

“TO JUST REACH FARTHER”: COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AND
CREDIBILITY—EMPOWERING MARGINALIZED YOUTH WITH 21st CENTURY
SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This participatory action research examines students’ perceptions of how intentionally taught 21st century skills have transformed their lives. Personal Development Education (PDE) encompasses interpersonal and interaction skills that are required for students to function and succeed in global-oriented 21st century colleges and careers. Emergent research indicates that all students need to be prepared for *both* college and career, and PDE is essential in both settings. PDE is particularly critical for first-generation college-educated students. Since these students are academic pioneers in their families’ quest for formal education and professional opportunity, such skills are essential. The study focused on students’ perceptions of how PDE influenced their ability to communicate more effectively and work collaboratively with a range of peers and others. Through a series of interviews and focus groups, the researcher built on previously established, classroom-based relationships to engage students in further examination of their perceptions of PDE. The researcher and students co-constructed a deeper understanding about the role of PDE: Students now see themselves as more credible and capable of moving fluidly between their home, communities and the larger world. The main findings from the study are that communication is the gateway skill to the rest of the 21st century

skills, and participants perceive code-switching (the ability to change language depending on the audience) as an added-value skill for effective communication; participants appreciate the art of collaboration, recognize the challenges and successes inherent in people-management and interpersonal relationships, and believe their credibility is increased as an outcome of learning effective communication techniques. This seminal study reveals a high level of student sophistication on the value of soft skills and offers educators a new understanding about the power of PDE. A key finding of this study is that teacher training programs be strengthened by embedding PDE. New teachers would learn practical implementation of behavioral 21st century competencies for both academic content and classroom management.

Keywords: employability skills, personal development education, hard skills, soft skills, 21st century skills, 21st century behavioral competencies, scan skills, globalization, and cultural capital.

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- ▶ My District

Dedication

To Katie and all those who would otherwise be voiceless

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

– (Nelson Mandela)

Educational philosophers and modern-day educators continue to debate the purposes of secondary education, while dropout statistics indicate that the number of youths of color that fail to complete high school is considerably higher than the number of white students who drop out (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Researchers who study the failure of formal schooling to serve immigrant and poor students cite a number of reasons for poor performance and attrition, including lack of student engagement, high absenteeism, boredom, lack of relevancy, and lack of cultural capital (Rumberger & Lim 2008: *Career & Technical Education State Report*, 2008). Pierre Bourdieu, the sociologist (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), was credited with establishing the theory of cultural capital. He surmised that American schools were structured and administered to maintain the status quo that favors the middle class and did not intend to address the educational needs of the lower strata of our society. Inequitable student outcomes and a growing population of under- or mis-educated adults are predictable as long as our PK-12 education retains its current structure.

One way to mitigate patterns of mis-education is through personal development education, an essential dimension of 21st century education designed to prepare lower income and immigrant students to succeed in college and careers. This study examined the effects of personal developmental education on students’ perceptions of growth with particular focus on and attention to potential benefits for socio-economically

disadvantaged subgroups (SED). The study offers a more pragmatic approach to teaching and learning framework that embeds career education in the school system, and it identifies factors that strengthen student career development (California Department of Education CDE, 2006). This study sought to document the role of Personal Development Education (PDE) through students' perceptions in strengthening 21st century behavioral skill development, and to report on whether such an education gives students multi-directional skills to navigate appropriately and successfully both in school and in their careers. The theory is that these 21st century skills, particularly collaboration and communication, could provide students with code-switching strategies less common in first-generation college attending families. Students could use these strategies to negotiate and navigate power relationships. The context of this study is a career and technical education program that specifically includes PDE as a framework within which educational transformation for first-generation college attending students can take place.

For generations, standardized test scores have been used to measure educational success, often described as academic achievement. While evidence that such data measures learning is flawed, politicians continue to describe lack of minority student success within standardized testing data as the measure for the achievement gap, reinforcing the belief that test scores are true measures of academic, and therefore social, success. Cultural capital, understanding the hidden curriculum of knowledge generated by the white dominant class and having the ability to navigate across class lines, is essential to student success in mainstream schools. Our present school system was developed over decades with white, Anglo-Saxon, Christian, heterosexual males representing the dominant class, and it has used their values, knowledge, and cultural capital to create our present day school system. This dissertation contends that Career and Technical Education (CTE) and in particular, PDE, can provide students with another set

of navigational skills to negotiate the cultural capital assets of the dominant class less familiar to Socio-Economically Disadvantaged (SED) populations and can be utilized for success both in college and careers.

Technical skills for the marketplace and the less obvious 21st century skills are essential for immigrant and first-generation college or post-secondary students. With these skills, working class and poor students will attain the capacity to move more fluidly between their communities and the mainstream of education and work. The strong community skills of linguistic and cultural knowledge are gifts that these young people and mid-career changers bring to the workplace (Molinsky, 2007). Attention to the challenges of entry into another class and work setting may allow a generation to disrupt the status quo, benefit directly from formal education, and lead to more equitable student outcomes in America (Bourdieu 1977; Symonds, Schwartz & Ferguson, 2011).

Career and Technical Education

According to the California Department of Education, The CTE Plan states: If you took 100 incoming 9th graders, only 66 graduate high school. Out of those 66 only 46 go on to some form of post-secondary education; out of those 40 only 11-18 go on to achieve their four year degree. (CDE, 2006, p. 40)

This staggering statistic tells us that the overall dropout rate in California is 33% and that only 11–18% of students actually completes a four-year college degree. Why do so many students leave the school system under- or mis-educated? Many of those who earn a diploma are not prepared for the world of work, a moral and economic crisis both in California and across the nation. In California, “In 2004, nearly three-fourths of all high school dropouts did not have jobs” (*CTE State Plan*, 2008, p. 40). What can educators do to educate all children properly? The need for educational reform has never been more compelling than it is now, especially for lower socio-economic populations.

According to Odis Johnson (2008), “The number of concentrated poverty more than doubled in recent decades as demand-side changes in the economic structure of our large cities altered the landscape of opportunity” (p. 227). The CTE State Plan (2008), California’s blueprint for creating a strong and vibrant Career and Technical Education plan within the public school system, states that CTE can keep students in school because it offers a *wide array* of learning experiences and *what* the student learns is relevant to their life after school (p. 38). Because of rapid changes in technology and a globalized work force, CTE has been reformed from earlier approaches to a vocational education system. CTE offers a very rigorous academic curriculum addressing *all* careers from lawyers to bio-technicians to receptionists. My premise is that Career and Technical Education is one avenue to improve access and equity in education to those who are currently under-served. Borrowing Van Jones’ (2008) concept that one solution could solve a multitude of problems within economically disadvantaged groups, educators could develop and redesign our educational system to include *all* students in an education that allows them access to satisfying and financially viable career outcomes.

Providing PDE to students in lower socio-economic subgroups is a critical dimension of equitable education. According to Johnson (2008), “those born into economically advantaged families receive through rearing the instruments needed to appropriate the knowledge transmitted in schools and those lacking capital and the cultivation of the requisite cultural tools unfortunately depend on schools to cultivate these dispositions” (p. 231). Educators can disrupt past practices of educational and workplace exclusion by recognizing the role of cultural capital in allowing access to the middle class. “Proponents of neoclassical human capital perspectives hold that individuals who possess a higher level of achieved status receive better paying jobs because their achievements—signal—to employers that they are more able and therefore

potentially more productive” (Sakura-Lemessy, Carter-Tellison, & Sakura-Lemessy, 2009, p. 408).

Strong cultural bias in schools and the workplace continues to limit access, even to entry-level positions. Students use code-switching to achieve success in mainstream school environments. Code-switching is the ability to use different languages for different purposes. Even as educators gain sensitivity to students and young people who must code-switch (Molinsky, 2007), educators must continue to seek ways to support students’ capacity to move into and out of mainstream educational settings and the workplace. Formal education about class and ethnic differences in behavior and language norms can be interpreted as “hegemonic,” that is, creating conditions at school and in the workplace that clearly oppress minority individuals’ culture and rights. Respectful acknowledgement of multiple cultures and ethnicities in schooling and in workforce development allows educators to work with and across minority communities. For example, educators must recognize the loss of community and culture experienced by many first-generation students as they enter mainstream education.

One way educators can provide greater opportunities for historically underserved groups is by *not* reproducing barriers to access that reflect divergent race, class, and gender patterns. Some educators may need diversity training to attain mutual respect of diverse cultures and appreciate the contributions of all cultures to depth and richness in the classroom and the world of work. Taking action on greater understanding through explicit curriculum, however, would be the best outcome.

21st century Skills

For this study within CTE, I focused on “21st century skills” for achieving success both in school and career. PDE is very broad, and the “skills” that fall into this education vary. The buzzword is “soft skills,” meaning the skills that do not fall into the technical

domain. They are called “SCAN skills” (SCANS 1991, p. 5) by the U.S. Department of Labor (so named from the late 20th-century Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (United States Department of Labor, Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills—SCANS 1991 p. 5), “professional skills” by the American Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET Schuman, Besterfield-Sacre, & McGourty, 2005), “Equipped for the Future – EFF Skills,” (Equipped for the Future 2009 p. 3), and “21st century skills” (overview page) by the organization called Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2003), or, as I prefer, “achievement skills.”

For the purpose of this study I focused on 21st century achievement skills, primarily communication and collaboration, as well as critical thinking, courage, and creativity. However these skills are characterized, they fall under the domain of PDE and are essential to the success of students, particularly those who are first generation high school or post-secondary students. Within the 21st century context known as the information age with rapid-fire technological advances, PDE is essential for student learning and achievement, both in school and the world of work. I now address some of the challenges providing this type of education in traditional or conventional school settings.

Statement of the Problem

CTE teaches knowledge and valuable skills to all students, regardless of their post-high school plans. Rapid changes in our global world influenced the development of Common Core State Standards (California Department of Education [CDE], 2012), emphasizing the need for all students to be prepared for both college and career. As of this writing, the definition of “college and career readiness” is being defined by policy-makers at the California Department of Education and Federal level, according to Dr. Patrick Ainsworth, Assistant Superintendent of the Secondary Career and Adult Learning

Division, California Department of Education (personal communication, February 2012). The Common Core State Standards and curriculum are rich in both hard skills as well as soft skills. Hard skills are defined as industry-specific skills enabling the student to acquire the rigorous technical training needed to perform specific job duties. Soft skills are defined as a cluster of personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, friendliness and optimism (Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007). According to Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2003), these soft skills were defined as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Other definitions include communication skills, people skills, teamwork skills, demeanor, motivation, flexibility, initiative, work attitudes, and effort (Moss & Tilly, 1995). As discussed earlier, mainstream workforce behaviors are based on historically white, Anglo-Saxon, male norms, such as male dominance in the workplace, that even educated individuals from outside this group struggle to understand (Smith, 2009). Given the racial, classist, and gendered nature of these structures, those seeking workforce opportunities will be served by more fully understanding them.

However these interpersonal skills are defined or named, the current workforce development literature states they are now recognized as necessary because of increasing demand for a broader skills set—especially among technical professionals—due to increasing global competition, and the search for new ways to increase productivity and profit (Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007). Research shows that when employees have had personal development education, companies gain a marketable edge in competition. Given that researchers have identified the critical role of personal development education, educators must explicitly teach these skills and evaluate whether and to what degree students have attained them. This study examined students' perceptions of the influence

of personal development education, particularly 21st century skills, with attention to those from socio-economically disadvantaged subgroups (Moss & Tilly, 1996).

The Changing Global Workplace

According to Thomas Friedman (2005), we are currently in an era called “Globalization 3.0.” (p.10). Due to rapid advances in technology, this era is unique because of the newfound power of individuals to collaborate and compete globally. Friedman has claimed that the power of the individual to work and survive by competing globally is enormous, and now the individual is required to work both alone and on a team performing complex tasks as knowledge workers (p. 10). Americans will do well *if* we produce knowledge workers who create idea-based goods and can connect “knowledge pools” (p.10) all around the world. This work, then, demands high-tech skills (hard skills) as well as teaming, collaboration, and communication (soft skills).

A team of researchers studying engineering education suggested that globalization has been driving changes in our economy and therefore our educational practices (Schuman, Besterfield-Sacre, & McGourty, 2005, p. 43). They identified four reasons for these changes: fast-paced information technology changes, corporate downsizing, outsourcing, and the new global work environment. Because of the new world economy and a growing group of overseas trained professionals willing to work for much less than the American workforce, the American educational system must not only provide hard skills but also value-added 21st century skills to justify a higher wage. To stay globally competitive, our work force must be excellent in both.

As the department chair of a California Partnership Academy, I discovered a need to teach these skills to the students from a socio-economic disadvantaged sub-group. After a field trip to Genentech, Bio Tech Company in the Bay Area, my colleagues and I noticed how inappropriate the students’ behaviors were. After some 21st century skill

instruction, the Academy team experienced a dramatic improvement in their overall communication, demeanor, teaming, and collaboration within a very short time period. During the summer of 2008, I created an informal survey where I asked 13 companies on the Peninsula what skills were lacking in new hires. They responded collectively and all ranked lack of 21st century skills as the number-one deficit in new employees.

Research has indicated that PDE increases personal productivity, collaboration and synergy at the workplace (Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007). Therefore, how do we reform education to embed PDE into the curriculum? Do we embed it in the academic curriculum or solely in CTE courses? How do we quantify these hard to define skills? This work is timely in helping to create the *new* work force in our globalized, high-tech, knowledge based world. Providing achievement skills to economically disadvantaged groups means access to successful employment, and they can contribute to satisfying, productive lives.

California recently adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for both English and Math. CCSS are designed to prepare every student for success in college *and* the workforce. *College is not a career*, and we need to be vigilant in our awareness of each student's life path. These new standards are designed to ensure that students can compete globally in the new world order. By starting at an early age, all students have opportunities to learn sophisticated and current reading, writing, *speaking*, and *listening* skills, and as soft-skills are mentioned in the CCSS making this work timely:

Including but not limited to skills necessary for formal presentations, the Speaking and Listening standards require students to develop a range of broadly used oral communication and interpersonal skills. Students must learn to work together, express and listen carefully to ideas, integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources, evaluate what they hear, use media and

visual displays strategically to help achieve communicative purposes, and adapt speech to context and task. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012, p. 8)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate students' perceptions of the value of 21st Century skills in all areas of their lives. I examined students' perceptions of PDE within a 21st century context, particularly in the areas of collaboration, critical thinking, communication, courage, and creativity. Some research indicates that these skills are necessary for the synergistic outcomes needed for success both in college and career. The perceptions about PDE came directly from the students, documenting their stories and experiences. Participants for this study were selected from socio-economically disadvantaged populations, with whom I addressed the three main research questions:

1. What changes have students experienced with 21st century competencies, namely communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, or courage?
2. How have these changes influenced the students' personal, family, school, and/or community life?
3. How have the students comprehended, used realistically, and incorporated these skills into actual work habits?

My hypothesis is that the education system can, indeed, strengthen cultural capital, held previously by only the dominant class, for all students. Bourdieu's theory explained that cultural capital is a human asset that should be viewed as a resource to generate cultural profits (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Twenty-first-century skills within a curriculum enrich cultural capital knowledge and intellectual/social properties. A curriculum that contains 21st century skills can be used with underserved populations ensuring success in both a school setting and later on in the world of work. Such skills enable young people to navigate and code-switch in all avenues of life. This study

suggests that there is a viable and feasible delivery system to disrupt the status quo that allows only one-fifth of our students to successfully graduate college with a four-year degree (CDE, 2006). This type of curriculum can address the educational needs of all our students, especially within educationally disadvantaged populations, thereby ensuring a more equitable educational system and equitable workforce.

Theoretical Base

This is my theory of change: socio-economically disadvantaged (SED) students must be provided career and technical education (CTE) that integrates technical skills and personal development. Then, they must be mentored in ways that encourage them to articulate the implementation of those skills in the workplace. If students articulate their personal learning experiences with 21st century skills, members of the educational community will recognize the validity of teaching 21st century skills. Educational leaders would be compelled to embed such skills and knowledge into curriculum to prepare students for success in both college and in their careers. The learning outcome would provide marginalized students greater access to the dominant culture, allowing them to influence it from the inside and to prosper economically in the process. My theory is based on several other theories, which I will discuss below.

The foundation of my theory is Pierre Bourdieu's theory, found in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977). Bourdieu stated that parents teach their children knowledge and skills from birth that provides an advantage for them in the current educational system. In working with socio-economic disadvantaged populations for many years, I have observed the dominant cultural capital deficits that my students brought to school and the hardships that they encountered trying to succeed in the current educational system. I have adopted Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital as educational or intellectual assets that promote social mobility, and therefore success, both

in school and later in life. “These pedagogic actions always tend to reproduce the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these groups or classes, thereby contributing to the reproduction of the social structure” (Bourdieu 1977, p. 11).

Since the American school system was developed by the dominant culture – white, European-descent males – their organization and norms specifically benefit children who develop their Euro-centric cultural capital from birth. In effect, these children are advantaged before they enter school. This is one reason why the educational system can be navigated well by some and remains less accessible to others. I contend that schools are designed to be both a mirror of and a window to social, cultural status and ultimately economic status, yet students not afforded dominant cultural capital, reflecting the dominant type of knowledge and experience, are forever disadvantaged within our current school system. Whittaker (2006) informed us that schools make very little attempt to “create multiple contexts that socialize students to the behaviors that are necessary for them to be achievers” (p. 15). Educators need training, guidance, and skill sets embedded in their pedagogical practice that can help them disrupt the social hierarchy that limits access for SED populations by creating more equitable learning outcomes for *all* students, making it easier for marginalized students to navigate through these power structures.

Because cultural and class traits are taught in the home, such as valuing theatre or travel, these traits are transmitted to the young almost invisibly. Only when all the children start school are perceived inequities and disadvantages of children from an SED background revealed. Bourdieu’s theory addressed how structures and institutions play a major role in producing this inequality by favoring the student that comes to the institution with an enriched background. Students with cultural capital assets as defined by the dominant class are being taught how to navigate the system long before they set

foot into the classroom. Those without such instruction are disadvantaged in mainstream schooling and the pattern of reproducing inequality and maintaining the status quo continues (Bourdieu, 1977; Whittaker, 2006). Bourdieu's theories provided me with insight, as I, too, have worked hard to raise myself out of my working-class status. As a single mother of a handicapped child, I needed ambition, motivation and resourcefulness to build cultural capital. I connect to his teachings and they guide and shape my research.

Educational reform seems to move forward at a glacial pace, but the world has dramatically changed at a very rapid rate due to advances in technology contributing to the new globalization. What does the term globalization actually mean? According to Merriam-Webster (2011), "globalization is marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets," which make economic issues the driving force behind globalization. If that is true, then our educational system must respond by preparing students for the workforce. I contend that our current system is not addressing these changes and is in need of urgent reform. According to Trilling & Fadel's (2009) *21st Century Skills: Learning for Our Life in Our Times*, the world has undergone monumental shifts in recent decades. They noted widespread advances in technology and communications, booming economic developments, increased global competition, and escalation of global challenges from financial meltdowns to global warming. If the authors are correct, then how can educators respond to needs and requirements of our students in a changing world? If educators had this awareness and power to facilitate change without bureaucratic interference of a rapidly, changing globalized world, then they would demand curriculum that meets the 21st century needs of students.

Our antiquated educational system is on the precipice of a new frontier. The timing is right to change and disrupt the system in order to produce successful, equitable student outcomes. In *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two*

Biggest Problems, Van Jones (2008) shared his vision to re-create the middle-class that has been historically marginalized. His idea is very practical and simple: Retrain under-represented groups to work in the new Green Collar job market. The simplicity and the practicality raise several questions: Why can't we apply this type of practicality to modernize our antiquated educational systems? Why can't we put our thinking, our time, and our energy into creating new educational systems that adapt to 21st century thinking and learning?

The literature has showed that PDE is critical to the success of all students, particularly to socio-economically disadvantaged (SED) populations. Twenty-first century skills could be embedded into academic curriculum early on, so students receive an education aligned with their needs. This type of education can teach first-generation college attending students the skills not taught previously, since these students are often not children from upper income families with access to family and school support structures. Researchers have stated, “. . . [C]hildren from upper-income families have access to family and schools support structures that assist them in making right choices, managing the risks of upward mobility, and crafting life trajectories” (Lakes, 2008, p. 432). I envision PDE as a way of disrupting patterns of exclusion of SED students in the current school system and a means to give these students authentic knowledge and skills to further their success in school and, ultimately, the world of work. In particular, the research focused on student perceptions of collaboration and communication as the primary focus with creativity, courage and critical thinking-skills as the secondary focus (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007), as the five main skills needed for a 21st century education. I sought to capture the transformative quality of this type of education that students need to further themselves on their quest for self-sufficiency and achievement in school and work.

