were their current experiences projected into the future. For instance, a pessimistic projection of the future reflected a negative perception of the trajectory of the program in the present. These questions were designed to also capture sentiment about how they felt about the potential of more cuts, since understanding student persistence was a main objective of this research project. Depending on the outcomes of the questions, this could help triangulate data from the different perspectives of the same phenomenon and same participant. Lastly, question 1-10 allowed for the student to add anything they feel was relevant.

The second research question was structured to explore how the students themselves perceive the nature of the budget cuts. More specifically, how do the students understand why budget cuts are being implemented? Why do they perceive that? What do the students feel is driving such decision-making in terms of the cuts? The use of the word nature was specifically chosen so as to allow the students to express their own opinions about whether or not they believe that budget cuts decision-making was influenced by other motives. The question was also designed to allow the student to express their perceptions of how the budget cuts had affected them or not. In other words, valuable data were gathered about student perceptions by asking the student to
express their opinions about how they understand the budget cuts. The following six interview questions helped obtain the participants’ view of the nature of the budget cuts:

2-1. Why do you think the education budget is being reduced in California?

2-2. Why do you think EOPS funding is being reduced in California?

2-3. Who do you think is responsible for the budget cuts?

2-4. How do you think budget reductions affect other students in the community college?

2-5. How do you think budget reductions affect other participants in the EOPS program?

Questions 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3 were structured to encourage students to evaluate their own opinions and perceptions as to why the budget cuts were happening throughout the community college system and why the EOPS program had been one of the specific areas selected for reduction. These questions tested how students perceive the nature of the cuts. This included whether or not they felt that they were part of a group or population that is disproportionately targeted or affected by the budget reductions, and/or if they felt participants of the EOPS program were disproportionately targeted or affected.

Questions 2-4 and 2-5 were designed to capture student perceptions of how budget reductions affected other students throughout the college and within the EOPS program, since this gave more insight into the question. This could be for a couple of reasons. It encouraged the student to consider identifiable patterns as to how the reductions affected larger groups as a whole, as opposed to just an individual. Some students also felt less restrained, had more insights, or were able to identify patterns more
effectively when expressing their views in a third person manner, as opposed to focusing solely on themselves.

In order to ensure that the questions were effective in soliciting the appropriate data, the questions had been pilot tested in advance. The pilot test was conducted with two individual students enrolled in the EOPS program from a different campus (where I am currently employed), who share similar characteristics as the research participants. The questions were successfully tested and the findings demonstrated the validity, relevance, and usefulness of the acquired data. As a result of the pilot testing, two additional questions were added to the interview protocol (1.6 and 1.7). These questions emerged from the pilot tests as significant and relevant issues discussed by the students that were not considered in the original interview protocol.

**Participant Selection**

The following section will examine the process of participant selection. This will include a discussion of the location, the selection criteria, and the recruitment strategies and procedures.

**Location**

This study employed a purposeful sampling method (Sandelowski, 1995). Research participants were recruited from students who were enrolled or were recently enrolled in the EOPS program at Frontier College. Frontier College had a total population of 29,620 enrolled students in the year 2008-2009, of which 60% were Latino/a students, 13% White, 12% Filipino, 5% Unknown, 5% African-American, and the remaining 5% comprised of Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American/Alaskan Native. Of the total student population for that year, 2,634 students participated in the
EOPS program, with 80% identified as Latino, 6% African-American, 4% White non-Hispanic, 4% Unknown, 3% Filipino, and the remaining 3% shared between Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Of the EOPS participants, 4% were under 18 years old, 78% ranged from age 18-24, 16% 25-49 years old, and 2% were 50 years old or older. For that same year, 62% of EOPS-enrolled students were female and 38% male. To qualify for EOPS, all students are required to be enrolled as full-time students (at least 12 units).

**Selection Criteria**

Latino male (Latinos) and Latina female (Latinas) students from the EOPS program were selected for the interview process. Low income is described in Table 1. Ethnicity and economic status were the primary determinants of participant selection as the purpose of the study was to explore how low-income Latino students being affected by budget cuts. Age, gender, and language were not specific factors considered in this study. The third criterion was the length of the student in the EOPS program. Participants selected had at least 1 year experience in the EOPS program. Students (or former students) that had been in the program for less than 1 year were excluded, since they might have not been in the program long enough to experience any changes as a result of budget reductions.

**Recruitment Strategies and Procedures**

A comprehensive strategy to recruit participants was employed. In order to gather the most accurate and relevant data, the search for students began at the EOPS office located on the campus. This was done in order to post recruitment materials as well as to solicit recommendations from EOPS staff. The flyers posted explained the purpose of the
Table 1

*Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) Income Requirements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family size</th>
<th>2007 income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$15,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$20,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$25,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$30,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$36,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$41,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$46,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$51,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each additional family member</td>
<td>$5,220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


research, the qualifications for the participants, the amount of payment for qualified applicants, and the contact email address and phone number of the researcher. Extended Opportunity Program and Services staff members distributed the recruitment flyers and research project information to students through their daily interactions. An announcement of the research project was also sent by email. Students who demonstrated interest in the project contacted the researcher by phone and email. Qualified candidates were then confirmed by the researcher and the interviews scheduled. Extended Opportunity Program Services staff members at Frontier College were contacted directly...
by the researcher. Interviews were solicited by the researcher directly, and on a voluntary basis. A total of 23 students contacted the researcher (in a 4-week period) in order to volunteer for the study. Even though all of the students were qualified to participate, only the first 11 students to contact the researcher were selected. The two staff members were contacted directly and both agreed to participate.

While there are no rules governing sample size in qualitative research (Patton, 2002), Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited by Patton, 2002) recommend sampling to the “point of redundancy” (p. 246), or terminating data collection when no new information is offered. In this study, student interviews were conducted until the point of information redundancy, or saturation, was reached. Staff interviews were limited since their perspectives were considered only in reference to student perceptions.

Student confidentiality was carefully maintained in all aspects of the study. Eight of the student interviews were conducted on the campus, and three were conducted at a coffee shop across from the campus. One of the staff interviews was conducted on campus, and the other at a coffee shop near the campus. Upon meeting and before the interviews began, the research participants were presented a consent form which disclosed all relevant details and purposes of the study. Participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and subject to termination at their desire. They were provided detailed information about the purpose of the study, their rights as a voluntary participant, and where to obtain more information about research process. Upon providing consent, the interviews began. The interviews ranged from 30 to 55 minutes.

The demographic characteristics factored into the survey included the length of time the student had been enrolled in the EOPS program and the ethnic identity terms
preferred by students. The first was chosen in order to ensure the research group had been enrolled in the EOPS program (and by extension the community college) long enough to experience budget cuts, or at least 1 year. The second question about identity was not essential to the research but included in order to see how the general category “Latino/a” might be further subdivided into categories in relation to the experience. Another apparent demographic factor was gender, although it was not factored into the research. Age was not considered as a significant factor in the experience of students at a time of budget cuts, especially as there are no age limitations to be enrolled in the EOPS program (with the exception that student had to be over 18 years of age for reasons of consent).

The students selected for the research project were all currently enrolled in the EOPS program at Frontier College. One of the students had been enrolled in the EOPS program for 3 years, three students for 2½ years, five students for 2 years, and two students for 1½ years. In terms of identity, five students identified themselves as Mexican-American, three as Mexican, two as Chicano/a, and one as Hispanic. Seven of the students were female, and four were male. They ranged in age from 18-25. At the time of the study, the two staff members were both working within the EOPS program at Frontier College. One is an Asian-American female (age 37), and the other a Latino male (age 48). Both staff member have worked in the EOPS program for 4 years.

The researcher in a qualitative study is the key instrument. As a Latino, former community college student, and current community college educator with 10 years of experience working with college students in general, and low-income Latino/a students in particular, the researcher was able to incorporate specific skills and attributes into the
interview process. This included empathy, cultural competency, sensitivity to nonverbal cues, shared experience, and common background and familiarity.

For the interviews, an Olympus VN 5200PC digital audio recorder was used, and the data transcribed verbatim and in a written format by professional transcribers Catherine Harris and Kim Monroe. This method was used in order to capture the information in an efficient and effective manner, and to be able to transfer digital recordings to a desktop computer enabled with transcription software. Interview protocol, the guidelines that lay out the standard format for all the interviews, and other relevant information to be included in the process are located in Appendices A and B. Interview protocol, notes, and all other collected information are stored on a desktop computer protected by password authorization in a locked office. The researcher is the only person who has access to the accumulated information.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness refers to the way in which the researcher employs a number of tools and safeguards to demonstrate that the research and interpretation of the data is accurate and valid. For this qualitative research project, the researcher incorporated elements to assure trustworthiness based on the model laid out by Creswell (2009). Aside from triangulation of data mentioned above, this included: pilot testing, member-checking, rich and thick description, clarification of bias, presentation of negative and discrepant information, prolonged time in the field, and peer de-briefing.

**Pilot-Testing**

This refers to how interview questions were tested in advance on nonstudy participants who share similar characteristics as the study participants to test the
reliability and validity of the questions. The interviews were pilot tested on two EOPS students enrolled at the same campus where the researcher is employed. The results of the pilot test were positive, in that they yielded rich data that pertained to the focus of the study. Two unforeseen elements did emerge from both pilot tests. The researcher did not initially anticipate how students would link their experiences during a time of budget cuts to affects on their family life. For this reason, question 11 (How do you think budget cuts affect your family?) was added to the list of interview questions. The second element refers to how the researcher did not originally anticipate how the students would link budget cuts to their jobs and work schedule. For this reason, question 3 (Do you have a job?) was also added to the interview questionnaire. These additions added important dimensions to the experience and perception, as demonstrated by how they factored into the emerging themes.

**Member-Checking**

This technique refers to a final consultation with the research subjects in which research findings and conclusions are presented for final clarification and verification. The researcher conducted member-checking with all of the subjects upon completion of the research process. This involved a follow-up meeting with the students to determine the accuracy of the emerging themes and research findings based on the analysis of the researcher.

The member-checking meetings took place in the same locations (on campus and at a nearby coffee shop) in order to accommodate the students, although they were spread out over a 3-week period since it was more difficult to align schedules. Eight took place on the campus and three at a nearby coffee shop. The second interviews ranged from
20 minutes to 45 minutes. In general, the students validated the transcripts and confirmed the themes emerging from the data. In one follow-up meeting, one student clarified a point she had previously made in the first interview. “Griselda” stated that in one of her responses she had mentioned that she was “triple majoring.” In the follow-up meeting, she pointed out that she meant to say it only “felt like she was triple majoring” because of taking so many classes. The clarification had no bearing on the emerging themes.

**Rich and Thick Description**

The researcher used detailed, descriptive, and vivid language in order to convey to the reader a sense of the setting, feeling and mood, and experience. This helped reinforce the sincerity and originality of the research.

**Clarification of Bias**

It is important for the researcher to be forthright about any potential biases concerning the subject, which can manifest unconsciously or in the most subtle of ways. While it was the intention of the researcher to be rigorous and relentless in striving for objectivity, there were personal views, experiences, and other factors that should be disclosed and considered as potential subjective influences. First of all, the researcher is of Latino ethnicity and of a similar socioeconomic status origin as the research participants. Secondly, the researcher is an instructor who works directly with many students who share the socioeconomic characteristics of the research participants. Thirdly, the researcher, as an instructor, is also affected directly and indirectly by the same budget reductions as the research participants.
Peer Debriefing

This refers to the involvement of an academic peer for objective review and analysis of the research project. A third party with some background in the subject or the research process can offer their perspective, constructive criticisms, personal insights, and other feedback. This can be especially helpful in the process of refinement or revision of the project. Consultation and feedback from an outside analyst, who is not directly invested in the research, offering an objective criticism, can prove beneficial in efforts to increase validity.

The researcher debriefed with two peers who work directly with low-income students at the same place of employment as the researcher (in the researcher’s office). This included peer de-briefing with a counselor in the EOPS office and a counselor in Cal-Works. The two colleagues involved in the de-briefing process validated the themes that emerged from the data and generally agreed with the analyses. The EOPS counselor offered some deeper insights into one of the main themes, Delayed Completion, based on her observations. She added that some EOPS students that are unable to get their required classes are increasingly expressing interest in attending private, for-profit schools as an alternative. This added depth to my understanding of the subject, which I incorporated into my findings and interpretations.

Data Analysis

Upon the completion of the data collection process, the researcher analyzed the data using the method of content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis relies on the examination, identification, and organization of themes and categories that emerge from the data collected from the interview process. Each audio recording was coded
according to an interviewee pseudonym (in order to protect privacy) and stored in an E-folder of the same name on my lap-top computer. A list that contains the name/pseudonym relationship was kept separately in a locked drawer in my office. Audio recordings were transcribed, and, along with field notes, analyzed and interpreted using Creswell’s (2009) six-step model. These include: Organizing and preparing the data, reading through the data, hand-coding the data, generating a description of the interviewees and the emerging themes, advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative, and interpreting the data.

**Coding**

Several stages of coding took place as a central feature of data analysis in qualitative research. Coding refers to the process of organizing the data into categories or segments of text before extrapolating larger identifiable patterns known as themes (Creswell, 2009). This research project used an open coding process, in which the codes emerge from the data rather than the researcher. This began with initial coding done in a line-by-line format. Focused coding was then used to combine and subdivide into more aligned and useful categories. Axial coding was then used to relate categories of codes to each other and bring the data back together into a coherent whole using a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The computer program ATLAS.ti (Version 6.211) was used to facilitate the coding process.

**Triangulation of Data**

Triangulation refers to the way that information derived from research is validated (or invalidated) by examining the same subject using multiple techniques or from different perspectives and affirming. In order to triangulate the data collected in the
study, the researcher collected field notes, as well as analyzed interview transcripts. The purpose behind the collection of field notes was to capture and collect expressions, quotes, concepts and other information that occurs in the process of data collection that can only be surmised by the observations of the researcher. This included nonverbal communication, body language, and other intangible data that emerges organically. These additional observations can add meaning to the verbal content of the audio recording.
CHAPTER 4—ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

In the following chapter, the results of this qualitative research study will be presented based on 11 student interviews and 2 staff interviews. This research attempted to answer the two original research questions:

1. How do low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Service (EOPS) perceive the affect of education budget cuts on their persistence in the community college?
2. How do low-income Latino/a students in EOPS program perceive the reasons for the budget cuts?