Cultural Challenges of Embracing Personal Development Education

Although PDE is perceived as a success strategy, it must be noted that acquiring the dominant culture's cultural capital may cause the loss of the students' own cultural and/or racial identity. According to researchers "acting white" is a real phenomenon defined as "blacks who use language or ways of speaking displaying attitudes, behaviors, or preferences; or engage in activities considered to be white cultural norms" (Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005, p. 583). The risk of this identity loss is great and, therefore, a balance of cultural awareness and cultural validity must be offered to students, particularly those minority or SED subgroups. It is essential that PDE allows the students to understand that the skills are strategies to negotiate mainstream society and power relationships. A respectful approach should stress that PDE is not intended to replace their own culture but rather to add to their skills set, thus increasing their choices and decisions in their own lives. Giving students more choices in their navigational skills to ensure success both in their college and career choices is one way of empowering the students.

Significance of the Study for Social Justice

According to the principles and philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., social justice paralleled economic justice (Carson, 1998). In keeping with the Dr. King's principles, if we are to create an equitable school system, we must acknowledge economic justice as well as social justice. Schools are a reflection of the society in which they reside. Economic forces drive our educational system, and thus our social justice system. Our school system is in urgent need of an overhaul to effectively address world changes and meet the needs of all students in a 21st century context. One such change appears as global competition as researched in workforce development literature. "Consequently, a growing number of less developed countries with lower wages and an

abundance of young intellectual capital are competing for work that less than four years ago was performed by highly paid U.S. professionals” (Schuman, Besterfield-Sacre, & McGourty, 2005, p. 43). This clearly defines the effects of globalization, particularly for the United States’ workforce and its educational system. We are indeed living through a technological revolution—but our school systems are lagging behind.

It is not sufficient for our schools to educate students academically without accompanying cross-cultural skills, so it is imperative that we incorporate 21st century skills into the curriculum to keep all students globally competitive. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2003) clearly identified missing elements in educational institutions. It recommends that educators teach core content, life and career skills, innovation and creativity, and information and communication technology to prepare students to meet the current demands of the globalized world. According to Schuman et al. (2005), the four trends of our globalized world are changes in a fragile world economy, professional mobility, communication technology, and a growing awareness of a global social imperative. The authors describe a global social imperative as a growing social/global consciousness. How does our current educational system prepare our students for these challenges and changes? Twenty-first-century skills are necessary skills critical for success in a globalized economy and workplace. For students from socio-economic disadvantaged subgroups, 21st century skills are critical because they empower students with access to career opportunities historically not afforded them.

The study was conducted within a San Francisco Bay Area school district. According to the Education Data Partnership Website (2011), 36.3% of the total student population of this district was eligible to receive free or reduced lunches. Over one-third of the students within this district are from socio-economically disadvantaged SED subgroups, and they have a very high potential for dropping out of school (p. 3).

The context of the study is a program that was designed to provide both academic and personal skills for this population, called Business United in Investing, Lending, and Developing, or BUILD. This is an intervention program targeting SED subgroups, beginning in the 9th grade teaching entrepreneurialism. In grades 10th through 12th it then becomes an after-school program teaching entrepreneurial and 21st century skills as well as academic tutorial instruction with a strong college focus. Therefore, this study addressed one approach to empowering current SED students with tools to achieve their personal, educational, and professional goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined students' perceptions of their personal development within a curriculum that integrates academic and personal skills. A program like BUILD seeks to provide a valuable, fresh, and innovative way of meeting the realistic educational needs of all students, particularly students from SED populations. In the 21st century, all students must have some form of post-secondary education to obtain satisfying employment that pays livable wages. This study sought to reveal the feasibility of educating students by empowering them with 21st century skills education. These skills are considered essential in today's workforce. Empowering students with a new language and fluency in appropriate behavior for their own personal success and achievement is timely due to all the global changes and forces at work. Twenty-first century skills education is relevant for *all* students to succeed both in a college setting and in the workplace. According to Mitchell, Skinner, and White, "employers rate soft skills highest in importance for entry-level success in the workplace" (2010, p. 44). As one employer pointed out, "We hire them for their hard skills and fire them for their soft skills" (Workshop Lecture, November 2005). Educators need to teach 21st century skills to all students, but particularly to those students in socio-economic disadvantaged

communities. According to Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999), children from working-or-lower class homes were less likely to have familiarity with educational institutions and failed academically (p. 159). Therefore, if parents are not providing their children with cultural capital common in economically advantaged homes, the responsibility falls on the state to provide this learning if education truly has equity as its core mission. By providing personal development curriculum to children and young people, we can empower *all* students with knowledge and marketable skills for their self-sufficiency, well-being, and advancement in life. This quest for equity compelled my study: Can we create real educational possibilities for *all*, thereby disrupting the status quo? Let us reform education with a fresh awareness of the urgency for addressing the varied needs of all our students in a 21st century globalized world. Researchers state that “Educational leaders have strayed far from their historic role in shaping ethical citizens who thereby serve the public trust, ensuring democratic practice in the affairs of state” (Lakes, 2009, p. 432). Let us reform education in a more equitable sense and acknowledge the needs of *all* students by paying attention to them as future leaders in a global village with large potential for greatness.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Each child is a unique person, with unique needs, and the purpose of the educational system of this state is to enable each child to develop all of his or her own potential.”

—Ed Code 33080 (Thomson Reuters/West 2009 p. 33102)

The following literature provides a foundation for this study and expresses the urgent necessity for educational reform to take place. First, from an historical viewpoint, I have explored concepts of the beginnings of the working middle class in America. Next is a brief overview of the history of vocational education in this country followed by information about the new system of Career and Technical Education (CTE) in response to the changing globalized world. The next section discusses literature on CTE as a sustainable reform movement, emphasizing literature defining Personal Development Education (PDE) and discussing typologies and their usefulness in the 21st century. The next section focuses on entrepreneurialism as an innovative way of approaching a new educational delivery system. I close with a discussion about cultural capital, reproduction of an antiquated educational system, and opportunities to reform education in a just and equitable manner.

Background

Laguardia and Pearl’s (2009) *Necessary Educational Reform for the 21st Century: The Future of Public Schools in our Democracy* served as the philosophical backbone of purpose for this study. Their position is that the purpose of education is to sustain a society with a populace educated to govern itself. Reforming our educational system requires taking a new look at base norms, as we are now living in the 21st century and

trying to create educational institutions that are equitable and relevant for all students. Laguardia and Pearl (2009) suggested that it takes diligence and effort to sustain a democracy, and educational leaders need to be reminded of this goal. Democracy is an ideal that is never fully achieved but must be diligently cared for, worked toward, taught about, nurtured, and attended. The authors quoted James Madison (1822), “And as a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives” (p. 353). Thus, the importance of a free public education is necessary in order to have a literate, self-governing populace.

The wisdom of Benjamin Franklin (Isaacson, 2003) is relevant as he was a practical visionary, stressing the importance of a strong, working middle class, using his vision to help create one. He believed that public education should focus on learning that was not intended to just glorify God but, “an inclination joined with an ability to serve mankind, one’s country, friends, and family” (Isaacson, 2003, p. 147). In Franklin’s time, the working middle class meant only white, European, Christian men. But in reading Franklin with an open mind in a 21st century context, educators can apply some of this wisdom to educator reform efforts. In the 21st century, the education system has the opportunity to create an *inclusive* middle class with people of color, women, the disabled, gender-differenced groups, and lower socio-economic subgroups, by affording them an opportunity to access livable wage careers. Franklin believed that the power of ordinary citizens doing meaningful work would contribute to their independent living and a strong working middle class. His unwavering belief in this power was the foundation of this new, emerging middle class. As Isaacson noted, “Instinctively more comfortable with democracy than were his fellow followers, . . . he had faith in the wisdom of the common man and felt that a new nation would draw its strength from what he called ‘the middling people’” (2003, p. 3).

Our country was birthed in response to oppression. Franklin believed new Americans could escape the oppression of the European monarchy by creating a democracy in which citizens could work in gainful employment. Twenty-first century thinkers and educational reformers need to revisit Franklin's practical wisdom that a successful democracy necessitates a large working middle class. This stance would invigorate a school reform movement and compel useful, practical, and equitable outcomes for *all* students. We need not reinvent the wheel, as Franklin's pragmatic genius only requires recognition and re-application for our new high-tech, globalized world. This is the moment in our history in which underrepresented groups with little access into the middle class can now gain entry only if our educational institutions can transform curriculum with 21st century awareness.

According to Valenzuela (2000), the purpose of education was not just about content but also the education of the whole person: "Within this framework, a well-educated person knows how to live in the world as a respectful, social, and caring human being, observing of others' dignity" (p. 525). This thinking is directly focused on the individual student as a person rather than an object to be shaped into a mold. Valenzuela explained that, from a Mexican cultural perspective, high school students were schooled rather than educated. A more holistic approach to education would logically follow in which we teach to the student as an individual with individual skill sets, talents, dreams and goals. Therefore, education needs to be separated by three equal domains. Connect Ed (2011); for example, has a conceptual framework identifying the domains as Academic, Career, and 21st century domains. I contend that effective education requires restructuring into three equal domains for educating the student as an individual and not as an object.

A Brief History of Vocational Education in America

Benjamin Franklin's interest in creating an educational system included a practical system for passing on the knowledge and skills necessary to create a new working middle class. He envisioned a society in which everyone had a purpose and worked hard at his particular job, thereby contributing to society in a useful and productive fashion. His academy opened in 1751 as the first nonsectarian college in America—later it came to be known as the University of Pennsylvania (Isaacson, 2003, p. 147). He intended the students to be taught “everything useful and everything ornamental related to the professions for which they were training” (p. 26). His ideas were not accepted at the time because most of his trustees were wealthy Anglicans with a more classical notion about education, but Franklin had an influence on future thinking that created a publicly supported educational system for the new nation.

Less than a century later, around 1820, tax-supported schools began cropping up as more citizens and legislators realized the need for formal educational institutions. This need led to rounds of arguments and debates over public, tax-supported schools. The pro-public sides argued that some education could prevent pauperism and crime, reduce poverty and distress, and could help prevent class differentiation for the new Republic. The arguments against tax-supported education included these reasons: It might educate people out of their station in society, those having no children should not be taxed, and education was designed purely for the leisure class (Barlow, 1976).

Some of the same philosophical viewpoints still stand today. Today, as then, people who have believed in Career and Technical Education (CTE) as part of an educational system serving all its citizens tend to view public education's role in a more practical light. Opponents of Career and Technical Education argue that public education's role is to liberate the mind, not the hand, by creating schools for people to

think, not necessarily to do. The debate stays current because our educational system is publicly funded; therefore, this issue is open to public debate and discussion as to how best to serve our youth, our workforce, and our society in general (Barlow, 1976).

Immediately following the Civil War, debates on how to educate African-Americans emerged, with one side arguing for classical education and the other arguing in favor of industrial education. “In 1853 Frederick Douglass advocated industrial schools for Negroes when Harriet Beecher Stowe offered funding for either a Negro industrial school or a classical school” (Barlow, 1976, p. 38). In 1868, the Hampton Institute was created by General Armstrong, offering a partial resolution to this argument by ascertaining the educational needs of newly freed people. The institute created a combined curriculum of trade training and liberal education. Courses in the trades, business, and agriculture were offered (Barlow, 1976). This was an early example of Americans recognizing the need to educate all members of society, and this struggle over “how” best to educate America’s youth continues today. It is vital to expand one’s mind through a liberal education; however, human survival takes precedence over that limited view, and a practical education does ensure survival of its citizens. Great strides in public education were made during this period, but vocational education would not firmly establish itself until the coming century (Barlow, 1976).

This argument over how best to educate America’s children was also represented in the debates between the two prominent African-American scholars, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Washington was born in 1856 into a slave family in Franklin County, Virginia. He came under the tutelage of Samuel Armstrong and as a result, attended The Hampton Institute. This experience influenced Washington’s practical philosophy on education (Franz, 1997). In 1881, he established the Tuskegee Institute where he coordinated occupational training along with academic classes.

Washington believed, “All training derived its meaning and purpose from real problems and could be used to elevate the conditions of the individual students as well as the entire community” (Franz, 1997, p. 88).

W.E. B. DuBois was born in 1868 in Massachusetts and was the son of well-to-do parents. He was educated in a formal, academically rigorous manner and graduated from Harvard in 1890. DuBois believed that the only way to improve the “Negro” was through a rigorous academic curriculum, and, thus, rivals their white counterparts in “social and political maneuverings” (Franz, 1997, p. 89). Although Washington and DuBois both cared deeply for the social cause of raising African-Americans’ status in American society, their differences were much like the differences between John Dewey and Charles Prosser (Franz, 1997). It is of note that this debate rages to this day as we continue to discuss the best way to educate our youth within a 21st century context.

During the years 1876 through 1925, the trade school versus technical school debate emerged. Trade school was defined as being narrow in scope with a general focus on only occupational skills and knowledge. The need for technical schooling that included both general education as well as occupational knowledge arose because of the arrival of a large wave of poor Jewish immigrants in the late 19th century. In 1883, the upper-class Jewish community founded the Hebrew Technical Institute in New York City. This school was designed to offer many more courses, some of which were considered more liberal in nature than the typical trade school. The founders of this school felt that the best and most practical way to help the poor Jewish immigrants “was to give the younger members such education as would fit them for success in mechanical trade, and thereby place themselves and those dependent upon them” (*Seventeenth Annual Labor Report*, Commissioner of Labor, as cited in Barlow, 1976, p. 48).

In 1872 the New York firm of R. Hoe and Company, manufacturers of printing presses, realized that their improved machinery demanded better educated, intelligent workmen, so they established a school which met two nights per week. Attendance was not compulsory, but if an employee wanted to advance within the company, taking courses almost guaranteed that advancement (Barlow, 1976, p. 49). The emerging new industrialized industries were putting greater demands on their workers to become more knowledgeable both in general intelligence as well as technical skills: “The foundation for technical success required a wider diffusion of industrial intelligence” (Barlow, 1976, p. 52). The company schooled a more widely educated and, therefore, knowledgeable class of workers, only one example of the need for a more educated workforce similar to what we are experiencing in today’s globalized, knowledge-based, high-tech economy.

From 1926 through 1976, a time in our history in which America took the lead as the world power in trade, commerce and education, vocational education grew and succeeded in its primary goal: to educate youth to succeed and to earn a livable wage in America. World War II further pushed vocational education in schools as the need for a new, trained workforce (mostly women, white as well as women of color), became evident when men went off to war. It should be noted here that throughout the history of education in the United States, the education system has been called upon in times of crisis to meet urgent needs, whether it be the education of freedmen, waves of immigrants, or women working during wars. The argument over classical versus vocational education subsides in times of crisis when needs far outweigh philosophical rants over which type of educational philosophy would best serve the students and the country (Barlow, 1976).

The concept of “career education” started in 1971 when the Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland, Jr., used the term for the first time (Barlow, 1976, p. 86), which focused on the student’s destination for future employment, to express the needs

for educational reform. Career education was necessary for a total educational experience and was not provided by the school system (Barlow, 1976, p. 86). Unfortunately, many of the programs tracked students (especially students of color) without allowing for choice and directed marginalized groups into non-academic career paths, such as the trades or entry-level factory work. A new type of system had not yet emerged in which students would be afforded opportunities for both college and career preparation because that thinking did not materialize for a few more years.

The School-to-Work Opportunity Act of 1994 stressed amending the existing career education programs as well as creating new ones. The new programs were designed to continue to integrate academic curriculum with vocational education. The purpose was to produce a wider range of options for career opportunities or more training or education (Rose, 2004). The new act also helped the school districts create effective pathways that aligned high school career programs with post-secondary options. According to Rose (2004), this encouraged a more sophisticated curriculum that combined industry requirements and needs with apprentice-like positions. New programs combined both academic as well as occupational competency. School-to-Work was instrumental within the CTE movement as it changed the thinking of CTE from college *or* career to college *and* career. As Rose stated we must have, “Curricula that merge rather than reinforce disciplines, that find in the occupational world rich educational content, that blend learning and doing through projects, public presentations, and portfolios of creative and scholarly work” (2004, p. 182).

Career and Technical Education

The Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) voted to officially change the name of vocational education to “Career and Technical Education” (CTE) in 1998, recognizing the importance of the new, globalized, high-tech, knowledge-based

world. ACTE began a campaign to reinvent itself by branding the name CTE, creating a more professional and rigorous image. The campaign included a website promoting the new image as well as recognizing occupations that historically had not been defined as CTE (Kacirek, Beck, & Grover, 2010). Today, the mission of ACTE is to prepare youth for careers in diverse fields such as health, transportation, and technology to name just a few.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) has a vast and important role to play in the reforming of our educational systems. CTE has been reborn from earlier notions of Vocational Education. What changed? A very small, but vital conjunction “*or*” was changed to “*and*.” Vocational Education was a tracking system that became stigmatized because the student either prepared for college courses *or* the world of work. Students of color and other under-represented groups were tracked to vocational programs, depriving them of opportunities to learn the middle-class curriculum, which left them underprepared for higher education and limited their access to cultural capital. CTE was rebirthed using the conjunction *and*. It is necessary to teach students CTE and college focus to prepare them to work and compete in the globalized 21st century (*CTE State Plan*, California Department of Education, 2008).

California’s education code.

California’s Education Code (2009) established the legislation to include a fully comprehensive Career and Technical Education system designed to serve all students within the state of California’s public school system. It clearly defines the standards and framework to implement successful CTE programs within the school system (See Appendix A.).

Career technical education (CTE) framework for California public schools.

The framework clearly sets out the vision and the mission of CTE within California's schools, including a nine-point delivery system (Appendix I).

The CTE delivery system is a well thought-out educational reform ensuring that more students can succeed in their future. The system is inclusive and addresses the needs for all students to develop career awareness, planning, and preparation for their post-high school education. The system is perceived as a reform in education that addresses the changes in the 21st century world by including *all* students for high-quality college and career opportunities, and taps into the individual talents, needs, interests, and motivations of all students within the California K-12 system. The following quote is thinking that serves the purpose of this study:

CTE can no longer exist as a separate educational alternative; it must be woven into the very fabric of our educational delivery system. Access must therefore be assured for all students through a system which aligns programs, curricula, and services across educational segments, programs, and disciplines. In this spirit, the state plan for CTE presents a framework, including a vision, mission statement, set of guiding principles, goals, and needed actions, which provides both the scaffolding for the state Perkins plan and a blueprint for strengthening California's CTE system overall. (California Department of Education, *CTE State Plan 2007*, p. 50)

Educators need to realign program purposes and goals through a focus on individualized student success. The CTE vision, mission, and framework identify and define the need for academic rigor offered in the CTE courses as do the CTE standards which set forth what students need to do and to know for their future success in both college and career.

CTE standards. In 2007 the California Department of Education adopted new CTE Standards, launching the movement throughout the state. The CTE Standards (approved in 2012) integrated rigorous academic content with industry-specific knowledge and skills to prepare students for both college and career. The current standards are research-based, drawing heavily from the 1991 U.S. Secretary of Labor’s report titled *Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)*. This report identified knowledge and skills needed to compete in the 21st century, globalized, high-tech world. These standards are much broader in scope than the previous vocational-education-centric ones since they prepare students for *both* college and the world of work.

CTE courses have eleven foundational, academically rigorous standards. According to the *California Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards Grades Seven through Twelve* (2006), 21st century-required skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and technology are embedded in these standards. The second set of standards is the industry-specific, by which the students simultaneously learn specific knowledge and skills needed to perform the work in that industry. Currently, the CDE is revising the first set of standards. Foundation standards are renamed “anchor” standards. Recently, California adopted The Common Core State Standards (CCSS); therefore, part of the alignment during the CTE revision process was to adopt and align the CCSS, thereby using common language as well. The industry-specific standard name remains the same. Here is the entire list of the newly-named anchor standards, noting no changes other than the title:

1. Academic—English Language Arts: Speaking and Listening
2. Communication
3. Career Planning and Management
4. Technology

5. Problem-solving and Critical Thinking
6. Health and Safety
7. Responsibility and Flexibility
8. Ethics and Legal Responsibility
9. Leadership and Teamwork
10. Technical Knowledge and Skills
11. Demonstration and Application (*California CTE Model Curriculum Standards*, 2005, pp. vii, viii)

California recently approved the revised California CTE Education Standards, in January 2013. This revision work included the anchor standards needed to ensure career readiness within the various industries. The CTE division changed the name from Foundation Standards (*California CTE Model Curriculum Standards 2005*) to Anchor Standards. Students not only need mastery of their specific industry (pathway) standards but also anchor standards, to be successful in their career. These standards are parallel to the competencies described in the June 1991 SCAN Skills, U.S. Department of Labor. Particular to this study are the following anchor standards:

Anchor Standard 2: Communications

Anchor Standard 5: Problem-solving and Critical Thinking

Anchor Standard 9: Leadership and Teamwork

California Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards: Grades Seven Through Twelve.)

The report *Pathways to Prosperity—Meeting the Challenges of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century* (Symonds et al., 2011) called for reforming schools by meaningful career training as a part of comprehensive new ways of teaching students.