Five major themes emerged from the student data. Pertaining to question 1, the three emerging themes are: Diminished Access, Reduced Support, and Delayed Completion. Pertaining to question 2, the two emerging themes are Devaluation of Education and Race & Class Discrimination. Two themes emerge from the staff data. These are Reduced Access and Services and Inequity. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, pseudonyms will be used in place of the real names of both students and staff.

About the Themes

The three emerging themes for question #1 are Diminished Access, Reduced Support, and Delayed Completion (see Figure 1). The first theme (Diminished Access) speaks to the universal perception amongst the students that budget cuts are closing access routes to acquiring an education. There are two subthemes that contribute to this larger theme: (a) Fewer Classes, and (b) Schedule Disruption. The second theme (Reduced Support) pertains to the perception that budget cuts are shrinking the pool of
support resources available to students in need. There are two subthemes that contribute to this larger theme: (a) **Lack of Guidance & Support**, and (b) **Financial Hardship**. The third theme (**Delayed Completion**) refers to the perception that budget cuts are constricting the pipeline to transfer or degree completion as students experience delays and roadblocks that are beyond their control. The perception is that despite having the desire, capability, and readiness to proceed, they are prevented from achieving their educational objectives. This produces a ripple effect expressed in the sub-theme **Demoralization**.

The two emerging themes for question 2 are **Devaluation of Education** and **Race & Class Discrimination** (see Figure 2). The first theme (**Devaluation of Education**) reflects a common perception amongst the students that education has been downgraded as a priority for policymakers and is therefore more expendable. There is one subtheme that contributes to this larger theme: **Lack of Political Power and Influence**. The second theme (**Race and Class Discrimination**) refers to the perception amongst students that they are being effectively targeted by budget cuts due to social prejudice against them based on their ethnicity and social class. There are two subthemes that contribute to this larger theme: (a) **Racism** and (b) **Class Discrimination**. The following sections delineate and describe the 5 themes and 10 corresponding subthemes in detail.
Figure 2. Student themes—research question 2.

**Theme 1: Diminished Access**

Community colleges were inaugurated based on the philosophy of open access. This includes the promise of low admission fees, the availability of the requisite classes to chart a path to completion or transfer, and access to support services. The perception of community colleges as an open access point for low-income, Latino/a students informs a starting point for student thinking and frames a dominant theme that emerges from the research. This refers to the perception that community college access is diminishing and no longer a reality for all students.

The students focused a lot of their time expounding upon the constellation of obstacles that have emerged along their educational paths in recent experience. The gamut of diminished access points runs the whole spectrum of the campus. They spoke of (a) fewer available classes and sections, (b) reduced access to support services like libraries, and (c) fewer available slots in the EOPS program to new students. Antonio, Carlos, and Patricia, for instance, all commented that they knew of students being turned away when they tried to apply. Antonio told the story of how he convinced three friends to apply for the program. He explained that when they arrived at the office, “there was actually a podium with a sign that said ‘EOPS has been closed off for the fall semester.’” The generalized perception of closing access was captured by student Sarai, who stated solemnly that “maybe they don’t want more students to come to college. It seems like
that’s what they want with the budget cuts.” Complications associated with diminished access were also expressed in secondary and tertiary forms.

For example, a number of students commented on the difficulties of organizing a workable schedule in light of fewer course sections available. Others expressed consternation at having less time for school due to increased workload in order to make up for diminished access to support services. Through the research it becomes apparent that students in this population have to exert gymnastic effort to balance family, work, and school schedules, leaving little flexibility for unanticipated or abrupt change for this student population. While the students exhibited a sense of determination (they are all currently still enrolled), many also conveyed the fragility and tenuousness of their situation based on the dislocating effects of budget cuts on student access. As student Rafael added matter-of-factly, “it’s the little details that kind of make or break things sometimes.” The following sections go into more detail about the subthemes, beginning with Fewer Classes.

**Subtheme 1: Fewer classes.** A dominant subtheme of Diminished Access in the research is students’ experience with the reduction of available classes and sections. As a primary component of the completion of educational objectives, and a crucial factor in creating functional schedules for students balancing school, family, and work, the reduction of classes as a result of budget cuts has had a detrimental effect in the experiences of this student population. The students expressed five negative consequences as a result of budget cuts and their impact on course availability. This includes: (a) Whole courses not being offered; (b) cancelled or fewer sections overall;
(c) course availability only at erratic times; (d) overcrowding of existing classes, and
(e) delays in accessing required courses.

The first element of the subtheme Fewer Classes is expressed in how several
students experienced whole courses being dropped. This was expressed in two particular
ways: transfer level courses with lower enrollments being dropped, and specialized
courses and elective beings cut out entirely. For instance, Rafael commented on how a
critical transfer level biology course was not being offered:

As I am getting to the end of my degree here, because I’m going for an Associates
in Science, and because of the budget cuts, certain classes aren’t offered here so I
have to go 30 miles [to another school] to go take my Bio 210B class.

For aspiring media art student Antonio, there were not only fewer classes available in his
field of interest, but these classes were being purposely cut. As he explained,

I’m sure they try to cut like the arts, media and the music, and they want to keep
as much English and math, the more important classes. So I guess when they cut
back on the media classes, there’s not that many available. They have a costume
set design production company where they actually build sets, and now it’s
completely taken off for the past year.

Students also expressed dismay over the number of course sections reduced. This
was a common refrain regardless of course level, with the general perception being that
the reduction in teachers means fewer sections available to both incoming and returning
students. As Carlos explained,

A lot of people that want to go to school and get their education. And now it’s
like there’s not room for anybody. There’s not enough instructors or classes.
Like the semester before I heard they were going to cut back a lot of classes and they let go a lot of teachers, so I think that’s why there isn’t enough room for students.

The connection between fewer teachers and course reductions was also made by Antonio, who observed that some familiar professors were no longer around. As a student considering a career as an educator, he has found the experience discouraging. As he explains,

I have spoken to a lot of my professors, and I’ve noticed some professors no longer are teaching here because they’ve been laid off. Specifically, part-time instructors. As far as people wanting to go into the education field, seeing themselves, students, there are a lot of part-time teachers that are being laid off at the community college level, kind of brings you down makes you think twice . . . do I really want to go into this field?

Some students expressed exasperation in getting their classes, even with priority registration that comes with being an EOPS student. For Adriana, this raised her consciousness about what other students without priority registration must be facing: I have like the first week before they get to register, and like some of my classes are already full from other early registration. So imagine the people that are just starting their first year here even, and you know what I mean, don’t even get to register . . . like they’re enrolling and they’re going through that whole process, by the time they get to register like they’re not going to get any classes that they need.

This sentiment was validated by a first-year student named Amy, who communicated a sense of disorientation as a result of her experience. “It’s harder to get
into classes and really the ones available, like they don’t grab my attention so I’m like
confused maybe of what to do, of which classes to take.” Another student, Martin,
succinctly summed up his experience with fewer course offerings: “There’s fewer
sections, there’s been cuts, and they’re harder to get into. Everything all put into one.”

Students also expressed a sense of frustration with their experience with fewer
course sections being offered at more erratic times. This tends to delay the process, either
because of concurrent scheduling or classes being offered only at times of unavailability
due to other obligations. According to Adriana:

Like the people taking these classes are for the same major, and you do them at
the same time or the same day. It’s kind of like; I don’t know if they do that on
purpose, you know what I mean? Or they just can’t take the time to see that,
because you have to wait another semester to take that class, whereas, you could
have taken it concurrently.

For students juggling their schedules to accommodate for work or family
obligations, piecing together a functional schedule with fewer and more erratically
scheduled courses can be particularly challenging. As Cristina explained:

So it’s like I’m taking a ten o’clock class, this is the first time I’ve done it, and its
affecting my kids, its affected my family so much because they don’t offer it any
other time during the day, and that sucks because my kids have to suffer for it.
Like Tuesday nights are hard nights for us, hard nights.

Overcrowding of classes also came up as an experience associated with fewer
available classes. Students felt that the overcrowding of available course sections
impacted their educational experience. As Patricia explains, “Like one of my teachers
she accepted as many students as she could, but she’s like I’m probably going to get in trouble because I can’t be having these many students in one classroom.” This, according to Patricia, diminishes the quality of the experience: “There’s going to be less attention for every student because the teacher is going to have a lot more students to deal with, and if students don’t get attention and get help with the stuff that they need, they drop.”

For some students, there is an awareness of an actual increase in enrollment concurrently with decreased access. According to Rafael:

Last semester there were certain classes that weren’t available here that because, again there is such an influx of students coming in, you have not only your community college students that were already here, like myself, but you have the high school students that continuously cycle into community colleges, and then you also have the UC students and CSU students that are coming down because their prices are getting juked up so they are coming down here, and kind of taking seats away from other students that could otherwise be filling them.

A final concept within the context of fewer classes has to do with the experience of delay in getting access to desired classes. Sarai, a student closer to transfer, explained the difficulty with delay: “. . . and how they cancel classes, and how they sometimes don’t offer any classes that you need for a full semester so you have to wait another semester . . . that’s like a very . . . that’s what the cuts are having an effect on the students.”

It appears that the educational experience of this student population is being disrupted by the lack of access to classes due to budget cuts. The disappearance of desired classes, reductions in the number of sections, difficulty in scheduling, classroom overcrowding, and delays in getting desired courses, are all identified factors that impede
the educational progress of students through diminished access. Building on the idea of
the difficulties associated with balancing between work, family, and school and its impact
on access, the following subtheme will elaborate on another substantial component of
student experience: schedule disruption.

**Subtheme 2: Schedule disruption.** As previously mentioned, the impact of
diminished access produces secondary effects as students encounter disrupted work,
family, and school schedules. An emerging subtheme from the research illustrates the
challenges experienced by students who have to scramble to assemble schedules to
accommodate for fewer available classes. Constructing a schedule in the context of
diminished access, while simultaneously attempting to find a semblance of balance
between school, work, and family works as a destabilizing agent in regards to education.
Several students lamented the impact that their increasingly erratic schedules were having
on their families. In the following section, the subtheme of *schedule disruption* will be
further analyzed looking at three different aspects present in the research: (a) schedule
unpredictability, and (b) family impacts.

Finding the requisite classes to advance through the education pipeline at a time
when course sections are being reduced means that students have to become more flexible
in their schedules. This need for flexibility presents great challenges for this student
population, who already strain to maintain delicate balance between work, school, and
family. Unpredictable schedules, based on erratic scheduling of classes pose a new
challenge each semester. As Carlos explained his experience with schedule disruption:

Now it’s harder to get a schedule to work for you. You’ve got to make some
changes and stuff. . . . My challenges are just rescheduling my time management,
and stuff. I’ve got to focus more on school you know, and work basically, and other like activities, recreational activities; I don’t really have no time for. It’s just like school, work, and then homework, trying to catch up, and even sometimes that’s not enough.

Another student, Patricia, explains the rigors of finding balance, referencing her work schedule:

The amount of classes has reduced a lot like before I think there were more campus classes with different times that you could adapt your school schedule with your work schedule, and now it’s like if you want a class, you have to try and get it first before it fills up, and then you have to see if your work schedule will fit into that, and if it doesn’t, then you have to drop the class.

When asked about the experience of other students, Martin feels that the challenge of schedule balancing is generalized:

I mean if they’re students like me, I think it affects them just the same way probably or even worse. I mean they all have to scramble for cash too. They all have to find a way to fix their schedules to accommodate what’s being offered at school.

The student comments confirm the challenge of finding balance when the scheduling of desired course is erratic or unpredictable. For some of the students, schedule disruption is detrimental to family life.

A common sentiment amongst the students is the connection to family. All of the students live at home, are financially supported by family, or have families of their own. Many student interviewees communicated their own experiences in the context of their
family, revealing both a cultural aspect (close familial ties) as well as a socioeconomic one (low-income interdependence). An emerging subtheme of schedule disruption identified by students is the way erratic scheduling affects their family life and family arrangements.

Adriana is a single mother who relies on her parents to babysit her daughter while she’s in school. With the cuts in classes, she has seen her ability to maintain a regular, workable schedule become more difficult:

> When I first started here, I would come to school just at night. I would take all my classes after 4:00 p.m. because my parents could take care of her then so I had free child care and thing like that, and I would be here from 4:00 to 9:00. So I was able to do three years like that, which would be six semesters or what not. And then this semester, and last semester I kind of like had to find other people to take care of her . . . because I had to take one class in the morning, and one in the afternoon, and one at night, because there’s only one session for that class. If I don’t take it that semester, I’m not guaranteed that the next semester will be at a time when I can take it, and therefore, I would be extending my time here.

Patricia discussed how her whole family needs to plan a schedule together since they share transportation. Erratic scheduling of classes produces a chain reaction through the whole family. As she explains,

> Well we’re all working, but we know that for us school comes first, and if we all can all help out, we’ll work around each other’s schedules. Like there’s just two cars for five people, and we’re all working, and those two cars to drive everyone around . . . we have to come to school, we have to drop off other students in high
school, and have to take our mom to work so anything else goes like if the classes
get cut even more than the schedules get more crazy.

Rafael laments the fact that schedule disruption due to budget cuts means he has
to spend more time away from his children to gather scarce resources:

It means that my family has to suffer more time without me, and my two
adolescent children and my newborn child have to deal without my being there for
so many more extra hours, because I have to go elsewhere sometimes to the other
side of town just to try to get my work done or what not; so it means I have to do
whatever I need to do to stay ahead.

Lastly, the impact of schedule disruption on family again comes up in the context
of time with family members and concern for their future with on-going budget cuts.