The report has made a very strong case for career education as a facet of reform due to our national dropout rates and the changing global world. The report focused on career and technical education with multiple pathways, thereby eliminating the failed “one size fits all” education currently in our schools. This report specifically spoke of the necessity for soft-skills education by declaring “hard and soft skills are essential for success in this economy” (p. 4), and “these findings strongly suggest that a more holistic approach to education—one that aims to equip young adults with a broader range of skills—is more likely to produce youth who will succeed in the 21st century” (p. 4). In our global, highly competitive world, the new workforce must be academically competent and possess all the necessary interpersonal skills that have been historically taught in the home but may not be in households with low cultural capital. California’s Department of Education brought the value of CTE one step further with the passage of Assembly Bill 1330 (Chapter 621, Statutes of 2011). This bill resulted in CTE becoming a state mandated graduation requirement. Beginning with the school year 2012–2013 (class of 2013), it authorized the local educational agencies to accept “CTE courses as an optional high school graduation requirement in lieu of one course of visual or performing arts or foreign language” (Torlakson, 2012; see Appendix H).

Industry sectors.

The California Career Technical Education (CCTE) model curriculum standards are organized into 15 *industry sectors*, of interrelated occupations and broad industries. Each sector has two or more career pathways. A *career pathway* is a coherent sequence of rigorous academic and technical courses that allow students to apply academics and develop technical skills in a curricular area. Career pathways prepare students for successful completion of state academic and technical standards and more advanced postsecondary course work related to the career in which they are interested. Currently,

there are fifteen industry sectors with 57 career pathways. (California Department of Education, *CTE Model Curriculum Standards*, 2006, pp. vi-vii). For example, under the Industry Sector, “Health Science and Medical Technology” (p.vii), there are a variety of career pathways such as dentistry, nursing services, or physician practices. See Appendix B for a complete list of Industry Sectors with their Career Pathways.

From the various industries named in the chart, one can clearly see that California has many rich and dynamic industries to offer its populace: Arts & Entertainment, Biotechnology, Stem Cell Research, Wine Industries, and Silicon Valley to name a few (CDE, *CTE Model Standards*, 2006). Career and Technical Education is on the forefront of changing California’s dismal dropout rate, especially as we embrace the newly adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Common Core State Standards

According to the Office of Economic Development (OECD), a recently published report titled, *Recommendation for the USA from Top Performing Countries* summarizes strategies to assist the United States in their failing education system:

United States President Barack Obama has launched one of the world’s most ambitious education reform agendas. The federally-funded programme “Race to the Top,” initiated in 2010, represents the cornerstone of this agenda and encourages states in the United States to change their aspirations and organizational culture by adopting internationally benchmarked state-developed standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace; recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals; building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and turning around the country’s lowest-performing schools. (OECD, 2011, p. 232)

The United States Department of Education leadership is quite aware of the many global changes and has placed focus on them. “Most recently, United States’ Department of Education, Secretary Duncan devoted much of his address to OECD Education Ministers to the importance of international benchmarking and the collective benefits of global exchange and collaboration in the field of education” (OECD, 2011, p. 232). Forty-eight states and two territories participated in writing the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), completing them in September 2009. These standards, then, are the basis for California’s Common Core State Standards (CCSS), designed to prepare students for both college-entry and the workplace. California’s implementation timeline, though, is dependent on the state legislature as it was set for 2013 but was stopped due to lack of funding. There currently is a tentative date of 2017, depending on the lawmakers’ vote to implement it.

Of particular interest is the CCSS’s assessment, which was piloted in 2012 and created a new state-wide assessment for our students. The first is the “Smarter Balanced Assessment” (SBAC). Thirty states are currently using this assessment, which is funded by the USDOE, contracted to WestEd, totaling \$160 million.

New assessments can be a key driver of the successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards, providing support for deeper learning and holding educators accountable for their students’ progress toward true college and career readiness. When they are well-designed and well-used, assessments can motivate students and teachers, and focus their attention on the knowledge and skills that really matter for student success. Conversely, though, assessments that are poorly designed and implemented can narrow the curriculum, impoverish instruction, and undermine students’ enthusiasm for learning.

Recognizing the transformative importance of assessments in realizing the promise of the Common Core, the U.S. Department of Education has funded two consortia of states that will work together to develop new assessments aligned to the new standards in English-language arts and mathematics. The Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) comprises 25 states including Massachusetts and California, while the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) comprises 29. (Some states participate in both consortia.) (WestEd, 2012, p. 3)

The assessments were set to start in 2012, but California's implementation date is unknown as of this writing, which will make for non-alignment of the assessment. This delay creates many problems for successful delivery and adoption of the new CCSS; therefore, it is hoped that our current state legislature recognizes this and passes the pending law into practice.

21st Century Globalized World

Common Core State Standards and the new CTE delivery system are responses to the changing globalized world, but they are not comprehensive, nor have they permeated the entire K-12 public school system. According to Trilling (2007), we are living in the knowledge age with worldwide demands for what he referred to as "learning societies" (p. 1). He stated that we need to bring awareness to an out-of-sync educational system, and we are living in revolutionary times similar to the challenging shifts from the Agricultural Age to the Industrial Age (Trilling, 2009, p. 12). Trilling (2009) believed that to sustain our society and way of life, we need to empower all our citizens to compete in the globalized world. He proposed that the new curriculum needs to include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, communication, computing, and career education – in addition to self-reliance – in order for students to thrive in the new age. The new breed of learner is what he referred to as "a digital native"

(p. 27) who speaks “technology without an accent” (p. 3). These students are raised with digital tools as intrinsic and intuitive to their lives, both as learners and members of the globalized community. Trilling asserts that as more of the world’s children are born into the digital landscape, our educational system must create facilitated learning experiences with a rich on-line digital orientation (2009, p. 153).

The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (Schuman, Besterfield-Sacre, & McGourty, 2005) preferred the term “professional skills,” which are interpersonal skills and behavior competencies, and has identified the need for this education among engineers, “We propose that the mastery of these professional skills combined with an ability to innovate will add sufficient value to U.S. engineering graduates. . . .To do engineering within its global (and/or societal) context, the professional skills are critical” (p. 43). Tom Wagner, co-director of the Change Leadership Group at Harvard Graduate School of Education defined the core 21st century survival skills as follows: “critical thinking and problem-solving, the ability to create, collaborate and communicate across media-rich networks and systems, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurship, effective oral and written communication, accessing analyzing information and curiosity and imagination” (Cornelius, 2011, p. 51). The literature explicitly described the needs of the 21st century, globalized, high-tech, knowledge-based world so that education can adapt, reform, and meet the needs of all students for their survival in a changed world.

According to Molinsky (2007), there were many value-added characteristics for students who learn cultural adaptation to become effective in a 21st century globalized economy. Researchers are identifying crucial personal characteristics, such as cultural intelligence, that are necessary to work in a global landscape. Students who learn to navigate cultural differences can influence their own effectiveness for success, leading to

a value-added skill set to compete, survive and succeed in college and career. Yosso (2005) referred to this form of cultural capital as “navigational capital” which is a set of skills used to navigate through social structures of the dominant class. Navigational capital helps students of color connect to social networks in their quest for success in both school and the workplace.

Molinsky (2007) introduced the concept of “cross-cultural code-switching” – the ability to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviors. Borrowing the term code-switching from socio-linguist Heller (1988), “Linguistic code-switching entails bilingual speakers alternating between languages in interaction with other bilinguals” (p. 623), further explaining the ability to navigate multiple realities. Therefore, it is safe to say that code-switching is a skill in which one can change words and/or behaviors in order to communicate effectively to obtain a desired goal. In the case of personal development skills, then, code-switching would help students obtain both college and career success.

O’Neal and Ringler (2010) noted what the sociolinguists have observed, “We are what we speak” (p. 50). We are defined, judged and valued through our language, and teaching students to code switch will only benefit them. “Code switching is a strategy that helps us communicate in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (O’Neal & Ringler, 2010, p. 50). The authors argued that code switching is natural, and we all communicate and naturally code-switch when talking to different audiences such as bosses, teachers, clergy, children, and others. Schools use another type of dialect which the authors refer to as “academic language,” which students need to learn to succeed. During my teacher training at San Francisco State University in 1993, Professor Silverman lectured on what he called “Cash English,” which is the ability to use the speak of news media to obtain power within the dominant culture.

Students learn new words, behaviors, and ways of interacting that are unfamiliar and not part of their identity, they may feel awkward, uncomfortable, and psychologically at risk. As with learning any new language or form of communication, the learning curve is steep at first, but it becomes more natural with repetition and application. If students are willing to learn these skills because they are helpful to their success at school and work, their anxiety may decrease. There is potential for identity loss in some students as they garner these new skills; therefore, greater awareness regarding cultural training and sensitivity must accompany this curriculum. For example, Greene and Walker (2004) pointed out that it is the task of the teacher to impress upon students that a negotiation of Standard and Black English is not an attack on their *blackness*, but rather an attempt at helping them to broaden their linguistic skills and function within mainstream society (p. 436).

Molinsky (2007) suggested that future research should address understanding that “code-switchers can achieve the benefits associated with cultural accommodations. . . [and] “individuals will likely be more willing to attempt a switch when they perceive themselves as having the ability to do so successfully” (p. 633). The next section considers effective sustainable reform strategies and knowledge needed to change our antiquated public K-12 education system.

Career and Technical Education as Sustainable Reform

According to the Office of Economic Development (2011):

Despite a decade of gains, the United States continues to sink in international measures of student learning, ranking seventh in reading, 13th in science, and 18th in mathematics out of 34 nations in the Programme for International Student survey. (PISA)

Education will be forced to reform in response to global economic pressures. According to Bill Daggett, CEO of International Center for Leadership in Education (2011), business and industry are moving four to five times faster than education. And Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2003) stated,

While the nature of life and work has changed dramatically in the last few decades, our educational policy has not evolved to meet these new realities. In pursuit of individual success for our students, as well the nation as a whole, we must commit to an education agenda that equips the next generation for the opportunities and challenges it shall face. (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003)

To ensure that the newly reborn Career and Technical Education (CTE) movement is a sustainable reform, educators must study methods and strategies to guarantee its success. CTE standards are reflected in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and assessments, adopted by 48 states including California. The goal of CCSS is to prepare students for success in both college and career. Therefore, Career and Technical Education must be implemented in public education so that sustainable reform is clearly in place because America is on the precipice of either economically soaring or economically failing. A large part of America's success depends on the public education system successfully preparing all students in and for a 21st century world.

Smith and O'Day (1991) stated that the education community should consider both implementation concepts: *bottom up*, meaning change occurring with non-authoritarian actors, and *top down*, meaning authoritarian style mandates for change. They argued that both methods will enlist all parties to create sustainable reform and enlist all key stakeholders with information, rationale, and tools to create change. Knight and Erlandson (2003) offered a tool to assess effective sustainable reform initiatives. This

tool could also be used for the development of change within educational institutions. In order to create successfully sustainable reform within our educational communities, we must first decide what our goals and outcomes for students are. Rorrer and Scheurich (2008) suggested, “Districts as an organized collective are bound by a web of interrelated and interdependent roles, responsibilities, and relationships that facilitate systemic reforms” (p. xx). The local school district office plays a vital role in sustaining reform movement, and it is often ineffective when there is a lack of alignment between external mandates and the organization of student outcomes. While some research shows that the decentralization of power from district offices is best for students, Ouchi (2006), suggested that decentralization only works if three caveats are in order: First, clear standards and expectations must be created. Second, the district office must monitor schools and ensure standards are met. Third, there must a public transparency for community members to review and monitor programs and student outcomes.

Noelle and Gansele (2008) suggested that individual behaviors must reflect system reform, or change does not happen. Changing human behavior is vital to sustainable reform. A change-agent leader not only speaks with authority, knowledge, and intelligence but also listens with an open mind and heart to gage the “pulse” of his/her constituents. The leader must lead by example, exhibiting actions that manifest the fidelity of the intended change. The change-agent asks the actors to remain open to dialogue, differences, opinions and thoughts with all key stakeholders encouraging and supporting throughout the change process. At the same time, the leader must be firm in resolve, faithful to the mission, strong in the fidelity of the reform and somehow merge the two opposing forces, allowing for successful reform to occur. An effective change-agent leader must acknowledge and validate the constituents’ concerns, feelings and histories. Dialogue, continual meetings, and relationship-building are vital to this type of

work. According to Knoff (2002), real systematic reform must begin with reforming and changing the behavior of adults.

Datnow (2005) suggested that most reforms are externally-driven; therefore, leaders must be aware of the distinction between mandating change and supporting change. They must allow for decision-making time, increase information needed to enact the change, and bolster teacher involvement. If they really want to change classroom effectiveness, the astute educational leaders must acknowledge the reality that teachers hold the majority of the power to enact the reform. Effective leaders can strategize to utilize this teacher-power creating success at the classroom level. The report from Bergeson (2004), "Characteristics of Improved School Districts," examined a "utopian" manual to guide effective reform in schools. This report posed questions following each segment as "how" questions. The way the questions were phrased reveals the challenge reformers face when starting the implementation phase of the reform, ensuring that change occurs. A change-agent leader recognizes that power lies within people and that empowering the constituents will ensure sustainable reforms system-wide, which is imperative for the CTE movement.

Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, and Daly (2008) proposed techniques which established School Leadership Teams (SLTs), which served by generating effective strategies for implementation and assist involved parties to change the status quo. The authors explained that the concept of mental models opened people to new ways of envisioning change. The first question is: How does a leader work with SLTs to create new mental models and work with SLTs to support CTE as a sustainable reform? Garcia (2009) stated that the four elements of effective reform included shared vision, leadership and advocacy, empowering the district office, and using external forces as catalysts for change. Since most reform efforts come from the outside, schools become the adopters of

the reforms. In creating new mental models and using SLTs, a leader-reformer must be cognizant of the power of authentic listening to discover the “pulse” of the group and can build relationships from there. This relationship-building is key to enacting change. When people develop effective relationships, synergy occurs, which requires enormous amounts of effort and energy. The outcome, then, is the sustainable reform work which is required for making changes. Successful change-agent leaders know the power of this group dynamic and readily use this strategy for reform. If the leader creates School Leadership Teams when the external pressure is intense, the school will unite under a common purpose and will withstand the external demands placed upon it.

The Sustainability Model is an effective strategy to ensure that CTE is implemented as a reform movement that erases residual thinking of “vocational” education. It was redesigned with a new name, “Career and Technical Education,” thus meeting the demands of a 21st century, globalized, high-tech, knowledge-based world. According to Garcia (2009), the Sustainability Model supported levels of staff commitment to any reform movement that would be key to the success of implementation and adopting the many changes that authentic reform brings. Through these questions, Garcia recommended triangulating the three dimensions of the sustainability model, namely, commitment, congruence, and coherence.

Garcia, Cesario, Stange, and Mangewala (2010) have warned us that although systemic alignment is cyclical in nature, it is also complex in its practicality. Therefore, to accomplish the goal of sustainable reform, it is necessary to lay the groundwork of alignment, ensuring all parties are well informed of the changes. This takes great human effort, time, and money. It is time for education to open its doors to other forces within society by inviting business, industry, non-profit agencies, government, military, and higher education to co-create and redesign a sustainable reform that is just and equitable

for all students. Hess (2007) built a case to infuse entrepreneurial thinking into educational reform that “continually welcomes talent” (p. 26) and stated that educational reform has not worked in the United States because reformers try to find one best system that fixes all education for all students. He suggested that we adopt more imaginative thinking instead, infusing entrepreneurial characteristics into reform to “create a system capable of growing with those it exists to serve” (2007, p. 27).

Reforming, redesigning, and reimagining public education in a 21st century context require many people to accomplish the goal. Authentic, sustainable change must happen quickly due to all the forces of change surrounding public education. We need our policy makers to do revolutionary work to re-design and re-imagine a new system for our new world order. Paying attention to the students is a start. What do students need and want? What are their talents, interests, potentials, and motivations? What plans, dreams, hopes, and desires do they have? According to Dr. Patrick Ainsworth, Deputy Superintendent of the California Department of Education (2011), a student who obtained a four-year degree from a university could earn the same salary and job opportunities as a student who obtained a two-year degree or certification from a community college. This reality must be addressed as the classical liberal education that has served middle-class students may not be the best route to obtaining meaningful work within the 21st century context for any of our students. The practical, real-life benefits of a two-year degree need serious recognition. Education needs to re-imagine itself with a focus on students’ success and survival within a 21st century world. Career and Technical Education is a delivery system that focuses on the entire student, in school and at work.

Personal Development Education (PDE). Quality CTE programs include PDE curriculum. Since there are many and various terms in use, I have defined PDE as the domain and 21st century skills as the skills under this domain. According to the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), “Ensuring that all students possess strong academic, employability and technical skills is critical as we face the growing demands of the global economy” (Knox, 2013). Employability skills are listed as critical thinking, adaptability, problem-solving, oral and written communication, collaboration and teamwork, creativity, responsibility, professionalism, ethics, and technology to name a few (ACTE 2012 p. 2). Therefore, this portion of the literature review focuses on the importance of PDE for career and life success.

PDE skills may have a wide variety of meanings, but in sum, they are behavioral competencies. They are known as interpersonal skills, or “people skills,” that include proficiency in areas such as communication, conflict resolution and negotiation, personal effectiveness, creative problem-solving, strategic thinking, team building, influencing skills, and selling skills. Teaching behavioral competencies, particularly to SED subgroups, may produce positive outcomes that afford the students educational opportunities that they may have missed in their home environment. PDE cannot replace the informal knowledge that parents transmit to the children in the home, but it can offer some behavioral and attitudinal strategies, helping students to build their own human capital and potential and fostering success in school, career, and life.

Soft skills are the newest buzz-phrase, replacing phrases such as “employability skills” or “Scan skills,” or more recently, “21st century skills.” Unlike hard skills—such as math and literacy—soft skills are characterized as soft, in part, as they are hard to define and quantify. The following list (Equipped for the Future at the Center for Literary Studies, 2009) is one such guide for what these soft skills necessitate.

Communication Skills

- Read With Understanding
- Speak So Others Can Understand
- Listen Actively
- Observe Critically

Interpersonal Skills

- Cooperate with Others
- Convey Ideas in Writing
- Guide Others
- Advocate and Influence
- Resolve Conflict and Negotiate

Decision Making Skills

- Takes Responsibility for Learning
- Plan and Communicate
- Use Math to Solve Problems
- Lifelong Learning Skills
- Solve Problems and Make Decisions
- Learn Through Research
- Reflect and Evaluate
- Use Information and Communications Technology

The following chart (Figure 2) is a graphic representation of one system of ranking 21st century skills as needed to succeed in a career. The base represents skills needed in all types of work. The higher up the pyramid, the higher the particular soft skill that is needed for more advanced work:

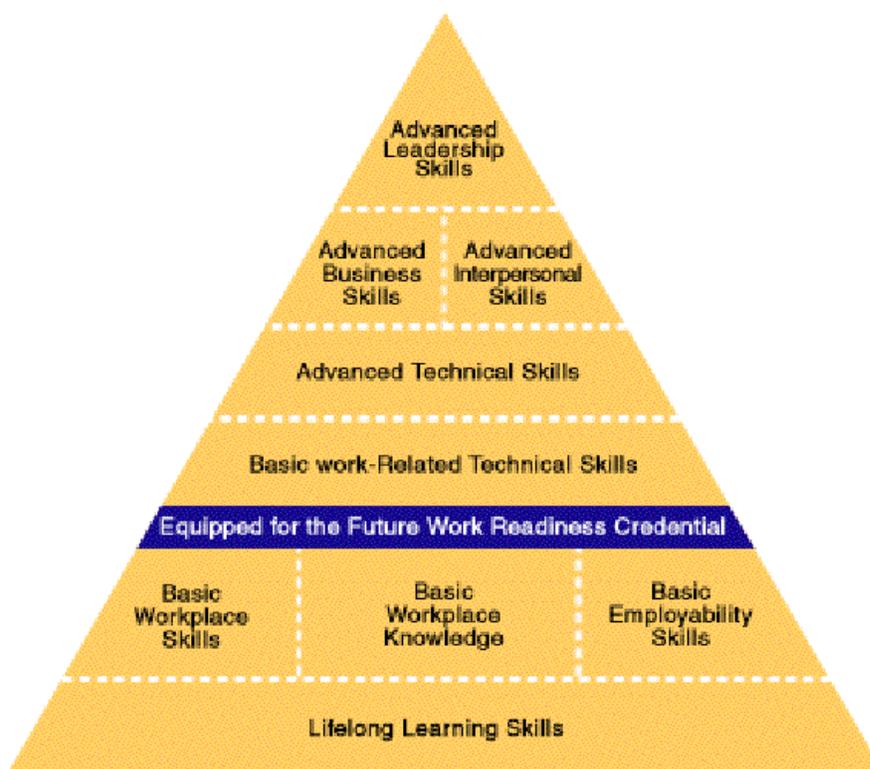


Figure 1. Work Readiness Credential Pyramid. This is a graphic representation of the soft skills necessary for success in the workplace. Basic all-purpose skills are the foundation of the pyramid; more advanced soft skills required by higher-level jobs are placed at the top. (Equipped for the Future, 2009, p. 20)

The U.S. Department of Labor established the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) in 1991. The report revealed the five competencies needed in the new workforce: resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems, and technology. The commission recommended that the skills listed below need to be taught in the public education system to ensure success for all students (See Appendix C.).