Another student, Lisette, expressing uncertainty and frustration, explained:

I am the future, my nieces are my future, my children are going to be my future,
and little by little they’re cutting education, it’s important to succeed, and it’s been
hard trying to balance school, and work, and studying, and family, and friends.
You know you need time for yourself. It’s been rough, and I don’t think that they
should take anymore out of education, because that’s important.

**Summary of Theme 1.** The experience of **Diminished Access** as a result of
budget cuts emerges from the research as a major theme, as students encountered fewer
classes and less means of support. The task of constructing a school schedule at a time
when class offerings are fewer and at more erratic and unpredictable times has impeded
student progress through the education pipeline. From the point of view of the students,
it also acts as a destabilizing force in their efforts to find balance between school, work,
and family. Taken together, these by-products of budget cuts work against the experience of this student population, to the point where some students are questioning the whole notion of community colleges as “open access” points into higher education.

**Theme 2: Reduced Support**

For many low-income, Latino/a students in the community college system, open access alone is not enough to transcend the winding passageways of educational achievement. Support is also needed to help sustain and advance the efforts. All of the students in the study receive various forms of support through their participation in the EOPS program, and all speak with appreciation when describing how important the financial support and guidance provided are to sustaining their efforts. Lisette, for example, stated bluntly that “I think if there wasn’t EOPS, it would have kicked my butt, because without those services I would be lost.”

While students speak glowingly of the EOPS program, they are also acutely aware of the cuts taking place within the program and communicate their discouragement. Two specific examples referenced by students include (a) the reduction in the book subsidy and (b) the decrease in counseling. The most common reference made by the students concerns the importance of the textbook subsidy provided through the program and how it has been gradually reduced.

As Martin commented,

I think it started with the book service, because at first it had $200, no it was $250, and they brought it down to $150. So $150 is practically enough for like one book compared to like when it was $250 it was like enough for maybe two or three, you know what I mean, and now it’s like I barely have enough for one book.
Rafael expressed exasperation that the cuts happen concurrently with rising costs: “It was
decreased gradually. . . . However, the price of books didn’t go down too. It actually
continued to go up as it usually does.” For other students, the reduction in the subsidy
also introduced secondary effects.

Antonio explained how he now has to devote his whole paycheck to textbooks
since the subsidy was reduced to $150 from $300. “I’m still getting my book service fee,
which is not what it used to be before, but I guess with my low hours, and because of the
budget cuts, if it was $300, I wouldn’t have to spend my $80 paycheck on a textbook
because that would be covered by EOPS funding.” Griselda, another student, explained
that the use of the subsidy is now restricted where it wasn’t before.

I only get $150, but it’s only for books, and I can’t get a dictionary, and I can’t get
pencils or scantrons. You know little things that you need. I was kind of like it’s
not fair. It’s like you use to get all these things, and now you don’t.

Students also described their experience with the reduction of support staff.

Another benefit of the EOPS program that the students value is the direct support
provided by EOPS counselors and staff. The importance of the guidance and support
provided to the students was reflected in their recognition of how that has been
diminished. The students linked the budget cuts to their experience of having less contact
support staff. Sarai observed that cuts to counseling staff overall were re-directing EOPS
counselors away from EOPS students:

I guess they are just too overwhelmed with so many students, the regular
counselors that they don’t have time for students so that I believe the EOPS
program kind of takes half of them with the budget cuts because they were
affected because they couldn’t have as many students as they would want.
Antonio reflected on his experience with diminished resources.

With the employees at EOPS usually, like today for example, I went up there, and
I waited for about 45 minutes because there were about four people, and only one
receptionist, one person helping you. And I remember last year there would be
two or three people behind the desk so they could answer your questions, get you
set up for whatever you need a lot faster. So that’s when I did hear they’re cutting
hours as far as the EOPS employees where they can’t help students’ needs.

Linking back to a previous perception that the community college is moving away
from “open access,” some students linked the reduction in services to the shutting out of
new students. Sarai and Ana described how the Outreach Program, designed to help high
school students transition to the community college campus, was being eviscerated.
According to Sarai:

I work for the Outreach Program, which is a program that during the budget cuts,
it got cut like a lot. It’s maybe that they don’t waste as much money, but they help
a lot of students transition from high school to college. Also one of the main
reasons it wanted to get cutoff was because it’s also bringing a lot of new students
in, and I didn’t find the reason why they wouldn’t want to bring more students in
instead of keeping them out, why not bring them in?

Adriana also contemplated her experience with the program:

Because I use to work for the Outreach Program here at Southwestern when I first
got here, and now I went into the Caesar Chavez Building this semester, and
they’re not even there anymore. So I don’t know . . . that completely disappeared or if they got lowered down into a smaller department or what not, but they don’t even have their office there . . . it doesn’t even say Outreach anymore.

The perception that the system is reversing its open access policy through the reduction of services is also reflected in the comments of Patricia, who concluded:

I think that because students think that there’s less money available, since they hear about the budget cuts and everything, they’re like well since its already being reduced, what’s my probability of me getting it there’s so many people already going for it?

Other students reflected on the reduction of hours of service and the detrimental impact this has had on their educational experience. For instance, Adriana described her recent difficulties getting access to computers due to reduced hours of operation in the library:

Well now . . . when I first started here, like the library wouldn’t be as over filled . . . the computers I barely notice because I would always do my homework here or like the Academic Student Center, and now you have to wait in line, and there’s not enough . . . those resources are going away. . . . It seems like every semester they’re like cutting one hour off everything that’s open.

A final element within the theme of reduced support relates to students’ perception of increased restrictions in accessing support services. Commenting on her perception of the increasingly restrictive process of accessing support services, Griselda had this to say about income-level requirements: “They get really ridiculous when it comes to income levels and what you can have as money.” Cristina ended up dropping
out of the program because of what she perceived as diminishing returns from her efforts. As she explained:

. . . towards the end . . . I just kind of like gave up on it. The book funding just wasn’t there . . . [but] you still have to do your progress reports, but we don’t have no funding, we can’t give you book money. At that point I was like well, what’s the point? I had to cooperate and be willing to do the progress reports in order to get the book funding, because I needed the money for books for my school, but that wasn’t there no more so like its more work. There’s no incentive there for me to continue it.

In summary, the students made an association between education budget cuts and reduced support services within EOPS and across campus institutions. The general perception is that reduced on-campus support works against their persistence; as book subsidies, guidance and support from staff, and other campus services play an integral role in their educational advancement. The reduction of support services is perceived as an increasing burden, as this student population scrambles to make up the difference with limited options. It is also perceived as a “closing of the door” for other students. The theme of Reduced Support is further comprised of two subthemes, the Importance of Guidance and Support and the experience of Economic Hardship.

**Subtheme 1: Lack of guidance and support.** The reduction of support as a result of education budget cuts has been identified as having a detrimental effect on student persistence. This is further illustrated by the emphasis that students place on the positive role that guidance and support has played in their lives. In describing their experiences within the EOPS program, students highlighted the importance of
(a) financial support; (b) guidance from counselors; and (c) a sense of security in economically tumultuous times.

Most of the students in the research have jobs. Nevertheless, they all come from low-income backgrounds and need financial support to meet the expenses of obtaining an education. One of the primary sources of support that students identified is the textbook subsidy provided to all EOPS students. Griselda, while acknowledging that the book subsidy has been reduced, still expressed gratitude. As she explained, “It really helps to have the book credit that they give because that helps with one or two books, and every little bit of money I am grateful for.” Cristina also referenced the utility of the book subsidy, stating: “Yeah that was like one of the most beneficial things from EOPS was that they did help us with our books . . . and that was like for us a big thing.” This was also a sentiment shared by Sarai, who grasped the difficulties of both new students and returning students in their integration (or re-integration) process:

So it’s just something . . . nothing else is better than the EOPS Program as a service to help all the students that are coming in as either first timers or they’re coming back to school. They need the help, and they’re struggling. They need the guidance, they need the money, and they need just that extra push.

Aside from the financial support, guidance was also identified as a key contributing factor to student persistence.

Many of the students interviewed identified as the first members of their families to go to college, a common attribute among EOPS students. For many, trying to navigate the educational bureaucracy can be challenging, intimidating, and confusing, especially if they cannot typically learn from the experiences of their immediate relatives. Guidance
from thoughtful and understanding counselors can often fill this void. As Lisette summarized the value of her experience in EOPS, “Some people need a little bit of help; they don’t know how to go about succeeding in the university. I happen to be one of those people, and it helped me.”

Adriana also commented positively on the guidance she received from her counselor, especially when it came to navigating through the educational pipeline:

I take her guidance in a way that I’ll ask her like do I need this class? Should I take this? And if she doesn’t know, she’ll tell me where to go like talk to this person down in this department or go here, call this number. So I really like that.

For Patricia, the comprehensive support helps her visualize and realize her educational goals:

It’s really helped because it keeps you on track. First of all, it tells you what you need to finish because sometimes when you’re in college, when I first started, I would just go and go and never see an end, but with the ELPS they give you a plan of the classes that you need, and every time you go there, they’re like okay you’ll need this much left, you’re almost done, and then this is what you have to do next. They tell you that there’s an end.

For other students, the personal guidance and moral support is motivational, comforting and reassuring. As Cristina explains:

Through EOPS . . . somebody went up to bat for me regardless of the hurdles I had to go through, and said okay you do good for this semester, you keep your grades up, you do all this, we’re going to do this. That for me gave me that incentive . . . okay cool, cool you know that I can come back.
For Rafael, the personal touch and genuine concern for the students made a lasting impact. As he recalled,

For a counselor to know you on a first name basis or for them to be familiar with what your story is or, you know, what your support lacks or what you need to be supported with exactly, it kind of goes a long way for somebody who hasn’t had such a support, and so I think that is one of the key components that I really got out of it.

For Amy, the program has been a positive influence. As she explains,

I have felt pretty comfortable in that program, because it helped me maintain good grades, and it helped me buy my books, and stuff like that . . . pay for my books. I feel like it’s a motivating program. The counseling is really good, and I enjoy having privileges like registering first and stuff like that. It’s pretty beneficial.

Antonio attributes his academic longevity to the program, stating: “Even through tough times it helped me stay in school for so long, and managed to get the classes that I needed, that I wanted.”

The sense of stability provided by the program, especially at a time of budget cuts, has been another factor identified by the students. For Sarai, “it was a really comfort thing to have EOPS during crisis so besides the saving money . . . it was just a good follow-up.” Antonio elaborates on how the program has helped him weather the economic storm:

It’s been critical because within the last year I’ve actually seen people affected by it [budget cuts], and I became affected by it, but knowing that there were a lot of budget cuts, about 25% of our classes were cut, because I was part of EOPS, I had
that ability of having priority registration. I fortunately got lucky and was able to get my classes, spring, summer, and fall. So, I guess if I wasn’t part of the program, I would probably be affected a little more as other people, but I got fortunate being part of EOPS.

The research reveals that this population of students seeks and values support and guidance. Not just financial assistance, but guidance, personal and moral support, and a sense of security at times of economic uncertainty help students maintain their focus and commitment. This is crucial for students who are often the first in their family to attend college, come from economically volatile households, and who—as Rafael puts it—haven’t “had such a support.” The following section will expand on the subtheme of economic volatility and hardship. This is another common reference emerging from the research that illustrates the detrimental consequences of “reduced support” in the context of the student’s financial situation.

Subtheme 2: Economic hardship. An underlying reality that shadows the experiences of this student population is economic hardship. To qualify for EOPS, students have to be low-income. In the social context of economic recession and the consequent cutting of budgets for education and needs-based program, this student population faces destabilization. A subtheme that manifests within the experience of “reduced support” is “economic hardship.” Students identified four aspects of this phenomenon that had a direct impact on their educational experience at a time of budget cuts. These are: (a) lack of funds; (b) family poverty; (c) impact of recession; and (d) increased workload.
A common thread linking student experience in the pursuit of educational attainment is the difficulty in making ends meet, an experience exacerbated by budget cuts. Many of the students explained that even with the lower fees of the community college, they often lack the necessary funds to cover all of the costs. They added that budget cuts are widening the deficit even more. Carlos described how his low income winds through his daily life:

On campus we’re not only working to put ourselves through school, but we’re working such to maintain generally, and it’s hard with the transportation. I take the city bus, and it’s really expensive. It’s like $80 a month, monthly pass, and even with the student pass, it makes a little difference, but not that much of a difference. So, it is kind of hard because of expenses everywhere.

Martin explains how the EOPS support keeps him afloat due to his lower economic status, but that when there are delays in distribution, there is uncertainty:

Financial aid I would say makes a big difference too because right now they haven’t given me money for financial aid because they said the funds were frozen or something like that, and a lot of friends that I’ve talked to already have told me they haven’t got any money. So, we’re all kind of broke right now . . . just chilling and waiting.

Griselda communicates that given her low economic status, financial aid is what enables her to maintain, and that budget cuts weaken the grip that lower-income students have on attaining an education.

I think that they are especially impacted because the requirements for ELPS is low income, and like actually I didn’t mention this before, but am totally glad I have
BOG, because if I didn’t have BOG, I wouldn’t be able to pay for my classes. Like I can barely afford books. Yeah, so people on ELPS are very affected because that’s why they go into the program because you don’t have a lot of money, and you need help.

Patricia explains how her income level and the program cuts in EOPS make it impossible to afford her books, so she tries to find other students with whom she can share.

There was a cut from $300 to $150, but right now they’re offering the book loan where you can borrow the book from the EOPS, because right now all the classes that I am taking, a $150 is not enough to buy all of the books. We have to share books with other students so that we can have books for the classes, but it’s kind of hard to buy all the books.

Lastly, Adriana, a single mother who has to balance her schedule around child care provided by her parents, explains how schedule disruption limits other options due to lack of funds:

I mean they’re not charging me, and they like don’t have no money. I don’t have the money to go pay someone to do it either. So, it’s kind of like if I didn’t have my parents or my parents had to work at night, had to have two jobs for whatever reason, then I wouldn’t be here.