Knowledge workers must demonstrate both hard and soft skills, and the more they are proficient in both, the more they can compete (Overtoom, 2000). In the 21st century, workers must rely on their own initiative and take on more responsibility as technology is

forcing us to utilize our own ability to navigate in a digital world with less assistance from other people. The new workforce must work with diverse groups of teams and show adaptability and flexibility to synergize the work. The challenge of working in a globalized world means teaming up with people all around the world on a single project producing high-quality work. Due to rapid technological advances, the value of life-long learning and continuous improvement cannot be overstated as innovation in technology is moving at a break-neck speed, and the workforce must constantly adapt to these rapid changes.

There are many traits and behavioral competencies outlined by researchers that I have synthesized to 8 different 21st skills needed for college and career readiness such as relationship management skills, conflict management skills, communication skills, and decision-making skills (See Appendix D for entire list.). This growing body of evidence clearly states that teaching PDE in the public schools is more important than ever, given the number of organizations attempting to define it. Twenty-first century skills are not skills that are unimportant or unnecessary; in fact, they are vital to our students' success in both college and career readiness. President Obama's educational Website is using the tag line, "Educate to Innovate," stating that America must re-focus educational goals on innovation building with our students (The White House, 2011). In President Obama's 2012 State of the Union Address he identified his goals for strengthening our economy, emphasizing the value of creativity, ingenuity, and innovation of American entrepreneurs, teachers, and students. The President also focused on the power of teamwork: "As long as we are joined in common purpose, as long as we maintain our common resolve, our journey moves forward" (Presidential State of the Union Address 2012). Creating my own 21st century skills typology, I suggest four levels ranked in terms of student behaviors and language, from low performing to high performing:

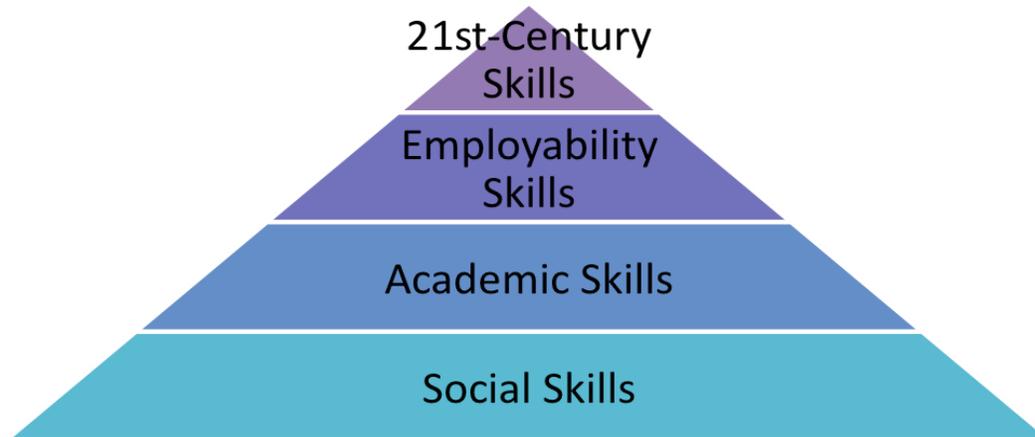


Figure 2. 21st Century Achievement Skills Pyramid.

1. Social skills
 - Physical Control
 - Human Interaction
 - Non-Verbal Communication
2. Academic skills
 - Organization
 - Binder/Planner Instruction
 - Goal Setting
3. Employability Skills
 - Teaming
 - Leadership
 - Appearance
4. 21st Century skills
 - Creativity

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Critical Thinking

The number of skills listed above is too large for the focus of one study, but they are skills that must be noted as research in those other areas informed this study. I focused on intentionally taught 21st century skills within an after-school intervention program that teaches entrepreneurial education within a 21st century context.

Entrepreneurial Education

Ready Skills and Business Functions overlie the Entrepreneurial Skills, those processes and traits/behaviors applicable to new ventures and ongoing ventures that create/drive/change economic activity—new markets, new products, new businesses, etc. Included in the standards are the stages of the entrepreneurial process: discovery, concept development, resourcing, actualization, and harvesting. This relationship informs this study because entrepreneurial education can bring about changes in personal development and behaviors in students' growth towards success (Consortium for Entrepreneurship, n.d.).

During my doctoral residency in November 2011, I participated in a project revising the CTE Standards for the State of California's Department of Education as a member of writing teams for Business and Marketing and helped to author the following for the new CTE Entrepreneurship Standards:

C2.0 Analyze the development of successful personal entrepreneurial traits.

C2.1 Define and identify the following entrepreneurial characteristics:

adaptability, competitiveness, confidence, discipline, perseverance, vision and risk-taking.

- C2.2 Analyze strengths and weaknesses of self in terms of entrepreneurial success.
- C2.3 Deconstruct the reasons for success of key entrepreneurs.
- C2.4 Explore the rationale of why, historically, the United States and California have been leaders in innovation and small business ventures. (CDE's CTE Revision Writing Team, 2012, p. MSS 13)
- C4.0 Develop creative and innovative thinking skills that apply to entrepreneurship and the products/services created.
- C4.1 Define terms to develop the creative process such as originality, flexibility, brain storming, modification, associative, and metaphorical thinking.
- C4.2 Develop creative thinking in order to stimulate curiosity and promote divergence.
- C4.3 Defend why failure is an opportunity to learn and to understand that creativity and innovation are long term and cyclical in the process of successes and mistakes.
- C4.4 Explore recognized creative-minded individuals and their products and services.
- C4.5 Defend why competitiveness depends on innovation.
- C4.6 Create and design potential innovative 21st century products and services. (CTE Standards, 2013, p. MSS14)

The above standards and performance indicators clearly describe and define the human side of entrepreneurship, which is central to this study. The timing of this study is vital for the work needed to reform education. Research indicates that it takes more than just a novel idea to succeed as an entrepreneur; it also takes hard and soft skills to succeed as an entrepreneur, both of which can be taught within the school system.

Therefore, this study is vital in shaping modern CTE, which leads me to the final section on cultural capital theory.

Cultural Capital Theory

If we are to truly reform and create education that is just and equitable for all students, first, we must understand why education continually reproduces itself. Pierre Bourdieu's 1977 work, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* developed the concepts of *habitus* and *cultural capital* to explain the ways relationships of social inequality were reproduced by the education system. He defined cultural capital as the knowledge and skills that parents give their children, ones that give them advantage in the current educational system. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) later claimed that cultural capital consists of informal learning about the class attributes of the dominant class, reproducing inequities in the educational system. These assets can be traded and are perceived as adding value, similar to economic assets, as they empower students to achieve success for themselves. Some examples of this informal education are family guidance on school and traditions, attitudes, style, manners, and the like. *Habitus* describes the character and thinking of people about their relationships to each other regarding power and status. Throughout both works, Bourdieu analyzed the role of cultural capital and habitus in determining educational outcomes.

Bourdieu (1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979) focused on relationships. For him capital included resources that are invested and utilized in hopes of achieving a certain goal. He broke capital into several categories: economic, social and cultural, while he viewed all capital as disguised economic capital. Economic capital is easily defined as material and financial resources, but for Bourdieu, it all related back to economic capital since money is power. Bourdieu argued that the people with the most economic capital also had the most cultural and social capital, ensuring the maintenance of the status quo.

He used this theory as a lens, explaining educational success or failure as a reflection of the amount of capital one possesses.

Bourdieu defined cultural capital as “relatively rare, high-status cultural and linguistic knowledge, skills, and dispositions as passed from one generation to the next” (as cited in Anyon & Perez, 2009, p. 139). He saw cultural capital in three ways: cultural capital being long-lasting behaviors, artistic works, and earned degrees and certifications. Social capital, loosely defined, lends itself to the thinking of “it’s not what you know but whom you know.” Therefore, the more power one has, the more personal connections one has, as the individual with the most economic capital tends to have similar income as well as powerful and influential networks. Because educators tend to perceive those who hold power (economic, cultural, and social) as right and just, they may favor these students and their families over marginalized groups, thereby maintaining the dominant cultures power.

In studying Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital Anyon & Perez (2009) reminded us that Bourdieu was born in a small village in the south of France, a son of a farmer (p. 151). He went to Paris to study at the *École Normal Supérieure* under Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, but he never completed his doctorate. Because of that and his humble origins, he was treated as an “outsider” among the French intellectual elite. Bourdieu, therefore, had a feel for the common man and marginalized people who were unable to raise themselves out of their status even though they are ambitious, intelligent and talented (2009, p. 151).

Many others recognize the truth in Bourdieu’s concepts. In *Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments*, Lamont and Lareau (1988) stated that family background influenced school experience and educational success, thereby contributing to constant reproduction of the status quo in the

educational system. They defined cultural capital as knowledge of high culture passed on to children, which prepared their entry into school systems designed by the dominant culture. They stated that children from the working class must acquire this knowledge outside the home to achieve success in school. The authors further explained that although working-class children can achieve success, “They can never achieve the natural familiarity of those born to these classes and are penalized on this basis” (1988, p. 155). For Lamont and Lareau, the working-class child would never have native fluency in upper-class cultural capital characteristics including “widely shared, high status signals such as attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials” (p. 156).

These authors shared a common theory: Parents from the dominant class freely transmit these codes of behavior and language to their children, advantaging them in the school system and, at the same time, monopolizing and maintaining privilege. Parents from the dominant class offer their children knowledge of personal development education: The etiquette, social mores and interpersonal skills that maintain the status quo and give their children cultural capital to succeed both in school and the workplace. Working class children and lower socio economic subgroups are not privileged with this training or education and do not always have these skills, thus disadvantaging them in the current school system and reproducing the dropout rates. These disadvantages are not only realized in the school system but also manifested in life by ill-informed decisions, forced choice, and lost time (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). For example, Moss and Tilly (1995) stated that although soft skills (another name for personal development education), might be confounded by differences in culture, employers reported that African American males lacked training in soft skills, which led to employment problems. This cross-cultural dynamic must be identified, because again, PDE offers skills and strategies for

negotiating the mainstream workplace, thereby empowering individuals to choose careers and life paths for themselves.

However, Yosso (2005) pointed out that schools assume that students of color “lacked” social and cultural capital and educators perceived the students as deficient, labeling them “disadvantaged.” Yosso’s theory stated that students from non-white backgrounds indeed possessed rich cultural wealth that schools tended to dismiss. Acknowledging that Students of Color have community cultural wealth would be transformative to schools and the students. Yosso identified the following as community cultural capital: (a) aspirational capital, meaning resiliency; (b) linguistic capital, meaning bilingualism; (c) familial capital, referring to cultural knowledge passed through the generations; (d) social capital, meaning networks within the community; (e) navigational capital, referring to moving through institutions other than one’s own; and (f) resistant capital, meaning knowledge and skills experienced when disenfranchised groups learn to survive within a dominant culture (2005, pp. 77–81). Yosso’s identified cultural capital must be noted to assist educational systems that perceived Students of Color as “disadvantaged” when indeed they came with a wealth of their own cultural capital. PDE is an approach for students to access their own cultural capital.

This domain of PDE gives students the opportunity to define, grow, and access a sense of self-efficacy and self-advocacy. With a renewed sense of empowerment, students might validate their own thoughts, ideas, abilities and cultures. The benefits of learning 21st century behavioral competencies are obvious, yet missing in public education, but I do believe we are on the precipice of revolutionizing this antiquated thinking.

Conclusion

In sum, empowering all students with knowledgeable and marketable skills ensuring success both in school and career is exciting to think about. Benjamin Franklin's wisdom can be applied to a 21st century mind-set. Franklin taught us, "In America, people do not enquire of a stranger, What is he? But, What can he do?" (Isaacson, 2003, p. 423). The sense of urgency with this work is noteworthy, as the world has changed dramatically and continues changing at a breakneck pace, demanding that education keep up. Career and Technical Education has changed to meet the demands of our 21st century, globalized world. Educational institutions must meet the needs of society, both for the well-being of the individual as well as the economy of the society. PDE can hold the key to teaching and inspiring all youth, particularly SED populations so that they can succeed in a society that has previously locked them out. Cultural capital, from the dominant class, can be taught in schools to benefit *all* students, but in particular, it will benefit students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It is also vital to recognize that all students bring with them their own cultural capital, and no child is bereft of human capital. PDE holds the key to the success of each and every student in public education as well as citizens of the world. Because in much of the literature the students' voices are absent, my inquiry centered on students' perception of personal development skills in relationship to their own sense of fulfillment, well-being, and empowerment. Capturing students' experiences was the motivation, the challenge, and the underpinning for this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

“Give a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”

–Chinese Proverb

Introduction

This study sought to understand how students adopted 21st century skills and strategies for their success. The qualitative inquiry pursued understanding intentionally taught communication and collaboration skills and how this education modified any and all aspects of the students’ lives. It is a qualitative research study that used students’ voices as the guiding motivation and inquiry. In a qualitative approach, “the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p.16). In Personal Development Education (PDE) —a collection of highly subjective and hard to define 21st century behavioral competencies—the students’ voices and perspectives were missing in the literature and, therefore, the hope of this study was to shed light on the significance of PDE as a relevant educational reform. The study focused on five 21st century skills: collaboration and communication as the primary focus and critical thinking, creativity, and courage as the secondary focus.

I followed the guidelines of Creswell (2009) and had students share their stories of personal transformation through informal interviews and focus study groups, which resulted in new knowledge. These new findings add to the existing knowledge surrounding 21st century skills within PDE as part of public education. My inquiry revolved around the students’ perspectives of their own learning, what it means to them,

and how this new learning impacted their lives. The data revealed innovative thinking regarding the value, effect, outcomes, and issues surrounding PDE.

Rationale of the Study

I explored the concept of student voice in regards to 21st century behavioral competencies within a qualitative study. In the students' own words, how did they understand PDE and its purpose? What did they think about learning these skills? What did the participants already know? Did they feel empowered learning new behaviors and language? Did they feel they were forfeiting part of their identity and/or culture? What conflict might they have between what is "cool" vs. successful language and behaviors? What impact did these skills make on their personal lives and their school lives? What did this mean to them? I observed students' behaviors and accompanying dialogues regarding their skills acquisition and any value this type of learning may have had for the students.

Participants

I proposed to work with three grades of high school students ranging from 10th through 12th grade. For the purpose of this study, I shaped the inquiry on the students' perceptions of this learning. Ninth-grade students were not used as they just began the program when I started the study. The students were of mixed races and genders from socio-economically disadvantaged subgroups. The number of students interviewed was 24, and 13 were selected for the focus groups. The following student profile is from the BUILD Website and describes, in detail, the students needed for this study:

BUILD tackles the soaring high school drop-out rate that has reached more than 50% in some urban schools and communities. Many students enter these high schools academically unprepared. Few find the resources to catch up. As a result, nearly 54% of drop-outs leave school their freshman year. Unlike many other

college-preparation programs, BUILD actively seeks to serve students who struggle academically when they enter high school. These students often face multiple socioeconomic risk factors and doubt the transformative power and value of education.

- Nine out of ten BUILD students are from low-income families and from ethnic backgrounds that have been historically under-represented in higher education (Latino, African-American, and Pacific Islander).
- Eighty percent of our students are of the first generation in their families to go to college.
- Two-thirds of our Bay Area students qualify for free or reduced lunches. In Washington, D.C., nine out of ten qualify for free and reduced lunches. (BUILD, “Who We Serve,” para. 1)

This study documented students’ languages and behaviors by using observations, interviews, and focus groups to capture students’ experiences. According to Briscoe, Arriaza and Henze (2009), to change the mindset of people we need to change our thinking and subsequently change our speech. Allowing students’ voices regarding personal development education, including the students’ language for the world of work or higher education, adds new insight and perspective to this domain of education. It was not the intent of this study to negate the students’ own cultural identities that help shape them as individual beings, but to add specific strategic skills needed to succeed in the 21st century, thereby allowing underserved students to gain the skills, strategies, and knowledge to negotiate power relationships furthering their success post-high school.

I used the following student demographic data from the BUILD records. Other data instruments were student interviews, ongoing student observations, student research journals, and student focus groups to record data and findings from the student’s

perspective. I was unable to conduct student exit interviews because of their program time constraints. The major purpose of this study was to record student perceptions of PDE within an entrepreneurial intervention program that teaches 21st century skills. The focus revolved around the following 21st century behavioral competencies: communication and collaboration as the focus with critical thinking, courage, and creativity as the secondary skills. From these five skills, I posed questions to the students and had them discuss their learning outcomes.

Through the research design centering on student voice using interviews and focus groups, I am able to contribute new, valuable knowledge and thought to the ongoing conversation of PDE as necessary to 21st century curriculum, thus helping students to transform and to develop personally.

Conceptual Framework

The literature review and theoretical framework suggest that to transform education, we need to include PDE within the curricula. The conceptual framework of this study is designed to examine changes in students' behaviors and language while receiving this education.

The Research Questions

1. What changes have students experienced with 21st century competencies, namely communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, or courage?
2. How have these changes influenced the students' personal, family, school, and/or community life?
3. How have the students comprehended, used realistically, and incorporated these skills into actual work habits?

Community Background and Demographics

The San Francisco Bay Area school district serves approximately 8,765 students (Education Data Partnership, 2011). This district serves the high school populations coming from eight elementary districts located in eight towns and cities in the county. The suburban-like setting of the communities, which range from very high to very low income, can easily hide the presence of urban realities (County of San Mateo Profile, 2010). Of great importance is the proximity of the district to Silicon Valley, the technology center of the world: Silicon Valley as well as to the biotech companies north of the district. The following is a list of the largest employers in San Mateo County:

- United Airlines 9,600
- Genentech Inc. 8250
- Oracle 5,642
- County of San Mateo 5443
- Kaiser Permanente 3,780
- Safeway, Inc. 2,273

(County of San Mateo, 2010-2012 profile, p. A-31)

San Mateo County's median family income in 2008 was \$101,504. Per capita income was \$44,438 and 6.6 percent of people were living in poverty (p. A-33).

Historically, San Mateo County has enjoyed a low unemployment rate as well. The county's unemployment rate was 13% in March 2010. San Mateo County has the third lowest unemployment rate amount California's 58 counties (p. A-32). In February 2010, median home prices stood at \$554,000 (p. A-33).

The High School District

The diversity in the student population of the district provides a unique resource as well as a complex challenges. District-wide in 2010-2011, the white student population

was 37.3% of the whole; Latinos accounted for 45.3%, Asians 7.2% and African-Americans were 4.2% of the student population. Approximately 19.1% of the student population represented English-language learners. Many of them recent immigrants with very limited skills in English, and 36.5% are socio-economically disadvantaged (Education Data Partnership, 2011, p. 2).

Personal History at the District

I came to this district in 1998, teaching Drama, English, Business Communications, and Media Literacy at my High School for two years. I was the Department Chair for the Academy Program for seven years, an at-risk sheltered program, with a career focus. My colleagues and I earned the title of exemplary California Partnership Academy Program for Northern California. In 2007, I was hired at the District Office, managing a reform effort to ensure that all students complete one year of a CTE coursework. My team and I were successful and changed the graduation requirement, a small step toward bringing equitable education to all the students within the district. I taught BUILD, the at-risk entrepreneurial program for two years, with my students taking first place at the overall competition. Currently, I teach history to 9th graders at my high school.

BUILD

BUILD is an entrepreneurial educational program with a social justice mission. It is a hybrid experience as it is first taught in the schools as an in-school elective in the 9th grade only. The 10th through 12th grade program occurs off-site at the BUILD office as both an entrepreneurial experience and an after-school intervention program. For the purpose of this study, I will only focus on the students' perceptions from the PDE they receive. The following is from the BUILD website:

BUILD mission and values. BUILD’s Mission is to use entrepreneurship to excite and propel disengaged, low-income students through high school to college success. Our program staff works with youth based on a set of Core Values and Guiding Principles.

Core values.

- BUILD sees value and opportunity in marginalized youth that others often do not.
- BUILD views entrepreneurship as a vehicle to higher education, not an ultimate destination.
- BUILD matches high expectations for students with a “can-do” problem-solving approach.
- BUILD operates at the axis of absolute authority and unconditional love.
- The BUILD program is different from most high school programs.

Staff guiding principles.

- Entrepreneurial Innovation
- Teamwork
- Belief in the Power of Youth
- Relentless Pursuit of Excellence
- Strengthening the BUILD Family (BUILD, “About Us,” 2013)

The program is organized as follows:

- Students learn the basics of entrepreneurship while improving academic skills,
- Develop a business plan,
- Secure seed capital through a pitch to a venture capitalist,
- Run their own businesses, and
- Concentrate on going to college

The specific students chosen for BUILD are individuals from economically disadvantaged populations. The students must meet extremely high expectations for behavior, and they must maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA each year. Students follow a strict set of rules and are held accountable for their participation. Students are not just taught about business—they learn the difference between being an entrepreneur and being an employee, as well as the difference between chatting with friends and presenting to business people. BUILD provides benefits that last a lifetime. From a tangible standpoint, students get to keep the profits from their businesses. They graduate high school, receive scholarships, and all of them go to college. They also receive personal development education, specifically 21st century skills such as critical thinking, leadership, financial management skills, conflict resolution, and negotiating skills, which are tools that are valuable at any stage of life. Simply put, they learn how to succeed (BUILD, 2011).

I studied the students of BUILD for three reasons. First, I taught in the BUILD program, and I understand and have observed the outcomes of an entrepreneurial, 21st century learning experience. Second, I wanted to study students from lower SED backgrounds to reveal new knowledge regarding the influence that PDE specifically had on their personal and academic lives. Third, students learn communication and collaboration skills as well as innovation/creativity skills, which are essential learning tools for students to achieve positive performance outcomes as indicated by the rigorous BUILD curriculum. I documented the students' perspectives on how or if this learning supports and helps them in their gaining academic self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy, thereby preparing them for their future success.

Data Collection Tools. The type of data needed for the study included the following:

- Student interviews from 3 grade levels—sophomore, junior, senior

- Student Data Demographics
- Student Observations at the BUILD Office
- Student Written Response Journals
- Four Student Focus Groups: Thirteen Students, Three Grade Levels

In August, I recruited three times, in all three grade levels. In September, I interviewed 24 students. The preliminary interviews inquired about the students' knowledge, vocabulary awareness, and learning impact of 21st century skills, helping me to discern what type of focus group questions that I needed. Some of the questions were critical thinking questions, allowing for a more in-depth discussion of the topic and for the inquiry to spiral, leading to new knowledge and more inquiry. Then demographic data was used to narrow the selection of participants for research. In October and November, I conducted four focus groups choosing thirteen students motivated to participate in this work. I informally observed the participants all throughout the study at the BUILD office.

Variables. According to Creswell (2009), a variable is a characteristic or attribute of an individual or organization that can be observed or measured, and the variable differs among individuals and groups being studied. The independent variables are the behavior and language of students from SED subgroups experienced personal development education. In my study, the outcomes were “dependent variables,” since the outcome is dependent on the beginning independent variable. So the dependent variable would be the observable behavior and language changes measured by this study after experiencing this education.

Limitations. Because of the intangible nature of studying human behavior, this research can be highly subjective and hard to assess, making it a challenge to demonstrate theory, learning, and outcomes. The potential challenges include the following:

- The openness of the inquiry—discussion spiraled at times into many directions which is hard to manage given the time constraints of the project
- This study is local and not meant for a national perspective
- Perceptions from other researchers regarding hegemonic issues revolved around cultural capital, ‘acting-white’ and code switching
- Measurement/outcomes are difficult due to the elusive nature of the subject
- A longitudinal study would offer additional, long-term data
- This research may only be the beginning of further studies
- Ethical problems—one included obtaining permission from parents
- Students wanted to please me knowing they are being observed and recorded
- Students were not seeing the value in this research and quitting mid-way

The students had the potential for many variables, which required more time than this study allowed. Studying human competencies, such as communication and the ability to collaborate, is a challenge. According to Shuman, Besterfield-Sacre, and McGourty (2005), just because a snapshot of the behavior was demonstrated at the time of the study, there was no concrete proof that the behavior would be adapted and used during an actual experience. Therefore, it must be stated that the findings from the students’ voices may be limited only to these particular students and not representative of all BUILD students.

The learning outcomes of behavioral curricula are highly situational, and human behavior is highly variable, making this a challenge to study and assess. Schuman et al. (2005) have suggested increasing validity by using multiple sources for assessment purposes such as peer feedback, rubrics, and observations repeated over time, but these were not feasible as they were lengthy and costly. The number of variables, combined with time and financial constraints, limits this study's scope. Finally, I had to be diligent as the researcher and not the teacher in conducting a qualitative study and remain open and neutral allowing students' voices and the students' input to guide the work.

Addressing Limitations. The potential limitations listed above are real. Three listed limitations centered on the perception of the subject matter, personal development education. Although PDE is not new to education, it is a new area of study. Therefore, considerable advocacy and education were done to ensure cooperation from the staff and the University. Also, as noted, measuring outcomes from this study is difficult as researching human behavior is never an absolute, and what may look like success to one person will not be viewed as success by another. Therefore, having students speak from their point of view and in focus groups where they can feel comfortable is likely to increase the authenticity of their responses and input.

Of greater concern are the unseen limitations, which tend to surface when least expected. My initial concern that students might be unable to articulate their growth or perception of their behavioral, intellectual, or emotional transformation was not borne out, as all 13 participants had something to share regarding these questions and were eager to speak. Time was a huge limitation. The openness of the inquiry spiraled, at times, in many directions, but I stayed with my timeline. Secondly, I was worried about human interactions as potential limitations, mainly in terms of individual perceptions. Communication was critical to offsetting these types of problems. Work and effort geared

toward relationship building played a vital role as well with the students and the BUILD staff.

Data Analysis—Pilot

I received permission from the principal and completed one pilot interview (Appendix E) to learn about the students' perceptions and thinking regarding personal development education, especially 21st century skills. Current literature tells us our students need PDE, but there is very little research documenting student perceptions.

The student survey (See Appendix F.) was revised several times before the pilot was executed. I used seven open-ended questions to create space for the students' voices and for new ideas to emerge. I obtained six interviews: two freshmen, one sophomore, two juniors, and one senior. Two interviews were solo, and two were joint. Five students were interviewed at another high school in the district where BUILD runs a tutorial on site, after school, for BUILD students. And the sixth interview was conducted at my site. Out of the six students, five of them were unknown to me, and the other one is a student in my class. All six interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder (See Appendix G for results.).

Changes to the Protocol

Because of the pilot, I redesigned my protocol and developed interview questions that were in-depth, solo interviews with each student for selection into the focus group. The students were more open, relaxed, and expressed themselves with less inhibition than they would with another student present. I selected students that were motivated to participate in a research study, asking them to keep a student journal for documentation purposes. Lastly, I conducted four focus groups that centered on communication and collaboration skills exploring the students' perceptions of this type of learning, how it might impact their future plans, any impact this learning experience has made within the

students' own families and quite possibly their communities, as well as any changes noted in their work habits.

Phases of the Study: Phase 1

Recruitment began in late August where I attended all three grade levels' launch camp meetings. Interview questions were administered at the BUILD office to students from three grade levels, sophomore, junior, and senior, to gather data about their knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of 21st century skills. I audio-taped 28 participants and took field notes. Four of them failed to return parent permission letters, so those four were not used. During this first phase, the information gathered was put into a chart noting student demographics, answers to the survey, and coded columns for the open-ended questions. Thirteen students were selected based on the interview data, specifically noting motivated students who express interest in this study. Demographic data was then gathered and quantified on the 13 selected students specifically noting Free and Reduced Lunch status. I also informally observed them as they interacted with each other at the BUILD office taking field notes.

Phases of the Study: Phase 2

During the second phase of the research, I selected thirteen participants for in-depth research communicating their personal stories of growth since they entered BUILD via the use of focus groups. The focus was two of the five 21st century behavioral competencies: communication and collaboration. I audio-taped them, took field notes, had them write their thoughts on posters and write in student journals. I captured many of their stories through their oral and written words, transcribing and coding the findings. I conducted four focus groups, two in October and two in November in two Teams: Team A and Team B. Team A had four participants, and Team B had nine. I fed them all four

times, which interfered with the data collection, but raised trust by creating a warm and comfortable atmosphere for sharing thoughts.

Phases of the Study: Phase 3

During the final phase of the research, I recorded, transcribed, and coded the focus group discussions. I created 21 charts to organize their responses, which are presented in tables in Chapter 4. I then analyzed the data for obvious responses and subsequently wrote unanticipated findings that emerged from the data, also in Chapter 4.

Participant Rights

In summer 2011, I met with BUILD's site director and obtained permission to conduct the research study. I drafted student and parent permission letters which were accepted by CSU East Bay's Institutional Review Board.

Participants-Researcher Positioning

Borrowing the concept that language has the power to transform individuals from Briscoe, Arriaza, and Henze (2009), I asked, "How can this research study use the transformative power of language, both verbal and non-verbal, to advance equity and social justice?" (p. 25). With this rationale, I explored the differences in language within SED populations and what they perceived as successful language to achieve their goals. I have been in the education profession for almost 20 years and have chosen to work with SED populations for most of my career. I have witnessed the inequities that the students suffer in school and their hardships in trying to succeed, most often due to their lack of the dominant culture's cultural capital.

In the 1990s, when I first entered education, I learned about the term "Cash English," English spoken in the world of business and work, in a teacher-training seminar. I was intrigued with this terminology and used it in my own practice by explaining the difference in language and the power that lies in knowing when to use "Cash English" for

the students' navigation in obtaining the results they sought. I believe in empowering my students with educational tools, language, behaviors, and strategies, helping them navigate success for themselves, both in the classroom and life.

As a researcher and practitioner, I was granted the opportunity to observe this type of personal development education, gather students' voices and perceptions around this type of education, record them, and analyze the findings with the possibility of having students voice their need for personal development educational reform. It is my sincere goal of this research, with the concluding findings, to reveal the significance of how PDE creates successful student outcomes. With these findings, I expect the validity of to be taken seriously. There is real potential for adopting such curriculum into instructor-training programs in universities, empowering new teachers and, thus, empowering the students, by allowing them access to and the abilities to navigate power relationships. This theoretical framework is not intended to negate the students' culture, behavior, or language but to add navigational skills for their success. I strived to counter this bias with my empirical observations, both as an educator and researcher. I am now from the dominant class, a white middle-aged female. With my life experiences and knowledge, I can offer support and experience to students who need help to achieve their dreams, whatever they imagine them to be. This is my goal and my motivation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

–African proverb

In Chapter 3, I explained that my research design was created to study students’ perceptions and personal changes upon receiving a 21st century skills education. I sought students’ stories about Personal Development Education (PDE) in the context of an entrepreneurial, after school program called BUILD. I intended to collect the following:

- Student interviews from three grade levels—sophomore, junior, and senior
- Student demographic data
- Notes from informal student observations at the BUILD office
- Student-written response journals
- Responses from four student focus groups of 13 students across 3 grade levels

I conducted 24 student interviews; researched data that included demographics, ethnicities, and free and reduced lunch status; made general observations at the BUILD office; and used student journals and four focus group sessions among 13 students total.

The individual interviews allowed me to inquire about the students’ knowledge, vocabulary, and the influence that 21st century skills have had on their thinking and interactions with others. Interview questions required a more in-depth, critical discussion of the topic, and for the inquiry to spiral, leading to new knowledge and deeper inquiry. My intent was to use data such as demographics, GPAs, behavior, test scores and college acceptance letters, but after the initial interviews, I realized that data was not necessary: I was studying their personal stories and perceptions, and data such as GPAs, behavior reports, and college acceptance letters would not enhance my understanding of students’

experiences. Therefore, I limited my use of demographic data to gender, addresses, ethnicities, and free and reduced-lunch status. While this study is not an ethnography, my method was qualitative, student-centered, and conducted in the after school setting. Data are from interviews, focus group reflections, and informal observations made at the BUILD office after school hours and shared by the 13 students motivated to take part in this study. In completing the study, I performed the observations, interviews, and focus groups as originally designed; additionally, I chose not to seek the less necessary demographic data and the exit interviews. The post-interviews with individual students did not take place because the program manager was concerned about the students missing program activities.

In the sections that follow, I first analyze the data derived from the interviews and focus groups, and then I present more in-depth analysis using the focus group data. I then share the themes that emerged through my coding process.

Data Collection

The setting. All data collection occurred at the BUILD office proximate to the students' high schools. It is a large cavernous space with a happy feel; it is best described as an upgraded hip, high-tech low budget work space, including a ceiling with exposed wooden beams that add to the authenticity as well as the warmth of the environment. The BUILD office has exposed metal and large cylinder heating ducts that add to the high-tech, Silicon Valley start-up tone. The office begins on the ground floor with an elevator for disabled people. To the left are the conference rooms where I conducted the focus groups, which are normally used for adult training. The stairs lead up to the next level, where the students meet.

The first big space upstairs is a large one. There are seven breakout rooms lining two of the four walls; one larger break-out room is reserved for "academics" where the

students are tutored by adult tutors. The third wall is utilitarian—a kitchen and a bathroom—lending itself to the homey feel of the environment. The fourth wall contains five cube spaces, and the beige walls and spotted mauve carpet add to the low-budget start-up feel. The second big space is reserved for seniors and is much more serious and quiet. The adults who staff BUILD share this space with the students and work in adjoining cubes.

The space is quite unique for high school students because they can move around, and the fluid setting creates a sense of freedom. Additionally, the working space allows a more natural physicality where students can easily, and independently, meet their bodily needs, creating an adult-type work environment. The students respond positively to this freedom of physical space and movement. I saw very little disobedience, defiance, or rudeness from the students. The BUILD program takes place after school, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.; they arrive at 4:00 p.m. and are expected to begin work at 4:30 p.m. The students seemed happy to be there: they checked in, ate snacks, and talked with each other. This appeared to be bonding/eating/talking time to transition from their school day to the BUILD experience.

Demographic data. The chart that follows is the demographic data that I gathered on the interviewees and subsequently the participants of the focus groups. For the purpose of confidentiality, all names are pseudonyms:
Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Grade	School	Gender	Ethnicity	Free & Reduced Lunch
Donny	11	HS A	Male	ME	Yes
Kay	11	HS C	Female	LA	Yes
Jose	11	HS B	Male	LA	Yes
John	11	HS B	Male	LA	Yes
Bobby	11	HS A	Male	AA/EA	Yes
Sienna	11	HS A	Female	ME	Yes
Cat	11	HS B	Female	CA	No
Yolanda	11	HS A	Female	LA	Yes
Lorenzo	11	HS A	Male	LA	Yes
Almira	11	HS A	Female	LA	Yes
Taylor	12	HS B	Female	EA	No
Brittany	11	HS A	Female	EA	Yes
Antone	11	HS A	Male	LA	No
Katrina	10	HS C	Female	LA	Yes
Johnny	12	HS A	Male	LA	Unknown
Olma	10	HS A	Female	PI	Yes
Georgie	10	HS C	Female	LA	Unknown
Barley	10	HS A	Male	AS-A/ Lebanese	Unknown
Rosa	10	HS A	Female	LA	No
Ethel	10	HS A	Female	Filipina-	No
Marisol	11	HS C	Female	LA	Yes
Eduardo	12	HS D	Male	LA	Yes
Participant	Grade	School	Gender	Ethnicity	Free & Reduced

					Lunch
Susie	12	HS D	Female	LA	Yes
Ronesha	12	HS D	Female	AA	Yes
Pamela	10	HS C	Female	LA	Yes
Maria	10	HS B	Female	LA	Yes
Bambi	10	HS B	Female	LA	No
Raj	12	HS A	Male	IA	No

Note. Four different high schools are labeled A, B, C, and D. ME = Middle Eastern-American; LA = Latino/a-American; AA = African-American; EA = European-American; PI = Pacific Islander; AS-A = Asian-American; IA = Indian (South Asian)-American; RWC = Redwood City; EPA = East Palo Alto. Author's table.

The Interviews

Criteria developed for choosing participants. As a teacher, I knew many of the participants and have taught some of them in the classroom. My relationships with these students provided a certain level of trust that allowed me to limit the recruitment process to sending emails, three separate recruitment days, and making myself available to meet with them at any time. It also imposed limitations on my study which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 5.

The purpose of the interviews was to qualify participants for the focus groups. I conducted 24 interviews over six weeks. I was looking for participants who were equally represented across gender, ethnicity, and the population of a socio-economically disadvantaged group. I also sought students who were dependable and articulate. During the interviews, I screened the students for possible participation in the focus groups. The following is the final list of criteria:

1. Communicated in a verbal, expressive manner
2. Exhibited a willingness to talk
3. Projected openness

4. Demonstrated friendliness and flexibility
5. Showed motivation to be in this study
6. Focused responses on the topic of 21st century skills, instead of other academic topics such as college help or an intervention program
7. Easily and readily discussed ideas that kept generating new thoughts and expressed evidence of their thoughts
8. Provided reflective responses
9. Expressed an eagerness to help others gain the success that they have gained
10. Harbored a general curiosity of participating in a research study

Interview Findings

During the preliminary interviews, I audio-taped the interviews and took field notes as each student responded to the six questions below:

1. Why did you join BUILD?
2. Why do you want to be in this study?
3. Why should other students join BUILD? Can you tell me about an experience while attending BUILD that reflects what this program is about to you?
4. What is your communication style?
5. Can you share a story regarding the teaming experience you have had in BUILD?
6. How has the teaming experience been for you?

Responses to the six questions centered on the value of 21st century skills. The three main themes were as follows: the value of communication and collaboration skills, confidence building, and self-empowerment. All participants expressed a desire to

achieve success in life with useful and profitable careers. In addition, participants specifically named communication and collaboration skills as tools that would help them achieve their goals. Some responses centered on the value of code-switching, which they believe allows them to voice their ideas in a variety of settings and communicate effectively. They also spoke of risk-taking and gaining confidence within this type of education. Some examples of the value of 21st century skills were as follows: “It is important [communication] because you want to know what is going on,”; “For a better future,” and “It is better with a group of minds with different knowledge.” They easily voiced their perceptions and thoughts regarding this type of education. Participants spoke of communication strategies for their success. For instance: “I take notes—brainstorm my ideas and that is how I create my ideas. Then I talk to others.”

A striking theme that emerged from individual student interviews about the BUILD experience was the story of personal transformation, especially with regard to the theme of self-empowerment for a better future. The interviews helped me to create focus group questions designed for more in-depth inquiry into personal development education. One participant stated that 21st century skills helped her to “create stronger and better ideas for success—to just reach farther.” This very strong statement expressed her desire for her own personal growth. I was so struck by this quote that I used it to name this study, “...to just reach farther.” She and others are learning to tap into their own greatness. This belief doesn’t always manifest externally, but it exists as a deeply personal self-empowerment occurring within the students as they voice their thoughts. Next, I will share data collected from the four focus groups. I have organized the data in tables and then analyze the findings.

Description of the Participants

From the aforementioned inclusion criteria, I selected the 13 participants above to participate in two rounds of focus groups. I split the participants into two groups: Team A, with four participants, and Team B with nine based on students' availability. I conducted four focus groups all together, two with each team. In the following section, I provide a brief description of the participants that I selected. Table 2 below displays the basic demographic data of the 13 participants chosen from the preliminary interviews of 24 students for the focus groups.

Table 2

Focus Group Demographics

Participant	Gender	Grade	Ethnicity	Free or reduced lunch	Attendance
Rosa	Female	10	Latin American	No	Absent once
Maria	Female	10	Latin American	Yes	Present
Bambi	Female	12	European American	No	Present
Barley	Male	10	Asian & Middle Eastern American	Unknown	Present
Sienna	Female	11	Middle Eastern American	Yes	Present
Brittany	Female	11	European American	Yes	Present
Donny	Male	11	Middle Eastern American	Yes	Absent once
Jose	Male	11	Latin	Yes	Present

Ronesha	Female	12	American African American	Yes	Late twice
Bobby	Male	11	African & European American	Yes	Present
Lorenzo	Male	11	Latin American	Yes	Present
Taylor	Female	11	European American	No	Absent once
Raj	Male	12	Indian American	No	Late twice

Note. Author's table.

Team A

Rosa is a Latina in the 10th grade that attends High School A (HS A) and is not in the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program. She is an attractive young woman, well groomed, with hair neatly in a bun and stylish glasses on. She seems serious and focused. She is mature and responsible and shoulders much within her team. She works with a very difficult team member and therefore spoke truthfully about her frustrations, challenges, and successes. She was absent for one round of focus groups.

Maria is a Latina in the 10th grade attending HS B. She is the only FRL student in Team A. She is an overweight, plain girl who has a lisp and appears to have a strabismus. She was eager to participate in this event, and this motivation manifested throughout the study; she is a very strong-minded young woman. Maria shared insights about how she wants to prove “everybody” wrong. When I probed that response, she said that lots of people put her down, and she loves to show them that they are wrong about her. This participant appeared to be quite marginalized from mainstream schooling as her dialogue revealed many stories of struggles and the strength she used to overcome them.

Bambi is a Euro American, 12th grade female who attends HS B and is not FRL. She is tall with long hair, and is friendly and open. She describes herself as someone who likes to talk and is very opinionated. She was the only senior in this group, but it did not seem to matter to her. She was cooperative and consistently emphasized that being “open” was key to communication/collaboration success.

Barley is the only male of the group, a 10th grader of mixed ethnicity consisting of Pilipino and Middle Eastern; he is also a former student. He attends HS A and does not have FRL status. He is a tall, attractive young man who wears glasses and is always smiling. His main point was that working with different people was interesting and fun to him, and he enjoys the experience of teaming due to his attitude. He laughs easily and readily and has a friendly, cheery disposition.

Team B

Sienna is a Middle Eastern American female junior at HS A and a former student of mine. She is an attractive young woman, with enormously expressive ideas, well groomed, and loud. She laughs easily and readily, and you can hear her laughter all over the BUILD office space. She was quite contained during this focus group, and I sensed that she was not able to share freely in front of the other students. She was much more open when we were alone. She spoke repeatedly about the use and value of code-switching.