Adriana’s experience segues to another subtheme emerging from “economic hardship”: family poverty. As previously mentioned, many of the students expressed a closeness and interdependency with their families. While they describe their families as supportive and assistive, they also communicate the low-income status of their families
and the hardship experienced as a group. As Griselda summarized, “I know they’re having their own financial issues, but they still support me.” For Amy, negotiating limited income at a time of budget cuts is difficult. She describes how the whole family works and then comes together as a team to prioritize needs due to economic hardship.

Well, actually my family, we have a lot of economic problems, so we all work so we don’t have that much time, and plus hours at work are not like that many so we have to reduce some expenses. Most of it we save for school so we can’t have luxuries or anything like that nothing, so like vacations, nothing. Basically, we have to spend the minimum on everything that is not school related. Like we use the cars to get around to school from home and stuff like that. So yeah, it’s been a little hard.

Martin illustrates his conundrum. As a low-income student facing reduced support as a result of budget cuts, he is unable to seek help from his family due to their own economic hardship. He explains,

It affects them because when I don’t have money or financial aid or book service money doesn’t come in; I usually go to my family to ask for money. And obviously they don’t have that much money so they’re kind of like scrambling for money themselves too, you know what I mean? Its kind of like an affect . . . I don’t have it, they don’t have it, do they end up looking somewhere else, and it kind of comes back to me. Everybody gets affected by it for sure.

This is also the case for Lisette, whose father is no longer in a situation to assist her at a time when budget cuts are reducing support:
At first EOPS helped you... it used to give you $200, $250, and now it's cut down to about $150 in books. So, I can't go to my parents, and ask for money. My dad's retired now, and he's worked his forty years so I have to step in.

The students are also acutely aware of how the economic recession impacts them. This causes further instability, and in some cases, makes it difficult to find work to help make up the costs of reduced support as a result of budget cuts. Carlos concluded that if the economy continues the future is bleak for low-income people like him:

If they continue you know to cut budgets, I mean you know people are going to have to depend on getting a job, and there’s really no jobs available. Just like classes. People come to school to get an education, and there’s really no room, and out there in the working field, there’s no jobs. People put application after application, and there’s just like registering for classes or for financial aid, there’s a waiting list. It’s going to affect the people a lot. Its going to discourage people from even wanting to get an education.

He goes on to add that as a worker on campus, budget cuts have reduced his hours, which in turn, has affected his education:

Since I work here at the college, we experienced a lot of budget cuts, and it was the only job I had so it kind of made me not work as many hours as I could, and that kind of affected my stay here at college because I couldn’t take as many classes.

Sarai, also a student worker, shares a similar experience, linking her reduction in hours to budget cuts and wider recession. “There are not many jobs or anything so, and
then [Frontier College] is experiencing budget cuts even worse because they are getting too overwhelmed with people, and they just can’t handle it.”

Cristina was also a student worker on campus until she lost her job which she attributes to the budget cuts and the economic downturn. “I lost my work study, and I had my work study for the last 2 to 3 years. Due to the budget cuts, I don’t have that income anymore. You know what I mean?” Lastly, Lisette remarked that the recession has changed the way she measures the value of things: “So yeah, you have to cut back on luxuries and not on necessities. The recession has made me look at do I really need that, is that a necessity or is it more of a luxury.” For students who have more stable jobs, some have had to increase their work hours to cover the costs of reduced support stemming from the budget cuts, which limits the amount of time for school.

Patricia illustrates this point by stating: “You have to sacrifice your school time; your studying time to go to work so can pay for your stuff. It’s not just what they’re giving you at EOPS; it’s not enough to pay for everything you need at school.” Lisette also confirms this experience, adding “. . . prices are going up in books, in classes, and when you transfer it’s a lot of money so you have to work more in order to pay for those costs. . . . It’s affected me because I have to work more, sometimes graveyard shifts.” Furthermore, Griselda related her observations along similar lines when discussing her perceptions of other students like herself, and expressing dismay at the prospect: “I think that they [other students] are very affected, because they have to go out and get a job while they’re going to school. I think school in itself is a job, and people shouldn’t really have to work that hard just so that they can stay in school.”
**Summary of Theme 2.** The social and economic reality for this student population is one of economic instability and hardship, especially at a time of budget cuts and recession. While the community college system offers accessible entry points into higher education for this student population, getting onto the campus is not enough to sustain their persistence through to completion. Financial support and guidance are crucial for the maintenance of their stability, whether it is subsidies to afford books, or the direct interaction with counselors who help them navigate the complexities of the educational pipeline. For this reason, the students feel profoundly affected by the reduced support that has resulted from educational budget cuts, especially to needs-based programs like EOPS that help provide a degree of stability.

**Theme 3: Delayed Completion**

For students involved in this research, there was a palpable desire to see their educational goals through to completion. This is either degree attainment or transfer to a university. A third major theme emerging from the data is identification of the way in which budget cuts delay the completion of educational goals. Students spoke of two different aspects of delayed completion. These are the unavailability of classes and the delay of transfer.

In a previous section of this chapter, students revealed that the reduction of classes due to budget cuts severely inhibited student access. Students also commonly mentioned the unavailability of classes as a contributing factor to the delaying of their educational process. From the point of view of a student and campus worker, Cristina shared her experience:
When budget cuts first started, I was working in the Student Affairs Office, and we had all kinds of students trying to crash classes because they cut a lot, a lot of classes. All kinds of students, and by cutting the classes that they didn’t need, they couldn’t transfer the next semester or they had to wait a whole year before they transferred again or they can’t get their Associates Degree at the time that they needed it because certain classes weren’t offered. . . . It delays people trying to progress to where they need to get to because of the budget cuts. It’s like on hold for a whole year or it’s on hold for however long until they can get where they need to get.

This perspective is also shared by another campus worker and EOPS student, Sarai, who has observed the process firsthand. Describing the time of budget cuts as the “worst that I experienced” as a community college student, she observed:

It slows down the students. And it makes a lot of students stay here for 3 to 4 years. It kind of does have an effect on the student, but also on how they conduct the classes, and how they cancel classes, and how they sometimes don’t offer any classes that you need for a full semester so you have to wait another semester . . . that’s like a very . . . that’s what the cuts are having an effect on the students.

For Martin, it comes down to one math class that has become elusive due to its lack of availability. “It’s holding me back from finishing school, and stuff like that, because I was supposed to finish school, but then I can’t find a math class, which is the most important thing that I need. That holds me back.” Amy described how she has seen this happen to her friends directly: “Some friends were held behind because they removed
some classes they needed to graduate from [Frontier College] and transfer, and that complicated them too . . . I’ve seen those kinds of stuff.”

For Antonio, the unavailability of classes affects him differently. While he has been able to get his transfer courses, he expresses disappointment that he can’t get classes that he is interested in for his career in film production. As he explains:

So I guess urging to learn more about film, and not having as much classes available, kind of disappoints me a lot because then I’ve got to wait the following fall to take just that documentary class or a video production, I have to wait until the following spring.

Another element of “delayed completion” pertains to the experience of delayed transfer.

Martin gave an example of how delayed transfer affected him and a close friend. Both missed a remaining class that was offered only once a year which was keeping him in the community college:

Actually we both were supposed to transfer this semester. It’s kind of bummed out because we are probably going to have to stay here for a whole another year. It actually feels better when you can relate to someone, but overall it sucks.

For Rafael, it can be emotionally unraveling. He described how budget cuts and economic recession—compounded by delayed transfer—makes students feel disheartened and uncertain:

It kind of makes me panic sometimes because you hear all kinds of horror stories about people not being able to complete their degrees or, not only that, what about when they complete their degrees and they can’t find jobs because of the economy, and this and that. It’s all tied in, it all comes together and so it’s a little
scary . . . I start scrutinizing every move that I make, and think am I using my time wisely here? Or what can I be doing in the meantime? If I can’t do this, then I’ll do this for now. . . . It just doesn’t seem as realistic. You lose momentum. I think that’s what I want to say you lose momentum . . . and then it’s like you hit a wall, there’s an obstacle, and it’s like any other obstacle in your life, you’re either going to overcome it or you’re going to get stung by it, and you’re going to be like “I’m just going to sit this one out.”

When asked about the prospect of more budget cuts, several of the students expressed uncertainty regarding the prospect of transfer. Adriana expressed doubt. She bluntly declared:

I probably won’t finish. I’ll probably just stay at . . . not get my Bachelor’s, which I’ve actually thought about, and I would just talk to my parents and let them know I might not, because to get my Associates, it’s taken me this long, and to get a Bachelor’s, and then . . . it’s just . . . I know it’s worth it, but I don’t know how long it’s going to be at [university]. And I don’t know how their budget cuts, and their class schedules are going to affect my daughter, because I have to think more about her for now, because it’s already been 3 years that she doesn’t spend time with me. You know what I mean?

This sentiment was also shared by Patricia, who concluded:

Well, if there are more budget cuts, I probably won’t be able to transfer already because I need the money . . . I couldn’t transfer by maybe next fall. I’m hoping that I’ll be there already [at the university], and if there are some more budget cuts, I’ll have to give up on the university.
Delayed completion as a result of budget cuts emerges as a major theme from the research. Students identify the phenomenon of delayed completion with the unavailability of requisite classes for completion and the delaying of transfer to university. Stemming from “delayed completion,” the subtheme of “demoralization” also emerges as an expression of student discontent with the inability to complete their educational goals.

**Subtheme 1: Demoralization.** Acknowledgement of how the budget cuts impede educational completion inspires a malaise amongst students. Considering the amount of effort it takes to pursue higher education, this student population experiences demoralization when their progress is slowed by factors beyond their control. Rafael explains how a 1-year delay has affected his confidence: “You do lose momentum whether it’s from the family or from the personal side or from wherever it may come from. Maybe it’s a financial thing . . . how do you maintain or provide for yourself that whole extra year?” While this group of students has maintained their enrollment, there is a sense of uncertainty that pervades the discourse of budget cuts, especially as they seem to be on-going and beyond the control of the students. Referencing the fact the classes she needs to transfer has been unobtainable, she concludes: “There are classes, certain biology classes that I wanted to take, but I didn’t get to because they were cut. So I was sad about that, but there’s really nothing I can do about it.”

An examination of the data reveals that student demoralization expresses itself in three different forms. This includes: (a) discouragement; (b) frustration; and (c) stress. The following section will explore these three aspects in more detail, followed by a
discussion of an emerging subtheme of “demoralization” emerging from the data, student attrition.

When speaking of delayed completion, there is the palpable presence of discouragement in the words and voices of students. This speaks to the disconnect between the perception that community colleges should be open access gateways to higher education and an increasing awareness of the obstacles that impede this realization. Linking budget cuts to delayed completion, students communicate feelings of discouragement about the prospect of achieving their educational goals.

Cristina compared her efforts to complete her education while budget cuts impede her progress to the equivalent of having a broken leg. Describing while some students get discouraged, she explained:

They lose interest. Because I’m not going to sit here, I’m not going to tell you that I haven’t thought about just quitting school, and going and getting a job. The interest is gone; the motivation and the determination isn’t there. It’s not there. When you have something you’re reaching for, and there’s that wall and let’s say you have a broken leg, do you really want to climb it. Are you that enthusiastic to get over that wall with a broken leg or a broken arm?

For Sarai, the prospect of stagnating at the community college because of less resources available to facilitate persistence is discouraging to students around her:

[People have the perspective of [Frontier College] as being here for 3 or 4 years, of just not never leaving, and just, I believe like programs like I mentioned, the Outreach, the EOPS are programs that just helping a lot of students, and those are the programs that are being more affected when the budget cuts come.
When Patricia discusses delayed completion in the context of incoming students, she perceives that some will be discouraged from the onset. As she speculates:

I think that because students think that there’s less money available, since they hear about the budget cuts and everything, they’re like well since its already being reduced, what’s my probability of me getting it, there’s so many people already going for it?

For herself, she feels determined but displays exasperation and is discouraged by the possibility of more budget cuts. She concludes: “Well, if there are more budget cuts, I probably won’t be able to transfer already because I need the money . . . and if there are some more budget cuts, I’ll have to give up on the university.”

Adriana describes how the prospect of delayed completion sparks an internal debate in which she tries to convince herself not to be discouraged:

I mean it’s not that it’s not doable, it’s just that when you have that to finish like me . . . like I’m just like if I’m to give up right now, and I could just be like its taking forever, it’s been years . . . I should just go work somewhere, but the fact is that I already did 3 years. I see it the opposite way. It’s like I just wasted 3 years; if I walk away now that was a waste of my time, it was a waste of my money and my sacrifice.

Antonio shares a story about a friend, and how he has tried to convince him to stay positive as he becomes increasingly discouraged. In the process, he also reveals his own inner way of countering demoralization:

Someone can be real negative, and say I’m going to give up now, you know what I mean . . . this sucks right here . . . I lost motivation, you know what I mean?
Which is kind of the first thing you want to do, but I mean like other people are on the more positive side saying things happen for a reason, and stuff like that. Like the buddy that I was talking to, that I was relating to with the math classes and the financial aid, he was kind of bummed out. He was more on the negative side. I was like, “Come on man, things happen for a reason; man we’re going to make it, we’re going to make it” I keep telling him, and he’s more on the negative side.

While some students get discouraged, others express frustration. This is symptomatic of a general desire to succeed against odds that seem overwhelming. The students feel that they are doing everything right, playing by the rules, and seeking to fulfill expectations but encounter roadblocks. As Lisette exhorts, “It makes me mad too, like why would you want to cut education when you know that’s our future? Like, that’s my future; like, don’t do that to me! It’s not fair.”

Adriana’s tone and words also project this sentiment, as she re-enacts a dialogue with other students who are becoming frustrated with delays:

And I think a lot of people get tired of that, because I’ve been frustrated, but I’ve been like, not like only motivated, it’s just like I don’t give up, but I see a lot of students that are gone for a semester, and I see them in the classes again because we have the same major, and I’m like, “Hey, what happened to you?” Because you get to see the same students when like you have that major. And they would like . . . “I got tired of waiting,” but then they’re back. So it’s kind of like they took that semester off because they got frustrated with the system, but then they know they still have to be here.
Sarai also shares in this frustration. She discusses how she persists, but that she has had to endure a whole semester delay. “I have managed to stay here, but it does kind of frustrate me . . . already we’re supposed to have transferred and it took me another semester just for the classes I passed through last semester.” Lastly, student demoralization is also reflected in feelings of stress and pressure.