Brittany is a female European American 11th grader who attends HS A and is FRL. I met her mother as well who is not groomed very well, has dental problems, and appeared to live in poverty. Brittany is a tall, pretty young woman with long brown hair and very soft-spoken. She was shy in the focus group but not as shy as she had once been. She spoke more during the interviews when peers were not around. She spoke readily about her personal transformation and her newly acquired self-empowerment.

Jose is a Latin American male junior who attends HS B and is categorized as FRL. He is a tall, handsome young man who seems serious about his education. He has a twin, but he was the brother that I chose due to his articulate answers. He appeared well-groomed, polite, and motivated to partake in the study. He was socially appropriate and seemed well liked by the other participants.

Ronesha is a female African-American Senior who attends HS D and is also categorized as FRL. She arrived half an hour late both times; therefore, her responses were not complete. She is an attractive young woman, well groomed and appears sweet. Despite arriving late, she spoke well and wanted to contribute to the conversation. She seems self-confident and serious about the learning and growth that has taken place for her in the last four years. She was the only student who spoke about workplace skills and the value of this type of learning for her future. She also referred to the disheartened spirit of her community.

Bobby is a male, African American and European American junior who attends HS A and is a former student of mine. He is categorized as FRL as well. Bobby is an overweight, bright young man who can come across as a bit dull—but he is not. He is easy-going and appears to have only sports on his mind. This is also not true. He ate quite a bit during the meeting. When I asked them to journal, he defined communication so succinctly that when he shared out loud, he impressed the entire group with his elegant writing style. Bobby's sports-centric language is deceiving as he is quite a serious young man with many goals for himself. Unfortunately, he ate continually during the conversations, which inhibited his responses.

Lorenzo is a Latin American male junior who attends HS A, is categorized as FRL, and is a former student of mine. He is of medium build and thin of frame, with large teeth. Lorenzo is a very nice, considerate, and polite young man; he describes

himself this way, and I agree with him. He has also told me repeatedly that he is shy. I was a bit leery to choose him for this study, but I thought perhaps a quiet student might add information that the more verbal students would not. Many of his reflections centered on listening, having patience, and being nice.

Taylor is a female European American who attends HS B and is not FRL. She is a tall, very attractive young woman who was quite articulate during the interview. She appears less marginalized than some, but during the interview casually referred to the neglect in her home. I included her because of her personal struggles with neglect. She has an interesting way of talking: she speaks rather rapidly and was very willing to share her stories. She is agreeable, cheerful, and appears to appreciate the many 21st century skills that she has acquired. She was absent for Round 2 of the focus groups.

Raj is a male senior who emigrated from India, attends HS A, and is not FRL. I taught him for one year in my class. He is a tall young man with facial hair and is quite serious about his education. He has a keen sense of humor, is very respectful, and is being raised by a single mom. I know a bit of the history of his family, and two years ago I bought him clothes for the BUILD events as he was living in poverty. He arrived late to both rounds; therefore, he was not able to contribute as much to this study as other participants.

Donny is in the 11th grade at HS A. He is a Middle Eastern American male, openly bisexual, categorized as FRL, and a former student of mine. He describes himself as “fat, Arab, and gay.” He has a keen intelligence, sharp wit, and at times exhibited hostile behavior with the other participants. He was absent for one round.

Introduction to Data Collection

The first round of focus groups occurred on October 16 and 17, 2012. Round Two was November 5 and 6, 2012. Round 1 consisted of 13 participants total; the two who

arrived late and did not participate in the discussion are noted in the No Response columns in the tables below. One participant was absent entirely in Round 1. During Round 2 there were two absent participants and two late arrivals.

The following table (Table 3) captures the cycle of data collection:

Table 3

Data Collection Overview: Questions and Format

Types of Data	Questions
Interviews	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did you join BUILD? 2. Why do you want to be in this study? 3. Why should other students join BUILD? Can you tell me about an experience while attending BUILD that reflects what this program is about to you? 4. What is your communication style? 5. Can you share a story regarding the teaming experience you have had in BUILD? 6. How has the teaming experience been for you?
Round 1 focus group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you define effective communication and what are the skills needed? 2. What communication skills have you developed since joining BUILD? 3. **What type of skills and attitudes do you need for effective teaming? 4. **What teaming skills have your developed since joining BUILD? 5. How do you think these skills will help you in the future? 6. How have you grown personally in your communication and teaming skills?
Round 1 poster data	

<p>Round 2 focus group</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What type of skills and attitudes do you need for effective teaming? 2. What teaming skills have your developed since joining BUILD? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the last 24 hours how did you communication or collaborate? With whom? Share a story? A result? 2. How are you using communication and/or collaboration skills? Where? Home? School? Work? BUILD? Personal Life? Are they changing you in any way? Is that OK? What new habits have you adopted? What impact are these skills having on you? 3. What other 21st century skills: creativity, critical thinking, or risk- taking have you experienced? If so, what are your thoughts, opinions, or feelings on these skills? 4. Should schools teach these 21st century skills? If so, where? How? Why? 5. Sacrifice? What? Your time? Your personality? Do you feel you have given up part of yourself to learn these skills? If so what? Was it worth it? 6. Have any of your relationships in any areas of your life changed since using these skills?
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Note. Author’s table.

Focus Group Round 1

I coded the data by category into a series of tables, drawing from the research on 21st century skills vocabulary and participants’ actual language in identifying the skills. “These findings strongly suggest a more holistic approach to education—one than aims to equip young adults with a broader range of skills—is more likely to produce youth who will succeed in the 21st century” (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011, p. 4). Refer to Appendices C & D for a fuller listing of these skills.

There were 12 focus group questions posed to both teams; the first six questions are from Round 1 in October 2012. In the following pages, I briefly introduce each question with its corresponding table and explain the codes as they emerged from the

data. In a few cases, I use my own words, such as “discernment,” for the sake of brevity in the table, but generally the terms are the participants’ actual words. In the tables below, an asterisk next to the word means that the word is my interpretative term.

The first question asked the students how they define “communication” and what skills are needed for communication. Since the question required a two-part response, Table 4 relays the definitions and Table 5 shows the skills. Six out of 10 participants’ spoke of knowing when and who to speak or listen to, which I describe as “discernment.” The other major response of note was four out of 10 students spoke of “being understood or to understand” when communicating.

Table 4

Key Codes Appearing in Student Responses to Round 1, Question 1a: “How do you define effective communication?” (n = 10)

Terms used to define “effective communication”	Number of students who expressed term
Listening	2
Being understood	4
Knowledge, insight	3
Taking notes	2
Focus, organized	2
Audience awareness	1
Open	1
Problem-solving*	3
Discernment*	6
No Response	3

Note. Three students were either late or absent and did not respond. Author’s table.

The second part of the question asked about the skills needed for effective communication (Table 5). The students listed ten skills; the most significant skill

mentioned (4 out of 10 participants) described the ability to use “appropriate language,” which I have designated as discernment.

Table 5

Key Codes Appearing in Student Responses to Round 1, Question 1b: “What are the skills needed [for effective communication]?” (n = 10)

Skills needed for “effective communication”	Number of students who expressed term
Listening	1
Flexibility	2
Paraphrasing	3
Open	1
Eye contact	1
Voice	2
Appropriate language	4
Note taking	1
Credibility	2
Vocabulary	2
No response	3

Note. Three students were either late or absent and did not respond. Author’s table.

Question 2 asked what communication skills the students have personally developed. Four out of 10 participants described using appropriate language, gestures, vocabulary, and so on, at appropriate times and settings, which I categorized as discernment to keep Table 6 legible. Sometimes the participants described stories of conflict with other team members, which I categorized as “problem-solving.”

Table 6
Key Codes Appearing in Student Responses to Round 1, Question 2: “What communication skills have you developed since joining BUILD?” (n = 10)

Skills	Number of students
Listening	3
Expressing	2
Selecting appropriate language	1
Ability to present ideas	2
Concision of speech	1
Discernment	4
Problem-solving	1
Performance skills	1
No response	4

Note. Three students were either late or absent and one did not respond. Author’s table.

Table 7 shows responses when I asked the students to brainstorm ideas for Question 3 on poster paper that I provided. Seventeen categories were listed; all terms below come from the participants. Five out of 10 described “positive attitude,” and four out of 10 said “passionate” and “work together” as the skills and attitudes need for effective teaming.

Table 7
Student Brainstorming Responses to Round 1, Question 3: “What types of skills and attitudes are needed for effective teaming?” (n = 10)

Terms used	Number of students
Positive attitude	5
Passion	3
Friendliness/inclusiveness	4
Knowledge of rules or norms	2
Patience	3
Professionalism	3
Working together	4

Listening	2
Confidence	3
Communication	2
Believe in team members	2
Get to know personalities	2
Open	2
Exploring all possibilities	2
Sacrifice	2
Compromise	2
Express ideas	2
No response	4

Note. One participant was absent, and two were late; therefore, there were only 10 respondents for this poster data. Author's table.

Question 3 asked students what types of skills and attitudes they thought were needed for effective teaming. The following table (Table 8) lists 27 categories, all of which are participants' words except for "problem-solving." Eight out of 10 students described "sacrificing," a response I hadn't anticipated and which informed Round 2 questioning about necessary skills and attitudes for effective teaming.

Table 8
Student Responses to Round 1, Question 3: "What types of skills and attitudes are needed for effective teaming?" (n = 10)

Skills and attitudes	Number of students
Positive attitude	5
Passion	3
Friendliness/inclusiveness	4
Knowledge of rules or norms	2
Patience	4
Professionalism	5
Working together	5
Listening	2

Confidence	4
Time management	3
Compromise	1
Leadership	3
Helpful	4
Focus	2
Respect	2
Negative attitude	1
Dependable	1
Sacrificing	8
Organization	2
Communication	4
Problem-solving*	1
Set boundaries	3
Open	2
Sense of self	3
Ignore	4
Sensitivity	3
Fun	2
No response	4

Note. One participant was absent, and two were late; therefore, there were only 10 respondents for the question. Author's table.

Question 4 asked the students what teaming skills they have personally developed. All 14 categories in Table 9 are the participants' own words. Five out of 11 participants described communication skills as the skill they developed. Four out of 11 described confidence, sacrificing, and ignoring as the teaming skills they have acquired.

Table 9

Student Responses to Round 1, Question 4: "What teaming skills have you developed since joining BUILD?" (n = 11)

Terms used	Number of students
Caring	1
Leadership	3
Professionalism	2
Inclusive	1
Patience	3
Confidence	4
Resiliency	3
Helpful	2
Sacrificing	4
Communication	5
Persistence	2
Ignore	4
Set boundaries	3
Self-control	3
No response	2

Note. One participant absent, and one was late; therefore, there were only 11 respondents for the question. Author's table.

Once again, I asked the students to brainstorm on poster paper—this time about Question 4. The next table (Table 10) represents data gained from their posters. Like the data from Round 1 Question 3, the 13 categories below came directly from the participants' language. Four out of 10 students listed leadership skills, cooperation, bonding, and patience as the most effective skills they have developed for collaboration.

Table 10

Student brainstorming responses to Round 1, Question 4: "What teaming skills have you developed since joining BUILD?" (n = 10)

Terms used	Number of students
Leadership	4
Finance	2
Creativity	2

Knowledge	2
Cooperation	4
Effective communication	2
Oral skills	2
Bonding	4
Focus	2
Professionalism	2
Patience	4
Inclusive	2
Compromise	2
No response	2

Note. One participant was absent, and two were late; therefore, there were only 10 respondents for this poster data. Author's table.

Question 5 asked the students how they think these skills will help them in the future. The biggest response from 10 out of 12 students (the late participants had arrived between Questions 4 and 5) stated "building confidence." The next frequent category, cited by 8 out of 12 students, stated "effectively communicate," and the third major response was "a better work ethic," a term used by 6 out of 12 students. The full results are below, in Table 11.

Table 11

Student Responses to Round 1, Question 5: "How do you think these skills will help you in the future?" (n = 12)

Situations and settings	Number of students
Employment	2
Confidence	10
Effective communication	8
Effective teaming	5
Empowerment	1
Work ethic	6
Self-control	2

Professionalism	2
Open	2
Meet new people	2
Community	2
School	2
Church	1
Deeper understanding	1
Presentations	2
Diversity work	1
No response	2

Note. One participant was absent; therefore, there were only 12 respondents for this poster data. Author's table.

The last question for Round 1 asked the participants to describe their own personal growth regarding communication and collaboration skills. Eight out of 12 said that they have developed more confidence, and 6 out of 12 felt they had grown in effective communication (See Table 12.).

Table 12

Student Responses to Round 1, Question 6: "How have you personally grown in your communication and teaming skills?" (n = 12)

Growth areas	Number of students
Confidence	8
Responsibility	2
Ownership	1
Leadership	1
Effective communication	6
Risk-taking	1
Aggressive	1
Positive	2
Respect	1
Set boundaries	1
Working with diverse people	0

Effective teaming	1
Empowerment	2
Knowledge	1
Patience	1
Work ethic	1
Opportunistic	1
No response	2

Note. One participant was absent; therefore, there were only 12 respondents for this data, and Jose had no response. Author's table.

Focus Group Round 2

The second round occurred on November 5th for Team A and the 6th for Team B. These two focus groups were different from the first round: First, my questions were informed from Round 1; therefore, they were more probing in nature in order to understand the participants' thinking in more depth. Second, I only fed them snacks in October, but this time I brought full meals as requested by the participants. They were very happy about this, and the trust level elevated. A third difference was that some had tested me in Round 1 by swearing and telling "off-color" jokes. Since they had determined that I was not using school-derived authority with them, their trust escalated, and they were more open to expressing themselves than I had experienced in Round 1.

In Round 2, I attempted to go further in my data gathering by capturing the stories of the participants; therefore, the data was harder to code. Since the students lowered their affective filter, they spoke more in depth by using their personal stories to respond to my questions. At times, some of them were too busy eating to respond, which did interfere with the data collection. Later in this chapter, I provide narrative data, which is more effective for reporting some of these findings.

The first question asked the participants to share stories of communication and collaboration. Out of 13 focus-group participants between the two teams, two were absent, and two were late. Seven of the nine participants present for Question 1 described stories of “sharing knowledge,” and five out of nine student narratives cited their confidence, ability to problem-solve, and understanding/being understood (See Table 13.). The setting of their stories ranged from academic to personal, including both family and friends.

Table 13

Student Responses to Round 2, Question 1: “In the last 24 hours, how did you communicate or collaborate? With whom? Share a story or a result?” (n = 9)

Skills used	Situation (see note)	Number of students
Shared knowledge	A	2
	F	2
Patience	P	1
	A	1
	F	1
Confidence	P	1
	A	2
	F	2
Risk-taking	P	1
	A	2
	F	1

	P	1
Problem-solving	A	2
	F	2
	P	1
Performance skills		
	A	1
Understood		
	A	1
	F	3
	P	2
Technology		
	A	1
Trust building		
	F	2
	P	2
No response		5

Note. Two participants were absent, two were late arrivals, and one had no response. A = Academia (in school or class); P = Personal life (e.g., family interactions); F = Relationships with friends. Author's table.

Question 2 asked participants to describe their personal use of these skills. They listed 12 categories; with four out of nine students listing stories of self-empowerment (See Table 14.). Self-empowerment was a strong theme which will be described later in this chapter. Three students did not respond to this question because they were eating.

Table 14

Student Responses to Round 2, Question 2: "How are you using communication and/or collaboration skills? Where? Home? School? Work? BUILD? Personal life? Are they changing you in any way? Is that OK? What new habits have you adopted? What impact are these skills having on you?" (n = 9)

Skills used	Setting	Number of students
Shared communication skills		
	Friend/relationship	1
	Personal/Family relationship	1
	Self	1
Shared collaboration skills		
	Friend relationship	1
	Self	1
Human relationship		
	Friend relationship	1
	Self	1
Self-reflection		
	Self	2
Nonverbal communication		
	Self	3
Empowerment		
	Self	4
Oral presentation skills		
	Self	1
Job interview		
	Self	1
Increased credibility		
		3
Confidence		
		2
Risk-taking		
		2
Creativity		
		1
No response		
		3
No response		
		3

Note. Two students were absent; two others arrived later. Author's table.

Question 3 asked the students about other 21st century skills that they are aware of and use. They listed 12 categories total (see Table 15), with five out of 11 participants specifically naming “creativity” and “technology.”

Table 15

Round 2, Question 3: Student awareness of “other 21st century skills.” (n = 11)

21 st century skills	Number of students
Global/World	4
Creativity	5
Technology	5
Critical thinking	4
Cooperating	1
Peacemaking	2
Work ethic	1
Risk-taking	4
Entrepreneurialism	2
Time management	2
Value my ideas	4
Empowerment	2
No response	5

Note. Two participants were absent; three were not present for this question. Author’s table.

Question 4 asked the focus groups if schools should be teaching 21st century skills. Only three out of 11 responded, including one participant who stated that it should be taught for survival, one who said that it should be taught because the skills are a work-related curriculum, and another who said it was real-world learning. Survival skills can be defined as skills needed to achieve success in 21st century work environment validating the importance of this type of education. Work-related curriculum refers to curriculum that would be useful in the world of work and not found in academia. Lastly, real-world learning applies to a simulated learning experience that the student would use in a work environment such as project-based learning. This question was less accessible to the

applicants, perhaps because they are seldom asked their opinion on what schools should teach. This question did not yield much data, as shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Round 2, Question 4: Should schools teach the following 21st century skills? (n = 11)

Proposed areas of instruction	Supporting students
Survival skills	1
Work-related curriculum	1
Real-world learning	1
No response	8

Note. Two participants were absent. Author's table.

Question 5 asked them about the concept of sacrifice, as this was a theme that emerged from Round 1. There were divergent responses to this question, with five participants naming the sacrifice as that of their “voice.” However, two participants said that they were not sacrificing and, in fact, felt that 21st century skills were adding to their knowledge. The full range of results appears in Table 17.

Table 17

Round 2, Question 5: In Round 1, you mentioned sacrifice – what did you mean by that? Your time? Your personality? Do you feel you have given up part of yourself to learn these skills? If so what? Was it worth it? (n = 11)

Areas of sacrifice	Number of students
My ideas	3
My voice	5
Unpopularity	1
Personal time	3
Fun	1
Exert self-control	2
Exert patience	1

Joy of work	1
Vulnerability	1
None	2
No response	2

Note. Two participants were absent. Author's table.

The last question asked students about changes within their relationships that they felt was due to the acquisition of communication and collaboration skills (Table 16). Out of 11 participants, five stated they felt they had “better relationships,” had better “non-verbal communication skills,” and that their “maturity” had increased.

Table 18

Round 2, Question 6: Have any relationships in your life changed as a result of you using these skills? (n = 11)

Skills used	Number of students responding in affirmative
Vulnerable	1
Open	4
Friendly	2
Better relationships	5
Conflict resolution	4
Eye contact	1
Sacrificed attachment	1
Communication	3
Nonverbal communication	5
Maturity	5
No response	2

Note. Two participants were absent. Author's table.

Evaluation of Focus Group Data

For the first level of evaluation, I used tables to organize and codify the participants' responses and analyze those responses against two key 21st century skills.

While this is a qualitative study, numbers of responses in the tables provide one measure of students' perceptions of their experiences in BUILD. The tables were useful for coding; however, the students' thoughts are better expressed in their own words with more context. In the following section, I present the students' own words in narrative form to illustrate their perceptions of the two, 21st century skills at the center of the study.

Round I Responses

Questions 1 and 2: How do you define effective communication and what are the skills needed? What communication skills have you developed since joining BUILD? The participants spoke of three types of communication: receptive, expressive, and simultaneous communication (Stewart, 1990). "Listening" is noted several times in their attempt to define communication, as well as remaining "flexible." I interpret their definition of communication as trying to reach a true understanding of what is said or being said. As Barley said, "If you are not listening, you are not going to understand anything. You're going to be totally lost." It is the search for meaning that they speak of.

Students articulated that to achieve effective communication, "You need effective understanding as well." To understand and to be understood is mentioned in all subjects' responses. For example, Bambi clarified a statement by ending it with "to get a clear understanding." Page's definition involved hearing and understanding opinions and information that you receive from the sender. She also said that effective communication involves "giving insight into the conversation" and not just mirroring what someone says: effective communication entails hearing and processing for understanding the message, which adds new thoughts and not just repeated ones. Taylor greatly valued formal communication because it is a learned skill; whereas, informal communication is free and limitless: "You're able to communicate how you please. That is why it's so different inside and outside the classroom or work area."

The participants portrayed a heightened awareness of using these skills for effective human relations and expressed the enormous complexity of the communication process. Some spoke of receptive communication where the goal is to understand the message. Others spoke of sending the message and trying to accomplish, effectively, the purpose of sending it. In one example, Bambi stated that paraphrasing is important for checking for understanding: “You should restate it [someone else’s message] in a way that it makes sense to you, and then maybe it will help other people too who also do not understand clearly.” Still others spoke of the simultaneous condition of communication, that it is a complicated process and challenging to accomplish. Almost all spoke of conveying meaning or understanding meaning, so the purpose, then, of communication is to understand and to be understood. Rosa said, “But also not try to push their buttons and try to figure out what you can do to help each other out in the future.”

During these first two questions many forms of communication were discussed as well as the various purposes. Of note were the discussions that centered on informal/formal language. Sophisticated judgment skills are needed for discerning when to code-switch and what type of language to use. The students value code-switching for their communication success and demonstrated a belief in their ability to use it appropriately. A high level of critical thinking is revealed by their responses.

Question 3: What type of skills and attitudes do you need for effective teaming? Question 4: What teaming skills have your developed since joining BUILD? The participants’ reasoning, responses, thoughts, and opinions demonstrate highly sophisticated strategies of dealing with human personalities. This is the essence of soft skills, namely, people management. The participants’ stories and responses reveal a sophisticated level of maneuvering and strategizing in dealing with the complex nature of collaboration. On the one hand, the work must get done by the team. On the other hand,

as a team member, one needs to stay friendly and caring with the team. Rosa talked about the complexities of discussing problem-solving with her team. She persistently gets them to attend BUILD as they sometimes do not want to go. She spoke of boundaries and limits—in short, how much she will put up with: “At the end of the day there’s only three of us; we all have two roles to play here, and this is how it’s going to get done.” These are complex issues that are central to human nature and the human struggle, both in the workforce as well as in their personal lives.

Bambi stated her patience has limits, and she tries to keep her mouth shut at times and ignore the others in her team. They spoke of setting boundaries around using too much empathy and talked about enlisting techniques such as threatening. They struggled with finding solutions for effective collaboration and were constantly trying to determine an effective way to accomplish tasks while remaining on good terms with team members. One student stated, “If I disagree with someone I’m not rude, but I’ll let them know I don’t agree with them.” This was a new finding as emotional intelligence and social intelligence are challenging to demonstrate, yet these participants readily used high levels of this form of intelligence. Their response revealed sophisticated human relation techniques for effective collaboration. They articulated stories of learning to handle interpersonal conflicts by problem-solving, setting boundaries, creating threats, ignoring others, thoughtful decision making, and learning stress management techniques.

Their areas of growth within both their academic and personal life included resiliency, confidence, empowerment, community impact, and sacrificing personal needs for the good of the team. Maria explained by saying, “You might not enjoy it, but it is important in teaming. If you keep a positive attitude it will affect the whole community and [they will] feel more uplifting.” Marginalized youths have many personal hardships, and some gain strength through their experiences. The participants spoke of their

hardships and how they learned to develop themselves exhibiting sophisticated strategies in dealing with human behaviors. Maria shared a personal, painful story of economic hard times as she almost became homeless. People called her terrible names like “toad.” She remained strong and said, “People don’t know when they judge, and they may hurt someone’s feelings.” They are learning to manage people by adapting to situations, events, as well as each other. Teamwork depends on team members’ cooperation. I believe they are not victims of their marginalized background but rather warriors in overcoming their hardships that can serve them well in life—both in school and in their careers.

Question 5: How do you think these skills will help you in the future?

Question 6: How have you personally grown in your communication and teaming skills? Participants shared risk-taking stories regarding their many oral presentations. They explained the various reasons for their shyness ranging from their own personalities, to immigrant experiences, to teen awkwardness. By performing oral presentations repeatedly, however, they gained confidence. Simply stated, they believe, “The more you do the better you get.” Lorenzo explained how nervous he was in speaking in front of crowds, but through these experiences he has learned to “get more comfortable.” Jose described himself in the past as being shy, distracted, and disengaged. Through these experiences, he believes he has learned responsibility, taken ownership of his work, and grown in his confidence at presenting.

Brittany’s story was more dramatic as she explained her terror when talking in front of anyone, including teachers (authority figures). She was pushed into a leadership position as no one else would take it, but she said, “It gave me a chance to be a leader and to tell people what to do and to give my opinions.” She relayed the story of her first presentation and how she was not only upset and crying but also thinking of quitting the

entire program. She did not quit and went on to present. Her team ended up winning that first event and “it made me feel like, really. . . !” Her growth was quite substantial in all areas of communication: selling events, persuading, presenting, and speaking to authority.

Round 2 Responses

Question 1: In the last 24 hours how did you communicate or collaborate?

With whom? Share a story? A result? Question 2: How are you using

communication and/or collaboration skills? Where? Home? School? Work?

BUILD? Personal Life? Are they changing you in any way? Is that OK? What new

habits have you adopted? What impact are these skills having on you? Participants’

responses and their highly sophisticated wisdom in regards to human nature were evident

throughout their narratives. Maria told her story about her sister moving from Mexico to

the United States, so Maria had to communicate—teach her—the ways of the United

States. She practiced her effective communication by exhibiting patience: “We took it

slow for her, so she could understand. And we took it easy and slow for her, so it was

long. It was very long.” Because of her growth in communication and collaboration

skills, Maria practiced patience in her personal relationships. Donny said, “I had to be

able to speak loudly and use good hand gestures, so they understand what I’m trying to

talk about. . .so that they could understand and comprehend everything that I was trying

to get across to them.” He integrated technology into his communication with PowerPoint

slides and laser pointers. He has a firm grasp on the purpose of communication and

understands the goal is to be understood.

Students know that they can solve problems in their lives using effective

communication skills. Brittany shared how she had to collaborate with her teacher to

make up work due to an illness. “I was able to get him to let me turn in my late work and

make up a test in class and stuff.” This was a sign of growth for Brittany, as she is a shy

person—and she knows now how to communicate effectively for her personal gain. She explained her own growth by saying, “I could never ask the teacher for extra time on something or if I could have another chance to make up a test or something.”

Maria reported a story of her personal life, involving her boyfriend. She said they used to argue a lot, and he did not communicate well with her. “He expects me to know right away when he’s mad or not.” Once she started sharing her communication skills with him, he then explained to her his reasons for his emotions. The results are positive:

He starts communicating with me, collaborating with what’s going on, and we help each other through it, because once you start communicating you start to know and realize what they’re going through. You could feel sympathy; you could feel empathy for them.

This is sophisticated thinking, revealing a high level of emotional and social intelligence needed to perform these skills. She concluded her story with this wisdom:

When you communicate, it’s a beautiful thing because you’re not just knowing how they feel, but you could also know what you’re feeling inside and what other people in the world could be feeling too. So communication is like the best thing to do.

Maria told her story with emphasis on empathy, sympathy, feelings, compassion, and caring in dealing with human relationships. She also reported, as stated earlier, that listening is vital for effective communication.

“If I disagree with someone I’m not rude, but I’ll let them know I don’t agree with them.” This was an important finding as emotional intelligence and social intelligence are challenging to demonstrate, yet these participants readily used high levels of this form of intelligence. Their response revealed sophisticated human relation techniques for effective collaboration. The articulated stories of learning to handle interpersonal

conflicts by problem-solving, setting boundaries, creating threats, ignoring others, thoughtful decision making, and learning stress management techniques.

The students are empowered with this knowledge and are applying it to their lives. Their stories reveal many hardships, yet they articulate strength in struggle, and they are not victimized by their hardships. They recognize the value of adding these skills to their wisdom, and the knowledge base will further them on their journey for future success in college and career. Ronesha stated that currently, she is Student Body President, and before this personal development education, she would not have run as a candidate. She has learned to present and to share knowledge in a confident way. She has been changed from this experience by developing confidence with each event. She described herself in the past by saying, “I was so quiet.” She was afraid of people making fun of her, but once she started presenting, she actually fell in love with it. “I love being in the spotlight, I love having all this attention and like expressing something that I actually feel for.”

Question 3: What other 21st century skills: creativity, critical thinking, or risk-taking have you experienced? If so, what are your thoughts, opinions, or feelings on these skills? Question 4: Should schools teach these 21st century skills? If so, where? How? Why? Maria said that critical thinking skills are also life skills: “It’s a skill that you need for life.” She said she needed to constantly think critically and have the ability to express herself creatively. Maria spoke of “cooperation” in a global sense to help green up the planet. She consistently takes a global perspective and shared her thoughts that her generation needs to motivate and inspire the next one coming behind them: “How we’re using our imagination. . .with us cooperating with the world we help others understand things better.” Maria further stated that cooperating can include recycling and planting trees trying to “diminish pollution.” She captures the essence of 21st century skills as valuable education. Bambi spoke of using problem-solving and

critical thinking to overcome violence and stop wars. To Bambi and Maria, 21st century skills are not just used as employability skills, but are also skills used for a refined way of negotiating all human relations.

Ronesha reported about living conditions in a lower-income community. She values these skills because

For me it's necessary to be teaching it in school because where I come from, it's like it's different because, well not different, but most people aren't exposed to these types of good skills that they should be having. Most people are saying I'm just going to go to school and learn what I need and I'll be successful.

Ronesha clearly understands the value of these skills for success and relates that people in her community could benefit from receiving them in education.

And especially where I come from, people have closed minds. They're not very open to very many different things, and that's what BUILD teaches you is you should just go with it; it's okay, every idea is a good idea, [and] that's what they teach you all the time. There's something about just sitting in class and memorizing things and taking tests and memorizing things; it's not very helpful. Because all you do is learn how to memorize things and take tests, but you don't know how to actually think about what you're doing, or why you're doing it.

You're just trying to get that grade and pass. That's also another problem that people in my community have.

Ronesha's story articulated the need for 21st century skills' education. She said it is not helpful to sit and memorize things because the learning is not authentic.

Ronesha further explained how she thought the people in her community feel, saying,

I don't know; they're just kind of closed. Because it's like, my town is low income and a lot of people don't believe—a lot of people don't have that motivation to succeed. And like, I don't know how to say it. They don't believe in themselves and they're just like school is whack. I'm just going to go hang with my homies there. There's a lot of violence. In the past months three people already got killed because of gang violence and not being engaged in something else other than violence. It's just like they're closed to different opportunities that they actually have.

There is a sadness to her story and a frustration as she sees a better way to live, but feels a sense of helplessness due to the large amount of violence.

Raj spoke about technology and how advanced it has become. He said that it is changing the way we communicate with each other, and that people don't do one-on-one communication as much, and more happens digitally now than ever. Raj describes the order of a meeting thusly: "They first meet up on Facebook or some other chatting site and then they can connect in reality." He spoke for his generation, where connecting in reality is in cyberspace and not in the physical world. His generation, often times, prefers to communicate through a digital medium rather than face-to-face or by using the phone. The students in general spoke of technology changing us as people and the way we as people interact with each other. We are global. We can connect to anyone around the world at any time. Raj even spoke of the true "reality" as cyberspace. Donny stated, "We've mixed our communication with our technology."

Question 5: Sacrifice? What? Your time? Your personality? Do you feel you have given up part of yourself to learn these skills? If so what? Was it worth it?

Question 6: Have any of your relationships in any areas of your life changed since using these skills? Maria's theme centered on strategies of survival. She spoke of being

bullied and said, “You need everything you can. You put everything you can so that other people can understand what is going on.” Bambi shared something different regarding the concept of vulnerability with human relations, saying, “But you are letting people see you on the inside which shows vulnerability or strength. Because some people who are vulnerable are also strong because they’re able to show their inner self as strength.” This is high-level emotional intelligence. Bambi claimed that vulnerability is an asset because, “When you are so strong within yourself, you can open up and share this with others. . . .She’s (Maria) talking about her experiences, which is leaving her vulnerable for judgment, but she’s hoping that the risk is that people will see things and they won’t be so judgmental.” That is keen insight.

Ronesha commented, “I don’t think I’m losing myself. I think I am building on to who I am.” She explained that everybody is born with the 21st century skills, but some people may need help expressing them. According to Ronesha, one has to learn how to deal with people and sometimes “be the bigger person.”

At first, Bobby said that yes, he sacrifices his personality to “calm down” so people will “take you seriously.” Bobby’s consistent theme is credibility; he desires not only to be validated but valued as well. He explained, “Calming down isn’t that bad when you think about it.” Brittany said that she is definitely not losing a part of herself but adding value to her skill set. She added that these skills have helped her become more social and more at ease when talking to others.

Bambi said that these skills are value-added in her world. Barley seemed to know quite a few soft skills and people management, so he is quite comfortable just being there for others: “I try to be a friendly person. I’m not sure if it really helped me, maybe subconsciously, but I just try to be nice to people and see what they come up with.” This is keen insight as well, as not everybody can be the “idea” person, and it is people like

Barley who allow the more verbose or noisy ones to have the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas.

Sienna concluded the discussion describing the meaning behind eye contact.

Learning to look someone in the eye is very empowering:

Instead of like looking down on them you're like inferior, or you looking down on them, we look eye to eye with them. It's like we're equal. . .even though we're not adults yet, it feels like it; it feels like we're equal to them and they treat us equal.

Conclusion

The data from focus group transcripts reflect the perceptions of marginalized high school students about learning and using 21st century skills. Students' perceptions of personal development education, specifically, 21st century skills, show a sophisticated understanding of human interactions so necessary in the context of a 21st century, globalized world. The emergent themes were the value of effective communication including code-switching, the art of collaboration, and credibility as an outcome of effective communication that empowers students. The participants' areas of growth while learning these skills included resiliency, confidence, empowerment, community impact, and sacrificing personal needs for the good of the team. In Chapter 5, I will discuss findings at a deeper level, revisit the three research questions, and offer recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Once the game is over the King and the pawn go back in the same box.”

–Italian Proverb

This study focused on the role of Personal Development Education (PDE) for disenfranchised students’ success in both college and careers. While 21st century skills or soft-skills are under-rated and under-valued in our education system, workforce development literature shows that they are necessary for students’ success, both in college and careers, in a globalized, high-tech, knowledge-based world (Trilling 2009; Friedman, 2005; Schuman et al., 2005). The literature supports the case for soft-skills education, yet mainstream schooling has historically ignored these recommendations. At the Association for Career and Technical (ACTE) Convention in Atlanta November 2012, a speaker from Caterpillar, Inc., indicated that 70% of terminations at the workplace are due to conflicts with fellow employees. This alarming statistic compels educators to ensure that the next generation learns effective collaboration and problem-solving skills to stay competitive in a globalized workforce. More than ever before, conflict resolution skills and effective communication skills need to be embedded into school curriculum. This study demonstrates students’ awareness of the value of PDE for their individual success in both college and career.

In this conclusion, I review the key findings, align the findings with the literature, and offer recommendations in three areas: educational equity implications, improvements to educational programming for individuals both in college and career, and current policy issues for implementation. I close with reflections on the research process and my learning experiences from this work.

The newly adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) address PDE by adding six Speaking and Listening criteria, making this study timely. Under the domain of speaking and listening standards are elements such as comprehension and collaboration and presentation of knowledge and ideas. The standards specifically state: “Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically (using appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation) such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose” (Common Core State Standards, 2012, p. 29).

This study is seminal because I found few studies in the literature in which students themselves were asked about their perceptions and opinions regarding this type of education. To bridge this gap, I designed a qualitative study to engage students in voicing their perceptions of 21st century skills and documented their opinions about their personal growth and changes while learning these skills. The specific focus was communication and collaboration skills. The three research questions were:

1. What changes have students experienced with 21st century competencies, namely communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, or courage?
2. How have these changes influenced the students’ personal, family, school, and/or community life?
3. How have the students comprehended, used realistically, and incorporated these skills into actual work habits?

Through a series of interviews and focus groups, the participants described their perceptions about the importance of two essential 21st century skills: communication and collaboration. The participants reported feeling empowered by learning communication and collaboration skills. They told of their struggles in learning to get along in teams to produce work; to have and use a high level of critical thinking and problem-solving

strategies, as well as to master sophisticated methods of effective communication. They employed this learning in all areas of their lives including academia, personal relationships, church, and family, noting their struggles as well as their achievements. Almost all students interviewed spoke of their sense of self-empowerment via this education. Here is an analysis of the findings.

Findings: Communication, Collaboration, and Credibility

This study is about the role of communication and collaboration in self-empowerment and students' sense of their own credibility. It is also about the importance of developing soft skills and the potential of those skills to support success in both college and career, which contributes to self-empowerment. Before this study, I had a general idea that PDE was a way to empower youth, particularly socio-economically disadvantaged populations (SED). I originally thought soft skills empowered students for their future career success. But the students' portrayal of their experiences in BUILD illuminated the contribution of soft skills to increase of confidence, self-efficacy, and credibility. I now align those findings with the literature, review the value of PDE, and make recommendations for educational policy change.

The overarching theme that permeates the findings from this study is self-empowerment through PDE, specifically through learning communication and collaboration skills. While the literature recommending soft skills development was consistent about the need for lower SED students to obtain these skills, I had not anticipated the depth and breadth of the personal transformations that the participants shared. The emergent findings are that (a) communication is the gateway skill to the rest of the 21st century skills and participants perceive code-switching as an added-value skill for effective communication; (b) participants appreciate the art of collaboration, recognizing the challenges and successes inherent in people management and

interpersonal relationships; and (c) participants believe their credibility is increased as an outcome of learning effective communication techniques.

Communication—the Gateway Skill

“It is important to communicate because you want to know what is going on.”

–April

One key finding was that communication and collaboration are gateway skills to other soft skills. Communication skills lead into the more sophisticated, complicated soft skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, stress management, and risk-taking.

Collaboration is also a gateway skill because producing work with others is a most challenging skill to acquire. If 70% of terminated employees are fired from their jobs because they could not get along with others (ACTE Convention, 2012), it is critical that educators address this problem within the school system. Before this study, I was unaware that communication and collaboration were the keys to the acquisition of many other soft skills, although the literature suggested these two skills would be the most visible and tangible skills to evaluate. Now, however, I see a pattern—communication and collaboration lead the way to more sophisticated soft skills. Without a competent understanding of these skills, the student may not be able to access other skills such as critical thinking and risk-taking.

Communication is powerful: language holds immense power in the development of successful human relations. In fact, effective communication’s real purpose is to relay information successfully from one person to another. Freire (1993) stated that the oppressed must fight for their own liberation; through effective communication, this liberation can be a reality. According to Stewart (1990), “The quality of your life is directly linked to the quality of your communication” (p. 6). All 13 participants spoke

purposefully and sincerely in agreement with this statement. They know the value of effective communication and that language and communication are keys to their success in life. The participants recognize the value of effective communication by expressing their ability to discern the type of communication skill set needed for a given situation in a sophisticated way. Their awareness of the “other”—the audience—is essential to their ability to communicate. Likewise, participants voiced their concerns about wanting to hear and *be heard*, to know and *be known*, and to understand—and *be understood*.

Code-switching. The way the participants are understood is through their ability to code switch, which was defined by O’Neal and Ringler (2010) as “a strategy that helps us communicate in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (p. 50). Heller (1988) stated that “linguistic code-switching entails bilingual speakers alternating between languages in interaction with other bilinguals” (p. 623), further explaining students’ ability to navigate multiple realities. Therefore, it is safe to say that code-switching is a skill where one can change words and/or behaviors in order to effectively communicate and obtain a desired goal. The participants defined 21st century behavioral competencies (soft skills) in a globalized, 21st century, high-tech, knowledge-based world as “survival skills.” The participants believe that without these skills, newly hired employees have only a small chance of success in their field of employment. The data showed a strong awareness of informal or formal language and the need to discern when to code-switch; most participants valued code-switching as part of their communication successes and demonstrated belief in their ability to use it appropriately.

Discerning what type of language to use in particular situations and when to use it is a sophisticated judgment skill expressed in participant responses. The participants realized the value of code-switching for effective communication, noting that personal communication is comfortable when one has built-in trust with the other. Formal

communication is another mode of speaking or writing that relies on one's ability to discern which language to use, and, as Sienna described, "Just [use] normal English." The participants stated that formal language is limited and specific, whereas informal language has no boundaries. They also noted that sometimes the two forms overlap, forming a gray area. Sienna added, "It's less formal, but in a way, it's still formal." Simply stated, the execution of effective communication requires the sender to access formal communication skills so that the receiver can fully comprehend the message. When the receiver fully understands the message and believes it, the communication is deemed successful—which establishes the credibility of the sender.

Most of the participants are aware of the value of code-switching and expressed their ability to discern the type of communication skill set needed for a desired type of communication. They portrayed a heightened awareness of using these code-switching skills for effective human relations, and in their responses they shared their beliefs in their abilities to use language appropriately to obtain their goals. In her summary of code-switching, Sienna says that use of appropriate language is "just something you have to do." She claims there is a time and place for everything: That does not mean she is being fake, but rather choosing to act or speak differently depending on the occasion and her goal.

Given that the participants articulated the value of communication and collaboration in their present lives, there are implications for workplace communication/collaboration effectiveness as students from these programs enter the workforce. Carry over to workplace effectiveness was not within the scope of this study, but longitudinal research is needed to expand upon initial findings. Such research could be done state-wide within the California Partnership Academies or nationally with the other BUILD programs with the focus on skill development at the workplace.

The Art of Collaboration—The Need to Communicate in Order to Collaborate

The second finding relates to the art of collaboration. Some participants demonstrated strong views on the subject of motivation and collaboration. For example, Bobby spoke repeatedly about passion as a motivator: for him, caring is key to building trust and honesty among team members. He explained that passion is what drives him to care about the work and the team, to do his best, and to help out by achieving more: “We all put in our ideas and we kind of all came to an agreement. . . .When you care—really care in a passionate way—you do your work and accomplish more than is required.” This finding can be instrumental in identifying successful collaboration efforts.