Carlos explains how the pressure to get his classes causes stress and disrupts his performance.

. . . like for instance for next semester, for spring, it puts you in that pressure of like trying to make sure you get your classes for next semester, because there are a lot of people that didn’t get in this semester, and they’re going to be the first in line to get the next classes. So that throws me off of what I’m doing now. I’m trying to focus on my classes right now, and make sure I pass with a passing grade at least, and I’ve got to be pressured to get ahead of myself like even more with a deadline because I got to make sure that I’ll continue to stay in school.

Grisleda explains how the thought of not getting the class that she needs causes her to pressure herself. “Well, there’s a little bit more pressure to be serious about when I’m in class that I have to pass the class because it might not be there next semester, but most of that pressure comes from me.”

The contradiction between the students’ desire to achieve their educational goals and the delays in their attainment onset by budget cuts causes consternation. Students express demoralization in the form of discouragement, frustration, and stress and pressure. This imbalance wears down the resolve of some students, contributing to “student attrition,” an emerging subtheme of demoralization.
Subtheme 2: Student attrition. While the students in the research study persisted in their education—even if expressing demoralization—many seemed to know or know of other students who have dropped out. Antonio describes the processes by which he has seen students become demoralized and drop out:

I know that a lot of people have dropped out, because some people, a lot of my friends, are in their mid-20s, early 20s, and they’ve been out of school for a few months or a few years, so when they do come back, they’re unaware of this budget crisis. . . . So, when they do apply to come back to school, they’re very excited, and they’re focused, their dedicated, they’re starting with a clean plate, but then they find out that . . . your registration date is on the 20th of this month as opposed to like the 8th, and by the time you do register, they’re like wow, I’m on the wait list for five classes. That already brings you down. I’ve seen people drop out. I’ve seen people come here for a semester; they can’t get the classes they want or they only take one class, and they drop out.

This experience and perception is also shared by Patricia, who communicates as much of her own sense of demoralization as that of others as she rationalizes why other students drop out of school:

Well, some of them stop showing up because if they didn’t get the class that they needed, it puts back everything that they had already planned so if it sets them back a semester, a year, and sometimes you don’t want to wait. You had plans for that stuff, and you’re not going to be able to do it in the timeframe, then what’s the point of doing it anymore?
Sarai shares this sentiment as well, concluding that as a result of the budget cuts, “it’s just going to make a lot of students fall back, drop out, just not care enough to come to college because everything is getting cut . . . programs, services, classes, semesters . . . it doesn’t make sense.” She goes on to add that with cuts in EOPS and other needs-based programs specifically, that “a lot of people don’t come to school anymore or just prefer not to bother because they’re not getting the same help as just being a regular student.”

Cristina also understands why students drop, even as she struggles to persist. She adds, “. . . it’s been hard, stressful, at times depressing, but I try to not see that part. Not like other students. Some students just check out, but I try not to. And I try to . . . stay active and involved so that I don’t lose that motivation.”

Other students like Patricia and Adriana see students “stop-out” and return later when classes are available. As Patricia explains, “Some just don’t come, and they take their classes and wait until next semester to be able to take their classes, and the other ones that definitely can’t get into college, they’re just at home or work or stuff like that.” Adriana adds a comment about her observations of the cyclical nature of the stop-out process:

So it’s kind of like they took that semester off because they got frustrated with the system, but then they know they still have to be here. They still have that commitment to getting their education so its kind of like . . . I’ve seen a lot of people like drop out, but then I’ve seen a lot of new people come in. So it’s kind of like a cycle.
Summary of Theme 3. In summary, the experience of “delayed completion” as a result of the effects of budget cuts, strikes a blow against student persistence. Students describe how they are unable to obtain the required classes and support resources for completion and transfer. The students perceive the community college as an open access gateway to higher education and have educational aspirations and determination. This is contradicted by the experience of encountering obstacles and impediments that inhibit their educational attainment, factors they perceive that are beyond their control. This contradiction produces “demoralization,” leading many students to become discouraged, frustrated, or stressed. Many of the students identified this process as a major factor in “student attrition,” whether it is students stopping out or dropping out.

Theme 4: Devaluation of Education

The students perceived that education as whole—and community college education in particular—is less socially important than in the past. The research further reveals that most of the students believe that policymakers place less value and priority on community colleges and programs like EOPS because they are far removed from the students’ social realities and they do not understand and appreciate the impact that community college and EOPS has on students like them. This culminates in the belief that they have less political power and influence than other social groups, which determines why they are being targeted for budget cuts. This sets up subtheme #1, Lack of Political Power and Influence.

Subtheme 1: Lack of power and political influence. The students universally believe that education is important and that it it functions as a social good; a benefit for society as a whole and the means to social advancement. As Sarai commented, “I still
think a college education should be one of the most important things in the economy because it’s what brings us up to the professionals we become.” They also felt that they deserve the opportunity to pursue their education, even if they need support. When analyzing the budget cuts, their perceptions place them at odds with policymakers, who they feel are distant from the social realities of students like them.

Carlos communicates this by explaining how education is important for low-income people, many of whom are returning to school at a time of high unemployment:

I think it will affect [students] a lot. If they continue you know to cut budgets, I mean you know people are going to have to depend on getting a job, and there’s really no jobs available. Just like classes. People come to school to get an education, and there’s really no room, and out there in the working field, there’s no jobs. People put application after application, and there’s just like registering for classes or for financial aid, there’s a waiting list. It’s going to affect the people a lot. It’s going to discourage people from even wanting to get an education.

This perception is shared by Sarai, who also comments on the lack of understanding that policymakers have about the realities of people in her community:

. . . maybe a lot of people don’t think that education is that important, which is wrong because everyone now is coming back to school. They want to get a degree or they want to do something because the economy is not very . . . to get an employment now their not even looking for high school . . . a lot of good paying jobs are not just looking for high school diploma . . . they want some sort of degree, and not being able to come to school just because some person thinks that education is not that important, they like cut a lot of budgets, programs, and the
Cristina believes that policymakers do not have to live with the consequences of their cuts, as they don’t send their kids to community colleges. She asserts that personally I think it’s because like a lot of people in the government they send their kids off to private schools and everything, and these community colleges are basically for the people. The working class people, the low income people, so it really doesn’t affect them to tell you the truth. So I think that’s part of the reason.

Other students speak to a lack of understanding that policymakers have concerning the positive effects of programs like EOPS. As Cristina explains, policymakers look at end data and figures, but fail to take student development into account. As she concludes: “They see the end result. They don’t see the progress in my opinion.” This perception is shared by Rafael, who feels that the policymakers might see things differently if they were in his shoes:

They’re just not personal with it if that makes any sense. I don’t believe that they know firsthand or they’ve seen firsthand or heard firsthand the impact that it makes . . . they don’t understand the complete impact that those programs have in making or breaking the success of a student.

Lastly, students also conveyed a sense of disempowerment within the political system, believing that as a group, community college students and EOPS recipients lose out in the equations of political power based on the decision to cut their education. As Adriana explains,
I mean if you think about it . . . to me it just seems . . . it’s all politics . . . it’s all bottom line whether they say that [or not]. . . . It’s kind of one of those programs . . . that you’re at the bottom of the list . . . you’re not the priority.

This is a point of view shared by both Antonio and Cristina. As Cristina explains it: “I think they’re focused more on other political things versus education and what students need right now.”

For Lisette, policymakers are serving other more influential interests. Taking a resentful tone, she proclaims:

It’s just stupidity. Money is being spent the wrong way. Like, I don’t know if you will remember when General Motors like they were begging for money. Who cares about General Motors? Education is important, you know, education is our future. Education is our children’s future, and I want my children to succeed.

At another point, she expresses resentment at the government about how she feels her tax dollars are being misused:

I don’t know where my tax dollars go. If it was up to me, the tax dollars would go to education, not to pay for our debt. It’s not my debt. The U.S. debt, I don’t know how many billions of dollars from sending our troops to Iraq . . . what the hell? There’s no reason.

Rafael also shares this view, but feels that politicians cut the education budgets and focus on building prisons instead. He explains his position:

Because they’re giving it all to prisons. I mean that’s just it in a nutshell. A very interesting fact that for the amount that they spend, which is close to $47,000 to house an inmate, just to warehouse them, not to rehabilitate them, but just to
warehouse them; that’s the same amount that they could spend putting two to
three students through the UC system, everything paid for. That’s the same price
you can put two or three students through community college with everything paid
for. So, you stop and think—like are we really investing our money properly in
California?

Rafael feels that policymakers manipulate budget cuts for political gain. He feels that
cutting programs like EOPS might build a career for some politicians, it has grave
consequences for students like him:

I mean I think most of these programs, when they are allowed to be established,
there’s some politicians somewhere that say that will look good if I approve that
or its cool or I’ll sign for that because it looks really nice for me, but I don’t think
they really understand the impact which these programs make. . . . That’s because
they don’t understand the complete impact that those programs have in making or
breaking the success of a student.

**Summary of Theme 4.** In summary, “devaluation of education” emerged as a
theme pertaining to student perception of why community college funding is being cut.
While they framed their own perspectives according to the belief that education is a social
good and that it provided a means for opportunity and social advancement, they identified
a disconnect amongst policymakers. This sets up the subtheme “Lack of Political Power
and Influence.” Students identified three points of divergence for policymakers that
facilitated their devaluation of community college education: the socioeconomic distance
between policymakers and community college students and experience, a lack of
understanding of the importance of the programs like EOPS, and a sense that the
populations served by community colleges are less influential than other social groups.

This is further elaborated in the final theme, “Discrimination,” where the majority of students communicated a sense of victimization based on their ethnicity and social class.

**Theme 5: Race and Class Discrimination**

The decision-making process involved the cutting of budgets is not a neutral exercise, according to the majority of students interviewed. Rather, it occurs within a matrix of social and political power, with winners and losers emerging based on this configuration. When exploring this equation, most of the students perceived that they were on the losing end, based on their ethnicity and income level compared to those in policymaking positions. This sets up the subthemes, (a) *Racism* and (b) *Class Discrimination*. Emerging from the data, students communicated the experience of “race and class discrimination” as a result of how and why education budgets are being cut.

**Subtheme 1: Racism.** The first element is the perception that their ethnicity puts them at a disadvantage and makes them subject to discrimination when political decision-making about budget cuts is in play. Student perceptions can be broken down into two categories: (a) budget cuts are directed at Latinos/as to prevent their full integration and social advancement; and that (b) budget cuts target Latinos/as because their education is less important or socially significant.

Adriana thinks that because community colleges play a positive role in the social advancement of Latinos/as, their success is perceived as a threat to the existing racial structure. Community colleges, she posits, are too successful when it comes to “minorities.” She feels that if Latinos/as continue to advance, they will begin to enter into positions of power, and that is threatening for some. She also believes that the
community colleges are not as profitable and therefore less valuable economically. For these reasons, they are being targeted. It appears as though she is guarded when discussing issues of race, but her point still comes through. The question related to her perception of why the education budget was being cut. She explains her thoughts in detail:

Because a lot of people are getting an education . . . I honestly think that . . . I think that they’re starting to see that a lot of minorities and people are getting out there. A lot of people are using the college community system to get to there, which is less expensive . . . I feel that people got smarter in how they did their education so instead of going to a 4-year college straight away, take out a bunch of loans, and then come back here, and waste like 2 or 3 years. I feel that people got smarter because before like, even when I was in high school, like for me to say I was coming to community college, my parents were like, why? You have the opportunity to go to San Diego State, why don’t you just go to San Diego State? My main reason was because: (a) it’s less expensive, and I was like why am I going to go, while I’m going to get the same classes, and transfer, and be the same, and not be in debt, and I think a lot of students are doing that, and that they were just like . . . you know it’s taking from their money, and they want that back. I mean if you think about it . . . to me it just seems . . . its all politics . . . it’s all bottom line whether they say that. They want people to get an education . . . bottom line . . . if it’s not there, people are getting the education [here], you know. You’re always going to see that. Everyone in some way or another is about their race so when they’re seeing that, it’s the Mexican that’s giving me the job now.
It’s this person who has a Ph.D.; it’s this person who has a Master’s. I just have a Bachelor’s . . . like how does that work? So I think it’s that, and it is like a lot of people are not doing it anymore, a lot of people can’t afford it because the reason that they were affording it was because of those resources.

Rafael also shares the opinion that that education budget cuts maintain the racial status quo. In his case, he describes how a glass ceiling for Latinos/as will be maintained by diminished access to transfer to the university, and how Latinos/as will be increasingly confined to vocational programs in community colleges and for-profit technical schools. He uses an example to illustrate his point:

. . . when I go to the clinic everybody I see there is either minority groups or like well represented as dental assistants, as medical assistants. When you go to get checked in, get your blood pressure done, and all that, and get sat, they tell you that the doctor or the dentist will be right there, those are Latinos, and it’s because they went to these classes. Is that what we’re going to be admitted to just being, the assistant?

He further elaborates,

As a Latino, I recently went to an internship at UCSD with the Cancer Research Center, and they asked me why do you want to come to UCSD, and I told them because the last time I was at UCSD, I went as a housekeeper. I was working for the summer in housekeeping. I saw one Latino person the whole time I was there. Everyone else was Asian or Caucasian. Nothing against them, but way underrepresented. . . . For a group that’s largely and quickly becoming a majority, we’re going to still be a minority in all the professions of the sciences, all the
doctors, all the nurses, and all the dentists, the scientists, and so there’s no balance there.

Carlos agrees with this perspective as well. He believes that racism and racial guilt combine to maintain a lid on Latino/a advancement. He feels that Latino/a advancement should not be perceived as a threat, since many want to assimilate into the existing structure rather than change it:

I think a lot of it has to do with racism like number one. I mean you know a lot of people want to sweep it under the carpet and stuff, but it has to do with racism. And it’s a fear of like our population; you know the Mexican culture, like basically taking over what was once theirs in the first place. But today’s culture, but a lot of people want to assimilate rather than, I mean they still stay routed in their culture, but they want to become part of the establishment rather than come with a revolutionized mentality and change it. A lot of [Latino] people want to be [part of] the establishment, and I don’t understand why they’re [White policymakers] still in fear. Maybe they have a guilt trip of what happened in the past.

For other students, the implementation of budget cuts impacts Latinos/as because they have less influence and are seen as less important in the social and political sphere. Lisette perceives policymakers to be White and rich and find it easier to target “minorities,” especially since they themselves will not have to experience the consequences of their cuts.

These people are rich. They don’t see it from, not poor, but minority perspective. That’s why I think they only see it from . . . they come from rich families, some
don’t, some do, but I think that has to do a lot why they’re cutting budgets. They
don’t see it from a minority’s point of view. They just say, “Oh let’s cut, it’s okay
they’ll make it the way they can,” and that’s not right.

Adriana perceives that EOPS is cut “because of who they service . . .
disadvantaged people, Hispanic people; first general college students.” Carlos agrees
with this statement. He feels that policymakers perceive EOPS students as a poor
investment due to their ethnicity, stating that the program is cut

Because it’s actually helping a lot of students, and it happens to house like
Mexican, Latino students, and they see it as giving out handouts or something. It
won’t be no investment, which in turn it will be because if people are educated
and they’re out there in the real world, it will create more jobs and stuff.

Sarai believes that the cutting of the college’s community outreach program is
because “it’s also bringing a lot of new students in.” She goes on to explain that the
consequence of the college’s cutting community outreach will mostly affect Latino/as.

We reach out to mostly to the local schools like San Ysidro, Montgomery,
Southwest, and the type of students we reach for . . . mostly the ones I talk to are
like Mexican-American, like myself. They’re the ones most interested in coming
to the community college since they believe maybe that they won’t be able to get
into other colleges such as the universities. So it’s mostly, I would say, the
Latinos, the Hispanics, the ones that are mostly lost as to whether to go or not to
go. Since we’re so close to the border also a lot of people from Tijuana and all
those places. They come here, and that’s the people that we actually guide the
most. So if I would put who we reach mostly . . . the Hispanics and then we also
reach to all the students who are interested. There’s probably like the Whites and all the other students, but they’re mostly like going to universities so they really don’t speak to us.

**Subtheme 2: Class discrimination.** Students also identified their social class as a reason for being the target of education budget cuts. This refers specifically to the perception that (a) policymakers view the education of working class people as less important and that (b) this social grouping has less influence and relevance in policymaking.

Martin believes that policymakers are not straightforward about the implementation of budget cuts. He perceives that they are well-off and are foisting the budget cuts onto low-income people in a circuitous manner:

> Not necessarily they’re lying to us, but they’re not telling us something they don’t want to tell us, and if they do tell us, they’re not telling us straight forward, direct . . . they’re kind of beating around the bush about it, I think. Those people are still getting paid good, and things are going good for them, you know what I mean? It’s always usually the people on the bottom that usually suffer the most when things hit the fan.

Adriana feels that more powerful and organized interests target low-income people though the ballot box, through support of politicians and policies that favor (what she perceives is) the wealthy and White population. Through this process, they are able to maintain the divides between rich and poor:

> The people who vote, and people who don’t know what they’re voting for, and don’t read. The bottom line is that the people who are voting . . . I mean like
overall, like conservative people, Republicans because of how they vote, and what they believe in . . . you know what I mean . . . what they believe should be, and where things should be going because bottom line, what is it the rich person always stay rich, the poor will always stay poor. The middle class will always be middle class. They don’t want more people to get on their level, and especially people that are getting on their income level is not what they view as to who it should be. All of sudden there’s like a billionaire next door or that Black . . . they don’t want that. So I do think that when it all started, they genuinely did want us to improve, but once they’ve seen our potential and they’ve seen how much we can improve, and how much we can go, they’re like kind of getting scared.

At a later, point she also adds that programs like EOPS are being cut because policymakers have low expectations of success from low-income people:

Because they are already at a disadvantage starting. So, I think that they see that if you’re already at a disadvantage starting, then what is the “expectation overall.” “Oh well, they’re probably not going to make it in the first place, so why are we wasting our money there? Why are we putting that in there? It’s going to waste.”

Griselda identifies a lack of fairness and expresses incredulity at how budgets are cut for programs serving poor people, postulating that policymakers consider such programs a luxury. “That doesn’t seem fair . . . I guess they consider EOPS a luxury as well as DSS [Disabled Student Services], because I know that was also in danger of being cut. So I think that they see EOPS as a luxury not a necessity.”

In other cases, students identify the lack of power and influence resulting from their social class as a reason for the education budget cut. As Carlos concludes,
They send their kids off to private schools and everything, and these community colleges are basically for the people. The working class people, the low income people, so it really doesn’t affect them to tell you the truth. So I think that’s part of the reason.

Lisette agrees, feeling that “those that aren’t economically privileged” are more affected by budget cuts. Antonio also concurs, stating that policymakers “won’t be affected by it tremendously.”

Cristina feels that policymakers are ignorant of the reality of working class people and discount the challenges that they face:

They think that this is where everybody’s at all times no matter what, like that higher position, that political position, you know, doing whatever they did or either they came from really good families, really rich families that they didn’t have that problem, but I see it as they focus on the end result that assumes that’s how it is and just forget that process in the meanwhile.

Sarai perceives that low-income people are going to be increasingly driven out of the community college system as it becomes more competitive and expensive:

But there was a lot of contradiction in saying they were not going to let a lot of people in anymore, because if the budget continues, they were going to let only certain people in the college, and times going on like this, a lot of people can’t afford to go to a university, so they need to come to a community college, and with the budget cuts here, its not helping the students that want to save up instead of going to a 4-year college, doing it in a 2-year college. So, that’s kind of also
kind of what Southwestern students experience here . . . like people would hear that around.

Martin summarizes how he also sees ability to pay becoming a primary factor for access. He describes how he and his low-income friends are concerned about the budget cuts, while his wealthier friends are indifferent:

. . . the people who don’t have money experience the same thing overall, and like I said I had friends who have money too, and they could care less, they’re not affected by it. But the students who are from low income, I can relate to financially. It’s all the same story I’ve heard many times already. It’s usually the same story.

Summary of Theme 5. In summary, the majority of students involved in the research perceive that race and social class are factors that influence how education budget cuts are determined and implemented, which set up the subthemes “Racism” and “Class Discrimination.” The students perceived that racial discrimination occurs in two particular forms. On the one hand, they felt that racism has informed the decision to cut community college funding on the basis that policymakers seek to preserve the racial status quo. More specifically, they cut community college and EOPS funding in particular to impede the full integration and social advancement of Latinos/as. Others felt that this occurred because the education of Latinos/as is seen as less important or socially significant. Pertaining to social class, the students perceive that policymakers view the education of working class people as less important and that this occurs because this social grouping has less influence in politics.
EOPS Staff Perceptions

As part of the research project, two EOPS staff members at Frontier College were also interviewed to compare and contrast their perspective and perceptions with those of the students. From these interviews, two major themes emerge: Reduction in Access and Services and Inequity (see Figure 3). Reduction in Access and Services links to the first research question and pertains to the staff perception that budget cuts have diminished crucial aspects of the educational experience that help underwrite student persistence amongst EOPS students. The subtheme Delay and Attrition emerges from the larger theme, as staff members draw a connection between the reduction in access and services to students dropping or facing delay in the attainment of their educational objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduction of Access and Services</th>
<th>Inequity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST #1 - Delay and Attrition</td>
<td>ST #1 - Progress and Potential Not Recognized</td>
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Figure 3. Staff themes.

A second theme emerging from the data is Inequity, which links to the second research question. This refers to the way the staff members perceive the experience of the EOPS students at a time of budget cuts to be affected by their diminished social status based on income level and ethnicity. A subtheme of inequity is Progress and Potential Not Recognized. This refers to the staff perception that student educational growth as a result of participation in EOPS and in the community college is not factored in as a consideration when budget cuts are being implemented. Secondly, they believe that the students have a lot of potential for success that is otherwise wasted when programs like
EOPS that serve disadvantaged students are cut. Due to their unequal social status, they are not given the opportunity to flourish when needs-based programs are reduced.

**Theme 1: Reduction in Access and Services**

A main theme of the staff data corroborates the perception of students when analyzing their experiences. Staff members identified that the experience of this student population at a time of budget cuts meant that there was less educational access overall and reduced services available for those already enrolled. This theme is revealed through identification of three separate components: (a) fewer classes available, (b) the decrease in EOPS enrollment, and (c) the cutting of support services.

Like the students, staff members are acutely aware of the diminished course offerings available to students due to budget cuts. Staff member Angelina commented that although she is not privy to most of the direct experiences to students, they communicate certain things to her very clearly in counseling sessions. As she explained, “I mean the only thing I do see really is, for example, because of the budget cuts they’re not offering as many classes. So then yeah, it is impacting them in that they can’t get the classes that they need.” Staff member Roberto concurs, describing reduced course offerings as the effects of budget cuts “trickling down” onto the students and making them “feel the pinch.” A second element of this theme is the reduced enrollments in EOPS.

Angelina describes her experience in seeing the number of students admitted to the EOPS program decline over time as a result of budget cuts. Expressing subtle dismay, she contemplates: “So I think we were at like 2,000 plus students way back when I started, you know, 3 or 4 years ago. Now we are down to I think 1,000 or 1,300,
something like that. So, definitely in terms of numbers the budget has impacted us.”

Roberto shares this conclusion, identifying that “EOPS has experienced some pretty severe cuts . . . [such that] . . . it has had an impact on the program as far as the number of students we could admit.” The last component of this theme has to do with the reduction of support services available to students enrolled in the program.

Both staff members communicated a sense of frustration with their inability to provide the optimal level of service to the students due to budget cuts and the resulting reduction in services. Angelina explains how staff has been expected to provide the same level of service over a time period in which resources have been cut. She expresses exasperation at trying to meet the needs of students while her workload increases and becomes unwieldy, and she sees the quality of support decline. As she explains,

But recently, because of the budget, we have had to cut down on staffing and decrease—well, the first year that it happened, which was last year, we still had the same number of students that we were serving but less staff to help. So we were booked back to back to back, no breaks in between, and even now it’s still the same way. So it has been exhausting and overwhelming, but we still have to serve our students at the level that we have always served them. And so although our service in helping students or wanting to help them hasn’t changed, it’s just caused us to be more stressed out and overwhelmed. So I think in quality maybe it may have been impacted, but yeah, I think it is more in quality of how we serve our students.

She concludes that although she wants to provide quality support based on student need, in fact it is more like “it’s like, well, I have to—it’s sort of like get them in; get
them out. Rather than, okay, spending my time on these issues and being able to do all these other things too.”

Roberto also explains how staff members are pressured by the increased workload (due to staff reductions) to self select ways to reduce services in order to maintain the pace. He gives the example of how counselors are reducing the number of appointments with students seeking extra support. He explains:

So that, I think, has an impact, has an impact on us as staff that we feel the crunch of, we have this many students to serve. We have a limited number of staff and we have to do these three contacts in this time period, so our schedules get tight . . . [so] that maybe [the students] can’t come in and see us in between their contact time because we have to see everybody first, that you—you can’t come for seconds until everybody else gets their serving first.

The staff members drew the conclusion that reduced access and services had an especially detrimental impact on EOPS students—as students with a need for extra support. A subtheme that emerges and gives expression to this impact is Delay and Attrition.

**Subtheme 1: Delay and attrition.** As a result of reduced access and services, staff members perceived that the impact resulted in the delayed completion of student educational goals and for some students to drop out. Angelina draws a connection between budget cuts and delay in transfer: “So then yeah, it is impacting them in that they can’t get the classes that they need. And if they’re transferring or ready to graduate then that is going to delay their time until graduation or transfer.” For Roberto, delay means a
longer stay in the community college, which he translates into less income. As he explains:

For students feeling a pinch would mean that if courses that they want and need to graduate, or courses that they want and need to transfer are not available, then the time period to graduate and/or transfer is going to be delayed. So being in school longer, it means not being able to start working at their chosen profession sooner, so there is a loss. There is a loss of potential income.

The longer students are delayed and the less support that have access to, the more likely they are going to drop out or give up. Angelina shares that in her experience delays or reduced support mean more out of pocket cost for the students. As she explains, increased costs presents this student population with difficult decisions: “So now they have to decide whether they want to stay in the class, you know, or a lot of them, even their family members they can’t borrow from because they don’t have money either.” She concludes that cuts in financial aid “is going to really drive out students, low income students. They won’t be able to come to school.”

Roberto expresses the same point, but from a different angle. He is convinced that the support that the EOPS program offers sustains many students within the educational pipeline. Cutting it, he feels, will push many off the rails. As he concludes, “Had it not been for EOPS they may not be in school [in the first place].” The second identifiable theme pertains to the perceptions of the staff members participants that low-income, Latino/a students already experience conditions of inequity prior to the implementation of budget cuts, which only exacerbates hardship.
Summary of Theme 1. The staff members were in a position to directly observe and validate the student perception of the reduction of access and support services. This perception was also shaped by their own incapacity to provide a more desirable level of support and services due to budget cuts. This includes the observation of fewer classes being made available to students, fewer EOPS slots available for new entrants, and the cutting of support services previously available to students. Furthermore, staff members also identified that the reduction of access and support were also contributing to the process of delay and attrition.

Theme 2: Inequity

The second major theme, Inequity, that emerges from the data relates to how the EOPS staff perceives the nature of the budget cuts. This underlying theme describes how the staff members see this student population as existing in a secondary social position based on their income level and ethnicity. The implementation of cuts in the community college system and in EOPS exacerbates the conditions of inequity, undermining persistence in their educational pursuits. There are three components referenced by the staff that gives shape to this theme. This includes: (a) less social power; (b) discrimination; and (c) the experience of hardship.

For the EOPS staff members, budget cuts are implemented within community colleges and programs like EOPS because the affected populations have less social power. As Roberto explains in forthright terms:

That population is often times one that doesn’t have a voice and who don’t have the lobbying or resources to get people to speak on our behalf at the statewide level. So it’s easier to pick on groups, programs that are easier to target.
For Angelina, the perception of “taxpayers” as a more politically powerful social force, whose interests are counterposed to those of low-income students, frames the narrative of budget cuts. Implicit in her words is that these “taxpayers” are targeting programs that serve low-income people because they are not invested in the program and that they are soft targets due to the low political influence of the end users. As she explains, programs that are

serving low income students, just like CalWORKs or any, you know, the ones where they’re giving money towards Head Start, or anything where it is serving low-income people. Those get scrutinized because the taxpayers, again they don’t—they can’t relate to what’s going on.

She further expounds on the theme of iniquity along similar lines, claiming:

But they don’t understand that we didn’t start at the same level. That is not equal when we look at it like that. So I think those are the same people that think, oh—or have that same perception of why EOPS shouldn’t exist, because they don’t understand.

The staff members also identify discrimination as a source of inequity.

When elaborating on their perceptions, staff members identified two facets of inequity that diminish the social power of this student population. These are forms of discrimination based on race and income level. Roberto, for example, sees a pattern of discrimination against low-income students through history, compared to wealthier students. As he illustrates in the first person plural (and somewhat guarded language), “If the group of students that we were, I think were well off and had that kind of clout we
could, I think probably make a difference, but yeah, the same reason why other groups historically have been targeted.”

For Angelina, budget cuts will fall heavily on community college students of color, obstructing the educational pathway for many. She observes that most students of color in higher education are enrolled in community college, and that they are already underrepresented in 4-year institutions. Implicit in her statement is that students of color already face iniquitous conditions. Since many depend on the community college and programs like EOPS, budget cuts ensure the pathway will be further narrowed. She explains:

And then of course many of those low income students are people of color, then that is going to impact even greater, you know, the system the—what do you call it? The, you know, the pathway for students to get into higher education. And you know, as you know, we are already having a dearth of students of color at that level. And so with that, with the budget cuts, it is going to even impact that more. So yeah, I think it is going to be, again, a domino effect of having less students of color at the higher ed. levels.

The staff members also communicate their perception of inequity through the use of descriptors that characterize students as having to endure perpetual forms of economic hardship in their lives. When describing the reality of budget cuts and how they impact the students, it is assumed that students are already accustomed to poverty-induced difficulties.

Angelina, for instance, characterizes the budget cuts as just another additional crisis for the students. “Whether it is a budget crisis or not,” she asserts, “they’re always
in a budget crisis; that is why they are part of our program.” For Roberto, students are in a permanent state of “survival mode.” From his perspective, this makes the shock of program budget cuts less severe for this student population and almost works in their favor. As he rationalizes:

You know, I think for EOPS that’s almost their day-to-day experience that there are—it almost seems as though the cuts have to be really severe in order for them to make a big, huge move because they’re, I think of a survival nature that they will somehow make ends meet.

Subtheme 1: Progress and potential not recognized. A subtheme of inequity is Progress and Potential Not Recognized, which derives from observations made by staff members that the potential and actual growth of this student population is not considered when programs like EOPS are being cut. Implicit in these statements is that the improvement and development experienced by disadvantaged students is not in and of itself intrinsically valuable. Therefore, community college funding and programs like EOPS are targeted for budget reductions.

Roberto taps into this sentiment when describing how statistics used in valuating educational program bypass student enrichment. He explains:

It is unfortunate that we can’t measure that emotional piece or the personal piece. We can show numbers of how many are admitted, how many finish, how many transfer, things of that sort, and those are important to have because it justifies funding. But the other piece that’s not measured I think is one that’s—that at some point needs to be told because it has a huge impact, huge impact on a student and what they are and what they do.
This subtheme is also touched on by Angelina, who questions the short-sided nature of budget cuts which miss the important long-term results based on student potential. As she explains her reasoning:

But they don’t see the big picture down the line. You know, if you’re able to help [a] low-income person or student now, in the end when they go through the educational system they are going to be able to contribute back to the society, you know, and they are not going to end up in jail where more of that money is going now versus in the education. You know, so they are not seeing the big picture and the future of educating a low-income person or a minority student.

Both EOPS staff members communicate a sense of frustration as they analyze the effects of budget cuts on this student population. Their awareness of and closeness to the process of student potential and progress makes them both communicate with an urgent tone when discussing the subject of the effects of budget cuts on students under conditions of inequity. As Roberto concludes,

You know, I have been working at the college for many years, and I have been there long enough to see how students can start with a shaky foundation. And with the right kind of guidance, and their own personal development, and their own sacrifices, that they, the students, would just blossom in ways that they never even imagined.

**Summary of Theme 2.** Relating to the theme of “Inequity,” staff members perceive this student population as existing in a secondary social position based on their income level and ethnicity, which is further exacerbated by budget cuts in programs (like EOPS) that are essential to their persistence in the community college. They referenced
three components that give shape to this theme, including the idea of them having less social power from the outset, experiencing discrimination in their daily lives, and facing financial hardship. They also communicated the idea that neither the progress of this student population nor their potential are considered when budget cuts are implemented in programs that serve them.

**Summary**

In summary, an analysis of the student interview data has produced multiple themes that correspond to the two research questions. Relating to research question 1 (How do low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Service (EOPS) perceive the affect of education budget cuts on their persistence in the community college?), three themes emerge. These themes are **Diminished Access**, **Reduced Support**, and **Delayed Completion**. These three themes reflect student perceptions of their own experiences and those of their fellow students as community college students enrolled in the EOPS Program at a time of budget cuts.

For the second research question (How do low-income Latino/a students in EOPS program perceive the nature of the budget cuts?), the themes **Devaluation of Education** and **Discrimination** emerge from the data. These themes reflect how students perceive the nature of the budget cuts in relation to their own enrollment in community college and the EOPS program. The themes reflect the student perceptions, which were validated by the themes that emerged from the EOPS staff data.

The two themes that emerge from the EOPS staff data are **Reduced Access and Services** and **Inequity**. The first theme corresponds to research question 1 and validates the student perceptions that budget cuts have had a detrimental effect on student access
and support. The second theme, which also validates student perspective, reflects a shared belief that low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the community college and EOPS program exercise less influence and social power in the decision-making processes that determines budget cuts.
This research is a qualitative study on the experiences and perceptions of low-income, Latino/a students in the California Community college and enrolled in the EOPS Program at a time of budget cuts. It employed a phenomenological approach to explore student perceptions of their experiences of being enrolled and taking classes in the community college at a time when budget cuts are reducing available resources throughout the system. This research concentrated on the empirical phenomenon of Latino/a students at a Southern California community college, referred to in this study as Frontier College. Two research questions guided this study:

1. How do low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Service (EOPS) perceive the affect of education budget cuts on their persistence in the community college?

2. How do low-income Latino/a students in EOPS program perceive the reasons for the budget cuts?

The research utilized the approach of individual interviews to collect data. The interviews were conducted with 11 students and 2 staff members. These interviews presented the perspectives, attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of the EOPS students and staff members. The following chapter will discuss the findings and the interpretation of the results and presents generalizations that can be surmised from the research. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the limitations of the study and implications for practice and for future research.

There were five themes that emerged from the research on student perceptions. Pertaining to question 1, the three emerging themes were: Diminished Access, Reduced
Support, and Delayed Completion. Pertaining to question 2, the two emerging themes are Devaluation of Education and Discrimination. There were two themes that emerged from the research on staff perceptions of student experiences: Reduction in Access and Services and Inequity.

**Findings and Interpretation of Results**

In relation to the first research question, regarding the experience of low-income, Latino/a students at a time of budget cuts in the community college, the research demonstrated a pattern of thought amongst the students and faculty. This pertained to the perception that the budget cuts were undermining both the concept of open access and the functioning of internal support systems with the California Community Colleges. This culminated in various ways, displacing students at both external and internal points of entry. The displacement was not occurring in an obvious, overt, and explicit way; but rather in subtle, systematic, and inconspicuous ways. Essential points of entry for low-income Latino/a students were constricting, with the apparent end result being higher exclusion rates in the short term, and attrition rates in the long term.

While the college system has not formally changed its entry policy, internal regimes that provide points of access and support for low-income students were shuttering due to diminished resources. While students maintained the formal ability to register and enroll, they were increasingly unable to access requisite courses and essential services that facilitated progress. What can previously be conceived as “access points,” such as open enrollment, relatively low registration fees, and subsidy programs such as the EOPS Program, were being transformed into “choke points.” In other words, budget cuts were introducing a process of inversion of the nature of the practice of community
colleges. Points of access were also points of exclusion, since the resources required to fulfill the promise of inclusion are decreasing in relation to student demand. These points functioned as both barriers to entry and strictures to advancement for students who were most economically vulnerable. As identified by the students and staff, they were lack of access to classes, reduced student services, and diminished support in the form of less access and resources available to students in programs like EOPS.

While some of these choke points had a direct impact, others were more indirect in that they produced a ripple effect that impacted students in other ways. For low-income, Latino/a students enrolled in the EOPS program, the direct form was a diminished textbook subsidy, reduced resources for support staff that provided counseling and other services, more stringent requirements and increased competition for fewer enrollment slots, and reduced campus resources (such as library hours, availability of computers, etc.).

The findings revealed that many low-income students did not have the personal or family income to withstand sudden prices increases in the form of reduced financial aid and subsidies or denied access to support services. Their economic vulnerability means that sudden or gradual cost increases—unmatched by an increase in income, especially at a time of economic recession and high unemployment—leads to internal displacement. The lack of availability of resources for new students entering from a similar socioeconomic standpoint produced the same effect. In essence, budget cuts increased the rate of attrition in the way that some students simply could not gain access, while others could not sustain their enrollment over time. Diminished support and guidance as
a component of educational process contributed to the gradual erosion of student persistence.

Low-income Latino/a students from this population who have more financial stability might be insulated from cost increases associated with budget cuts, but were still impacted by their secondary effects. This took shape in three ways associated with delays associated with diminished access. For instance, the findings linked budget cuts to fewer available classes and course sections available, which tended to produce more erratic and inflexible schedules. The students communicated how less stable scheduling conflicted with family or work obligations, which were generally considered to be higher priority.

When students stagnated along the educational pathway due to delay, they were faced with uncertainty. This led some to opt for what they felt was more productive use of their time, such as working more hours, enrolling in private schools, or simply stopping out. Students also communicated that while they might be able to sustain their enrollment in community colleges with cost increases, they were less confident about how they would fare with rising costs in the 4-year institutions resulting from the budget cuts.

The research also expressed how some students could pay the higher associated costs, but only by increasing the number of hours worked per day or week. While these factors did not displace students directly, they delayed the completion of their educational goals. As the findings indicated, delays became corrosive to persistence as students become demoralized and lose confidence that they would be able to complete their objectives. Another element of the experience of low-income Latino/a students was
linked to research question 2, which related to how students perceived the nature of the budget cuts.

The findings revealed that students believe that class and race dynamics played a role in how budget cuts are determined. Students generally perceived themselves as socially and politically marginalized in the decision-making process that influenced how budget cuts were decided and implemented. Specifically, they conceived of the people in the decision-making positions as wealthy, not connected to the community college experience, and generally unconcerned with or dismissive of the plight of low-income people like themselves.

The findings also revealed that many of the students perceived that race played a role in how budget cuts were determined and implemented. This included how race was reflected in who decided the budget cuts as well as who experienced them. Since the students are Latino/a, many perceived that budget cuts were being implemented by wealthy, White politicians who had not attended community colleges personally or sent their children to such institutions. This was bolstered by the perception that wealthy, White voters and like-minded special interest groups exercised their influence over the political process to insulate themselves from the effects of budget cuts. As a result, budget cuts were foisted upon those populations and programs that serve people of color. The perceptions of students were further corroborated by the perceptions of the EOPS staff members, with some distinctions.

The perception of the EOPS staff captured two dimensions of the experience with one significant divergence. They were conscious of their own inability to meet the diverse needs of their students due to reduced resources. They were also cognizant of
difficulties experienced by the students themselves, due to working with them in close proximity. They conveyed a sense of empathy and commitment to their students, but also exasperation in the face of increased workload with less staff. They were able to identify the same range of student experiences regarding reduced access and services.

The staff also shared in the belief that programs like EOPS were being reduced because of the limited social power of the student population using the program, compared to other more powerful social groups. This was expressed through a shared belief that the students were already experiencing conditions of inequity prior to the implementation of the budget cuts. They perceived the EOPS students as people facing perpetual economic hardship or of having previously experienced forms of discrimination or marginalization. They conceptualized the budget cuts as yet another obstacle, amongst many, that the students must face and overcome. The staff members communicated a firm belief in the potential of the students and their desire to succeed, but resigned themselves to the understanding that the barriers could be too daunting for many. Despite this convergence of perception and experiences, there was one significant divergence.

One point of divergence is that the staff did not elaborate on inequity in regards to race in particular. Instead, they conveyed their viewpoint utilizing the broader conception of disadvantage. While the perception of student inequity based on their race was implicit in their description, they consciously avoided the use of race-related terms. This is likely a reflection of their positions of employment and training received in the state of California, where the explicit use of race criteria in allocating resources in higher education is restricted. This reveals their internalization of the notion of “color-blindness.”
This is the guiding doctrine that has replaced the approach of “anti-racism,” which stemmed from implementation of Affirmative Action programs and aimed to eradicate embedded and institutional discriminatory practices. “Color-blindness” is predicated on the notion that racism is no longer a defining or significant feature of student experience in higher education and should therefore be diminished or discarded as a framework for policy development. The staff members refrained (at times visually restraining themselves) from using the language of race in their observations. This reveals the success of the institutional shift away from anti-racism as an official doctrine, but also the contradiction that persists for those staff members who continue to feel that racism still influences or defines student experience.

For the last part of the discussion on the interpretation of results, an evaluation of the findings in light of the conceptual research used in the study is warranted. The implications of the findings for the theory of Neoliberalism and Academic Capitalism in Higher education and Critical Race Theory (CRT) will be examined below.

The findings generally support the applicability of the concept of Neoliberalism as a philosophical model influencing how resources are distributed at a time of budget cuts. For instance, Levin (2005) points out that the evidence suggests that contemporary community college strategies are based on “adaptation to corporate and consumer demand at the expense of liberal arts programs, transfer functions, and citizenship development” (p. 14). This is validated by the increasing costs for a community college education, and how diminished funding is narrowing the pathways to advancement. Furthermore, the de-emphasis on funding for needs-based programs like EOPS also validates the theory of Neoliberalism in higher education validates Manteaw’s (2008)
assertion that those academic areas least tied to economic or technological progress in relation to the capitalist market are de-prioritized in the formulation of funding schemes. Since EOPS and similar needs-based programs are not tied to the market or technological progress, they are made expendable at a time of budget cuts. Lastly, the perceptions of the students validate another aspect of Neoliberal Theory. This is the idea that increased competition circumscribes lower-performing and less-prepared students since “performance-based funding” and the “ethics of competition” create, legitimate, or sustain inequalities that are then self-perpetuating (Webb et al., 2009). On the other hand, the theory of Academic Capitalism appears to have some applicability as it relates to student perceptions, but is limited in its relevance.

The theory of Academic Capitalism asserts that as education becomes increasingly market-based, the notion of universal accessibility and education having intrinsic and immutable value has waned as an educational ethic (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a). This is validated by student perceptions that there is a decline in the value of universal education, especially as it pertains to low-income students like themselves. On the other hand, the Theory of Academic Capitalism also emphasizes the process by which public research universities have integrated corporate practices, partnerships, and structures into academics (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997a). Since administrative decision-making is a process that is insulated from the daily lives of students, it is unlikely that student perceptions would reflect this trend. Therefore, the theory has limited applicability in a study of student perceptions. Critical Race Theory, on the other hand, is validated by student perceptions.
According to Solórzano and Yosso (2001), CRT asserts that racism continues to play a defining role in higher education by examining how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups. Student perceptions that budget cuts are being driven in part by racial prejudice validate the theory and legitimize its application from the qualitative standpoint of student experience. Critical Race Theory is useful in analyzing how budget cuts are dismantling the Civil Rights era infrastructure that has made significant, if only partial, gains in the integration of students of color into higher education. The racism embedded in this process is covert, as it is not expressed as an official reason for the cuts. Nevertheless, the historic reason for community college open access and the significance of affirmative action programs like EOPS is ignored and obscured in the process of budget cutting. Budget cuts in the community college system, therefore, express and embody a form of institutional racism that will perpetuate and exacerbate racial inequality by eroding mechanisms designed to counter historic racism and segregation still present in society as a whole.

Transferability

For this research project, purposeful sampling was used to select a small sample of students. This group of students, low-income, Latino/a students enrolled in the community college, was selected because their experience could have broader relevance for other students with similar characteristics and facing similar circumstances. Despite being a highly localized study, the findings can be transferred according to the Principal of Proximal Similarity. This refers to how a comparable pattern of experiences and perceptions will likely be the outcome where the population, setting, and circumstances are most similar (Patton, 2002).
For this study there are three results that have broader implication for other low-income Latino/a students in the California Community College. These are:

1. Education budget cuts in the California community college reduce funding for support services that play an important role in the persistence of low-income, Latino/a students.

2. Delays in the attainment of educational goals, associated with budget cuts and the reduction of access to classes, contributes to the attrition of low-income, Latino/a students.

3. Latino/a students in the community college perceive that budget cuts are conceived and implemented within a political power structure in which they have little or no influence due to their socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity.

Given the large and growing population of California Community College students who fall into the category of being low-income and Latino/a, facing similar budget cuts within the same social and economic context, it is possible to propose that these experiences and perceptions would likely be shared by similar groups on other campuses. There is enough commonality in the responses of the students to conclude that these experiences are part of a larger phenomenon experienced by this student population.

Limitations

This study has four limitations that may affect its transferability. These are:

1. The study was limited to one college campus and 11 students and 2 staff members. Their experiences and perceptions of this population cannot represent all low-income Latinos/as in the community college or in the EOPS program.
2. Since qualitative research is subjective, and while objectivity was pursued in every element of the study, the researcher may not have addressed the issue of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity as extensively as possible, resulting in research bias.

3. The research site is located at a site where Latino/a students constitute the majority of the overall student population, which may not be the same conditions for similar students on other campus and may affect perceptions.

4. Since the researcher focused on only one ethnic group amongst a variety of different ethnic groups that rely on the EOPS Program at Frontier College, findings may be specific or limited to the experiences and perspectives of that group only.

**Implications for Practice**

The implications for practice are derived from the five research themes corresponding to the two research questions. The themes relating to research question 1 (How do low-income Latino/a students enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Service [EOPS] perceive the affect of education budget cuts on their persistence in the community college?) are Diminished Access, Reduced Support, and Delayed Completion. The themes relating to question 2 (How do low-income Latino/a students in EOPS program perceive the nature of the budget cuts?) are Devaluation of Education and Discrimination.

The study reveals that adequately funded community colleges are essential access points to higher education for low-income, Latino/a students. Programs specially designed to subsidize economically and socially disadvantaged students (such as EOPS)
also provide secondary access points, since other potentially prohibitive costs are incurred beyond enrollment in the educational process. As state subsidized institutions with a large low-income student population, community colleges and needs-based programs like EOPS sustain a significant portion of the student population. Tertiary access takes the form of the community college providing an affordable pathway to transfer to the university. A fourth and final point of access, is the intangible—yet indispensible—role that moral support and guidance play in providing students with assistance and experience navigating through a process that is both challenging and complicated. In essence, community colleges and programs like EOPS are the only access point to higher education for many low-income Latino/a students, and are socially and economically constructed as a means to overcome the legacy of historical (and on-going) inequities embedded in higher education. In practice, budget cuts are unraveling this project. This is done through overall institutional down-sizing, reductions in material support, and the closing of pathways to transfer and completion.

Budget cuts, even seemingly minor ones, can shut out whole groups of students in a systematic way; peeling away whole layers at the bottom of the socioeconomic structure of society. Because of existing inequities based on race and class, budget cuts in equity and needs-based programs are having a disruptive impact on low-income and Latino/a student persistence, since they are more dependent on these resources to sustain and persist in their education. For community colleges to function as entry points for current and future low-income, Latino/a students, and to ensure support is maintained through to the completion of educational goals, budget cuts will need to cease and full-funding restored and increased.
The only other option is to abandon the pretense of community colleges as being “open access,” and move towards a restrictive, market-based, competitive model based on prequalifications and ability to pay. This would signal the end of universal access to higher education for the most economically disadvantaged and community colleges would change in their fundamental nature. This model would likely be opposed by most students, faculty, staff, and administrators, since it contradicts the institutional culture that guides current practice. Therefore, the only option is to oppose and resist budget cut implementation and to advocate for alternative funding models that preempt the need for budget cuts. Resistance to budget cuts will need to take place at the institutional level and at the state level.

Any challenge to the budget cut trend will require a paradigm shift that re-emphasizes the importance of colleges and programs designed to overcome historical and institutional inequities based on race and class discrimination. It will necessitate the rejuvenation of the principle of open access and state-support as it is articulated in the original intention of the California Master Plan for Education. To realize this, students, faculty, staff, and administrators will need to take more self-advocatory roles at all levels of the institution, as well as take coordinated actions at the state level, since budgets are determined in through the legislative process.

Since budget cuts are detrimental to job security for administrators, faculty, and staff; and since students are facing the possibility of being displaced from education, their opposition and resistance to budget cuts will take various forms based on their positions within the institution. Since administrators are under more direct pressure from the state legislature and education bureaucracy to conform their local institutions to statewide and
national trends, their forms of resistance will likely be limited to symbolic actions and statements.

For faculty and staff, opposition will most likely be expressed through the activities of the Academic and Classified Senates, budget committees, and collective bargaining units. Through these points of negotiation, faculty and staff can exert some power and influence to maintain job security and optimal standards for working conditions in the face of budget cuts; effectively forming firewalls within the institution. Institutional opposition can also take the form of what Levin (2008) refers to as being a “street-level bureaucrat.” This refers to small actions that individual administrators, faculty, and staff can do to work against prohibitive policies (such as budget cuts) to provide support for marginalized students at the point of individual contact.

Even though students have some representation within campus shared governance bodies (according to California Assembly Bill 1725) and can participate in student government, in practice they have the least amount of organizational and decision-making power within the institutions of higher education. Therefore, their opposition and resistance to budget cuts will be likely expressed through reactive protest to the implementation of budget cuts and other forms of demonstrated opposition and discontent.

Since budget cuts result from diminished funding allocation that occurs at the state level, resistance to budget cuts will also have to take on larger dimensions to change the current discourse and practice. Broad coalitions comprised of organizational bodies representing students, faculty, staff, and administration (and linked to others in the public sector facing budget cuts) will need to coordinate actions and activities that exert pressure
on policy-makers at the state level in order to seek alternative funding models to fully fund public education. This can take the form of political lobbying, but will also need to transcend the limitations of this approach, since other more financially powerful interest groups aligned with the current budgetary trends dominate this arena.

Rallies, protests, strikes, and other large, public acts of opposition have the potential to generate broad public support and foster a deeper social opposition to the detrimental impacts of state-led budget cuts. If sustained over a period of time, these public forms of opposition can yield a critical mass that shifts the balance of power and changes the discourse and political outcomes. An example of this approach was the sustained protest movement against the budget policies of the Wisconsin State Governor and Republican legislative majority passed late in the winter of 2010-2011.

The other implications for practice derive from the themes of Devaluation of Education and Discrimination. Both themes reflect student and staff perceptions that class and race bias influences how budget cuts are determined and implemented and how they affect low-income, students of color. An implication for practice is that institutional racism and discrimination are re-emerging in a new form: budget cuts. The particular way that budget cuts are targeting affirmative action programs are contemporary manifestations of a longer political trend that seeks to undermine efforts to address historical inequities, thereby re-institutionalizing them.

By understanding that budget cuts are not race and class neutral, administrators, faculty, staff, and students can re-contextualize them on historical and ethical grounds and use a civil rights framework as a means to oppose them. Furthermore, opposition to budget cuts can revitalize efforts to expand affirmative action programs and ensure the
continuity of the concept of open access at a time when there is increasing enrollment of racially and socioeconomically disadvantaged students in the community college system. This could also change the discourse of budget cuts, giving a broader appreciation for the accomplishments of the Civil Rights movement and drive contemporary efforts to re-initiate it in the context of access to higher education. Furthermore, it could inspire a new generation to re-evaluate the strategy and tactics of the Civil Rights Movement in order to determine their applicability to the current situation.

**Implications for Future Research**

While the scope of this research project is limited to the perceptions of low-income, Latino/a students at time of budget cuts in the community college system, the repercussive changes being wrought by budget cuts in higher education warrants further research. Future research could expand on the perception of budgets cuts by exploring the experiences of other ethnic groups as well as faculty members, staff, and administrators. This could be done to give a fuller picture of the experience of budget cuts. Furthermore, the research could be expanded to study the experiences and perceptions of students who actually dropped out of school at a time of budget cuts to compare with those that persisted.

Future research could also explore how budget cuts are determined and implemented. This could expand upon the applicability and potential usefulness of the Theory of Academic Capitalism as it pertains to budget cuts. This could be done in order to understand the philosophical beliefs that inform the thinking and the decision-making processes associated with the planning of budget cuts and resource allocation at the very point of conception and production.
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Appendix A

Student Interview Protocol

Directions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The interview will take about one and a half hours. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and completely confidential. Your answers will IN NO WAY affect your study at the college or any services you receive from the EOPS. Are you still willing to do the interview? Thank you. If there are any questions you do NOT wish to answer, please let me know and I will go on to the next question. Do you have any questions for me?

I would like to begin by asking you some questions about your experience at Frontier College:

1. How long have you been enrolled in the EOPS program?
2. What has been your experience as a participant in the EOPS program?
3. Do you have a job?
4. What has been your experience as an EOPS student at Frontier College at a time of education budget cuts?
5. Has your experience as a student changed in any way as a result of education budget cuts?
6. If there has been an impact, what has changed and how has this affected you?
7. Why do you think the education budget is being reduced in California?
8. Why do you think EOPS funding is being reduced in California?
9. Who do you think is responsible for the budget cuts?

10. How do you think reductions in the state education budget affect other students?

11. How do you think budget cuts affect your family?

12. How do you think reductions in the state education budget influence other participants in the EOPS program?

13. If budget cuts continue, how do you think this will affect your education?

14. Regarding your education, where do you see yourself a year from now?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the subject?

Now, I have some questions about you:

Demographic Information Sheet

Appendix B

Interview Protocol for EOPS Staff

Directions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The interview will take about one and a half hours. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and completely confidential and will have no impact on your position working for the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) program. Are you still willing to do the interview? Thank you. If there are any questions you do NOT wish to answer, please let me know and I will go on to the next question. Do you have any questions for me? I would like to begin by asking you some questions about your experience as a staff member in the EOPS program at Frontier College:

1. What kind of impact has the EOPS program had on the educational experience of students?

2. What has been your experience as an EOPS staff member at a time of budget cuts within the EOPS program?

3. What has been your experience as an EOPS staff member at a time of budget cuts within the community college system as whole?

4. In your view, what has been the experience of EOPS students at a time of education budget cuts within the EOPS program?

5. In your view, what has been the experience of EOPS students at a time of budget cuts within in the community college system as a whole?

6. If budget cuts continue, how do you think this will affect EOPS students in the future?

7. Why do you think the education budget is being cut in California?
8. Why do you think EOPS funding is being cut in California?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the subject?