Another finding regarding effective collaboration was the importance of being open and vulnerable. Bambi articulated the power of vulnerability, saying, “She [Maria] is talking about her experiences, which is leaving her vulnerable for judgment, but she’s hoping that the risk is that people will see things and they won’t be so judgmental.” As Bambi implies, however, people need inner strength to risk revealing weakness, which may open them to new hurt. This was a novel finding as the quality of vulnerability is indeed not defined as weak but rather as revealing a high degree of confidence. This confidence can translate to strength and allow people to take risks as well as share thoughts and ideas with each other, creating successful collaboration experiences. Bambi notes, “And so relationships have to be like a two-way vulnerable street. There should be no wall around a relationship to have effective communication.”

This is also a study of human nature and human relationships—in any setting. If communication and collaboration skills can empower marginalized populations and strengthen the sense of self, they too can be open and therefore vulnerable, ultimately achieving successful human relations. Participants repeatedly shared wisdom and insights that are far more advanced of many of the adults that I know.

Another finding was a more detailed look at the challenges of problem-solving within collaborative efforts. The following quote from Rosa illustrates the participants' perceptions on the challenges of collaboration: "At the end of the day there's only three of us; we all have two roles to play here, and this is how it's going to get done." There is a constant tension with collaborative work between producing the work and—at the same time—remaining friendly and caring with your co-workers. Personal sacrifice was a strategy spoken of many times, in terms of a complex tension between what they individually sacrificed for the team and what they could hold on to. "I know how to ignore little annoyances," noted Bambi.

Interestingly, the participants shared stories of their experiences that were not successful, but in their frustration, they revealed keen insight about interpersonal conflicts. Some ignored the other; some set boundaries and held firm to them, while still others threatened their teammates. As Rosa claimed, "So it's just like, put your emotions aside." The participants concluded that sometimes people have sad lives, and their responses revealed a heightened sense of empathy, allowing them to give personal space and extra time for their teammates to accomplish the work. When Bambi spoke of a relative in jail, and the family would be doing a holiday visit, the other participants showed empathy with comforting words.

Credibility

Credibility as an outcome of effective communication was the third finding. Communicating successfully results in credibility, which in turn empowers the individual. Bobby showed the importance of credibility by saying, "I've been able to present my ideas in a way to make them easily understood and to get to my point faster." Communicating clearly and concisely is key to building trust; sending a message needs to be done correctly in order to have the receiver believe that the sender is credible.

Participants described the value of credibility throughout our interviews; however, the literature reviewed did not directly address the importance of credibility. Perhaps in working with marginalized populations, a value such as credibility will surface more often as students are learning to access power—and credibility is a big part of accessing power.

The theme of credibility surfaced repeatedly among the participants' dialogue, characterized as believability that validates as well as motivates them. Soft skills of communication and collaboration lead to empowerment through the attainment of credibility. Freire (1993) has taught us that to liberate oppressed populations permanently, education must actively engage the participants in dialogue to create action to enable them to access their own power. Participants needed their ideas, thoughts, and opinions valued; therefore, *they* are valued. The participants want to feel worthy, not worthless. According to Freire (1993), the term *marginalized* itself has often been used in relation to lack of access to power. Therefore, effective communication is a tool to access power, and the participants valued this tool as they learned to use it. For example, Bobby spoke about his growth as he used to just say what he thought, hoping everybody else would agree—but he would not argue or defend his point if they did not. Since receiving this education, he has gained communication skills, so he can stand his ground, insisting on his argument or his idea.

The theme of credibility surfaced again with a wider scope of influence as Ronesha spoke of her community members as dispirited and not believing in themselves. This statement supports the value of credibility with the participants and how vitally important it is to be believed in and therefore valued. If this is true, then school programs can provide an option for these skills to be taught. When students learn to communicate effectively, they have a better chance of being believed, leading to believe in themselves.

As Ronessa said, “It’s just like they’re closed to different opportunities that they actually have.” If members of impoverished communities don’t believe in themselves, how can they expect to pass along confidence to their children? The school system needs to teach PDE within the school day. What if we, as educators, taught young people to communicate effectively and collaborate through a focus on 21st century skills in the schools? One outcome might be that a sense of self-belief may spark and ignite a fire of empowerment within a community.

Synthesis of Communication, Collaboration, and Credibility

Twenty-first century skills build social intelligence, which is defined as intelligence with human relationships (Goleman, 2006). When Ronessa said that we all have these personal qualities inside ourselves, I realized that she was speaking a profound truth. She stated that everybody is born with these traits but may need help in expressing them. As human beings, we all think, feel, and have a need to connect. Freire (1993) explained that when people are oppressed or not given adequate education, they become stifled. These 21st century behavioral competencies are a key to unlocking the power all people have; this is especially important in marginalized populations who have been oppressed and silenced. These skills can help all populations, however, access their own power, in a dignified manner, and use it to their advantage.

This study made me realize that communication is the gateway skill to other 21st century skills including collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and risk-taking. As Maria pointed out, these are “survival” skills within a 21st century context. Ronessa spoke of the defeated spirit within her own community, believing that if they only knew these skills, people in her community could transform their thinking. Raj told us of the new reality of cyberspace, where people communicate and connect digitally, forming relationships and working together.

Equally impressive are the stories from these participants from marginalized communities that speak about *their* need for success in *their* futures. Every participant shared his or her perceptions of these skills as value-added for their own growth and learning. They spoke of self-empowerment and how soft skills are a tool enabling them to access their own power. Participants described how they used these skills in all areas of their lives including church, school, family, friend relationships, as well as in navigating power relationships. They have a keen sense of using these skills to speak to power, so they too can access such power for their own personal use. It frustrates me hearing them speak of the value and need for such learning while our educational system undervalues and ignores this reality.

After conducting this study, I realized that PDE plays an essential role in students' lives beyond employability skills. PDE contributes to human empowerment by teaching students how to access the power that lies within them. It is a higher-level, transformative education. Ronsha clearly articulated the immense need for this kind of education in lower socio-economic neighborhoods where people have given in to the spirit of poverty: "Our town is low income and a lot of people don't believe—a lot of people don't have that motivation to succeed. . . .They don't believe in themselves. . . . 'School is whack; I'm just going go hang out with my homies.'" PDE can transform people and, through those people, their communities—by empowering them with their own creativity, critical thinking, and ability to achieve dignified interpersonal conflict resolutions. The reach of PDE is wider than I thought it was when I began this study.

All the participants spoke about valuing 21st century skills, the changes in their lives through participation in 21st century skills education, and how they use these skills personally, professionally, and academically. Their answers revealed their desires to achieve their dreams and demonstrated how they believed that

communication/collaboration skills are tools that assist them. These behavioral competencies (soft skills) are *survival skills* in a globalized, 21st century, high-tech, knowledge-based world. The participants already know the value of this learning and recognize that these skills are enhancing their lives by contributing to their own personal successes.

These insightful young people shared profound thoughts. Maria spoke of “cooperation” in a global sense by helping to green the planet; whereas, Bambi stated that problem-solving and critical thinking skills could be applied to overcoming violence and stopping wars. This is incredibly deep, insightful thinking that made me realize that PDE, particularly PDE involving 21st century skills, is about interpersonal relationships. The value of this education has no boundary; it could be used for more than just job training. Perhaps it is idealistic to dream of stopping wars with PDE, but it seems to me that these skills are good for not only getting a job that pays well, but also negotiating human relations in a more refined way.

This study explored human nature and human relationships in the context of one program, yet participants repeatedly shared wisdom and insights far more thoughtful than those of many adults. Young people are not empty-headed children; rather, they carry thoughts, insights, judgments, experiences, knowledge, and wisdom from which adults can learn. The participants discussed complex issues, aware of the tensions that exist between pragmatic thinking and idealistic thinking. They discovered and articulated the power of effective communication in their lives, expressing needs to be understood, listened to, and valued in a dignified manner. The participants describe how effective communication skills hold the power to fulfill those needs and achieve their goals; they know that they can solve problems in their lives *if* they know how to communicate effectively. Empowered with this knowledge, the participants are applying it to their daily

lives. While it is true that their stories reveal many hardships, I do believe there is strength gained in struggle. These communication and collaboration skills give them more coping strategies, so they are not victimized by their hardships. I believe by adding these skills to their wisdom and knowledge base, this will further them on the journey for future success and for self-empowerment.

Limitations

In Chapter 3 I stated the following limitations of this study:

- This is a local study and, while it informs the national perspective, larger studies are needed.
- Educational research is racialized, reflecting hegemonic assumptions about cultural capital, “acting white” and code switching.
- Ethical concerns must be addressed throughout—obtaining permission from parents, students’ relationship to me as a researcher, peer interactions, and adolescents as participants.

These limitations did influence the study. This was a local, subjective study and not representative of all BUILD students. The participants live on the Peninsula in the San Francisco Bay Area, between San Francisco and Silicon Valley, a geographical setting that influences the students’ awareness. They are close neighbors with a tech-oriented, globalized workforce, many of whom are highly educated and have high-paying careers. Therefore, some of the findings may reflect this unique area and may not be representative of all young people or all BUILD students. Further studies are recommended in other locations to compare and contrast findings.

Another limitation of the study is the research community’s perceptions of the subject matter, personal development education, which remains a heated topic. PDE is not new to education and requires continued examination and evaluation in the context of

classist educational policies that have historically pushed working-class and poor students into traditional vocational education fields such as manual labor trades. I believe longitudinal studies will strengthen understanding of the field and add greater depth to this work.

Studying human competencies such as communication and the ability to collaborate is a challenge. According to Shuman and colleagues (2005), just because a snapshot of the behavior was demonstrated at the time of the study there was no concrete proof that the behavior would be adapted and used during an actual experience. Therefore, the findings from the study are limited to these particular participants at this particular time.

While no participants left the study, their inconsistent participation reflected the lives of teenagers. My relationships with these students provided a certain level of trust, while adding the potential for biases in responses as students sometimes strived to provide a correct answer. I explained to them my role was researcher, not teacher, and they were free to express themselves in any way they saw fit. A few times they tested me by swearing and making toilet humor jokes. I did not react to any of this and continued with the discussions. Once they tested me, they responded with more fidelity as the level of trust increased.

Implications for Educational Reform

We are in an era of “Globalization 3.0” (Friedman, 2005). Due to rapid advances in technology, this era is unique because of the newfound power of individuals to collaborate and compete globally. The power of the individual to work and survive by competing globally is enormous, yet it requires individuals to work both alone and on teams performing complex tasks as knowledge workers (Friedman, 2005, p. 10). The United States will do well economically *if* we produce knowledgeable workers who

create idea-based goods and can connect knowledge pools all around the world. This work, then, demands high-tech know-how (hard skills) as well as teaming, collaboration, and communication (soft skills).

Trilling (2007) stated that we are living in the knowledge-age with worldwide demands for what he calls “learning societies” (p. 1). He noted that we need to bring awareness to an out-of-sync educational system. We are living in revolutionary times similar to the challenging shifts from the Agricultural Age to the Industrial Age (Trilling, 2009). Trilling believed that in order for us to sustain our society, we need to empower all our citizens to compete in the globalized world that sustains our entire way of life. He proposed that the new curriculum includes the “Seven C’s”: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, communication, computing, and career education (2009, p. 153).

So why is the school system so out of sync with the students’ future lives as well as the workforce? The next theory lends itself to the rationale that our education model consistently reproduces the status quo due to the concept of cultural capital. Bourdieu defined cultural capital as “relatively rare, high-status cultural and linguistic knowledge, skills, and dispositions as passed from one generation to the next” (Anyon & Perez, 2009, p. 139). Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) claimed that cultural capital consists of informal learning about the class attributes of the dominant class, reproducing inequities in the educational system. These assets can be traded similar to economic assets, as they empower students to achieve success for themselves and their communities.

In *Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments*, Lamont and Lareau (1988) stated that family background influences school experience and educational success, thereby contributing to constant reproduction of the status quo in the educational system. They defined cultural capital as knowledge of

high culture passed on to children, which prepared their entry into school systems designed by the dominant culture. They stated that children from the working class must acquire this knowledge outside the home to achieve success in school.

Yosso (2005) pointed out that schools assume that students of color “lack” social and cultural capital and the schools perceived the students as deficient, often labeling them “disadvantaged.” Her theory stated that students from non-white backgrounds did indeed possess rich cultural wealth that schools tend to dismiss. Yosso’s definition of cultural capital maintained that all of us have cultural capital, but the education system was designed by the dominant white culture, and that is why their children are advantaged in the current system. Mainstream educators perceive students of color as “disadvantaged” when indeed they come with a wealth of their own cultural capital.

Providing PDE to students in lower socio-economic subgroups is a critical dimension of equitable education. According to Johnson (2008), “Those born into economically advantaged families receive through rearing the instruments needed to appropriate the knowledge transmitted in schools and those lacking capital and the cultivation of the requisite cultural tools unfortunately depend on schools to cultivate these dispositions” (p. 231). Educators can disrupt past practices of educational and workplace exclusion by recognizing the role of cultural capital in allowing access to the middle class. Researchers have stated, “Proponents of neoclassical human capital perspectives hold that individuals who possess a higher level of achieved status receive better paying jobs because their achievements—signal—to employers that they are more able and therefore potentially more productive” (Sakura-Lemessy, Carter-Tellison, & Sakura-Lemessy, 2009, p. 408).

Recent literature indicates that awareness for reform has started to grow. Tom Wagner, co-director of the Change Leadership Group at Harvard Graduate School of

Education, defines the core 21st century survival skills as “critical thinking and problem-solving, the ability to create, collaborate and communicate across media-rich networks and systems, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurship, effective oral and written communication, accessing analyzing information and curiosity and imagination” (Cornelius, 2011, p. 51). Students who learn to navigate cultural differences can influence their own effectiveness for their own success, leading to a value-added skill set to compete, survive and succeed in college and career. Yosso (2005) referred to this form of cultural capital as navigational capital, which is a set of skills used to maneuver through social structures of the dominant class. Navigational capital helps students of color connect to social networks in their quest for success in both school and the workplace. Molinsky (2007) reported on the concept of “cross-cultural code-switching”—the ability to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviors. Socio-linguist Heller (1988), noted that “linguistic code-switching entails bilingual speakers alternating between languages in interaction with other bilinguals” (p. 623), further explaining the ability to navigate multiple realities.

The report *Pathways to Prosperity—Meeting the Challenges of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century* (Symonds et al., 2011) specifically speaks of the necessity for soft-skills education by saying,

[H]ard and soft skills are essential for success in this economy. . . . These findings strongly suggest that a more holistic approach to education—one that aims to equip young adults with a broader range of skills—is more likely to produce youth who will succeed in the 21st century. (p. 4)

California recently adopted CCSS for both English and Math. CCSS are designed to prepare every student for success in college *and* the workforce. These new standards are designed to ensure that students can compete globally in the new world order. The

Language Standards include not only elements of reading and writing but also speaking and listening. This is the beginning of a shift in thinking, bringing an increased awareness to the value of 21st century skills which makes this study timely. Through California's adoption of the CCSS, students learn to express ideas, work together, and listen carefully to integrate and evaluate information. Skills are not learned in isolation, but in concert with reading and analyzing grade-level texts and topics. Furthermore, hard skills are incorporated through the use of technology in gathering and presenting information (California Department of Education, 2010).

According to Valenzuela (2000), the purpose of education was not just about content but also the education of the whole person: "Within this framework, a well-educated person knows how to live in the world as a respectful, social, and caring human being, observing of others' dignity" (Valenzuela, 2000, p. 525). He focused on the individual student as a person rather than an object to be shaped into a mold. Valenzuela explained that from a Mexican cultural perspective, high school students were schooled rather than educated. As my mentor, a consultant at California's Department of Education, stated, "Teachers teach school." A more holistic approach to education would support teaching the student as an individual with individual skill sets, talents, dreams and goals. Therefore, education needs to be separated into three equal domains. Connect Ed (2011); for example, has built a conceptual framework identifying the domains as Academic, Career, and 21st century domains. I contend that education needs restructuring into three equal domains for educating the student as an individual and not as an object. The current education system is not broken but rather out of balance so I envision the following graphic to restructure the system:

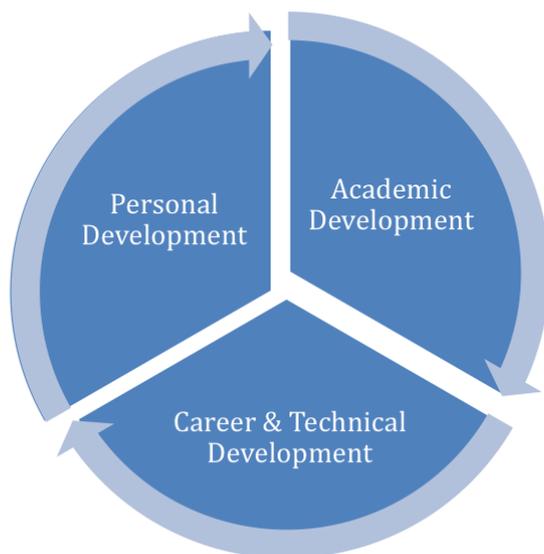


Figure 3. Three Domains of Education in the 21st Century. Author's figure.

Such a three-part educational structure would support greater educational equity, policy changes, and program development. I envision that these three domains of education can be embedded into the existing K-12 curriculum rather than separating them into individual components. This integrated approach would be articulated as instructional modalities throughout the current academic system. This chart clearly shows a more totally balanced system for equitable education inclusive of *all* students.

Educational equity opportunities. “I have also learned that the inseparable twin of racial injustice was economic injustice,” observed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. According to the principles and philosophies of King, social justice parallels economic justice (Carson, 1998). Dr. King’s principles could create a more equitable school system influence economic opportunities, and lead to a more just society. Therefore, for students from socio-economic disadvantaged (SED) subgroups, 21st century skills are critical because they empower students with access to career opportunities historically not afforded them.

Paulo Freire (1993), educational philosopher, taught us that to permanently liberate the oppressed, education must actively engage the participants in dialogue to create action to enable them to access their own power, and the marginalized need to reflect on their learning to engage in dialogical action. According to Freire, “Cooperation, as a characteristic of dialogical action. . . can only be achieved through communication. Dialogue, as essential communication, must underlie any cooperation” (1993, p. 149). Freire's theory is central in creating liberating education for marginalized populations. In doing this study, I came to understand that personal development education, namely 21st century skills or soft skills, is one key to the liberation of marginalized populations. As Freire argued, “Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning. . . .Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned with *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication” (1993, p. 58). Communication is the gateway skill to all the rest of the 21st century skills including collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and risk-taking. The participants clearly spoke about their newfound liberation. Maria pointed out that collaboration and communication are “survival” skills within a 21st century context, and Ronesha spoke of the defeated

spirit within her own community, explaining that if they only knew these 21st century skills, members of her community could transform their thinking.

Policy Implications. “Each child is a unique person, with unique needs, and the purpose of the educational system of this state is to enable each child to develop all of his or her own potential.”

– (Thomson Reuters West, 2009, p. 33102).

This definition of the purpose of education can be found in California’s Education Code. In doing this research, I discovered that PDE satisfies the Ed Code’s definition of the purpose. If school systems used this definition and implemented it with fidelity, how could education not be reformed? Educators should hang this definition in every classroom and boardroom across the state. *All* the children’s lives are at stake, yet the unique needs of each student continues to be ignored. If we educators are true to this creed, then we must ensure that our educational system enables each child to reach his or her potential. Fortunately, a system is already in place: California’s Education Code (2009) established legislation to include a fully comprehensive Career and Technical Education (CTE) system designed to serve all students within the state of California’s public school system (See Appendix A.). The excerpt below shows the existing foundation for an approach that combines CTE and PDE.

The combined vision and mission statement clearly address the need to prepare students for their future as the California Department of Education (CDE) is cognizant of the fast-paced changes of our 21st century world and how best to prepare all the students for their success as they transition into college and, eventually, the world of work.

California’s Education Code makes the following claims regarding CTE in the state:

- States that there is a CTE staff at the state level whose function is to design, implement, and maintain an integrated information system regarding CTE (California Education Code 2009, #8006).
- Lists the number of annual reports regarding CTE programs statewide (California Education Code 2009, # 8007).
- Recognizes the need for coordinating delivery of vocational education and training throughout the state and creates a memo of understanding with public K-12 education and the community college system California Education Code, 2009, #12053).
- Maintains that “the governing board with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and pupils shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study that may include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other outside school experience, CTE classes offered in the high schools.” (California Education Code, 2009, # 51225.3)

Program Design. In 2007 the vision of my District was to create a standards-based CTE system for all students. Along with this vision, they adopted the following goals to implement this change:

- Ensure that all students have equal access to CTE courses;
- Incorporate 21st century skills meeting the demands of the 21st century workplace;
- Implement, design, and maintain CTE courses giving all students employable and marketable skills, internships and mentoring opportunities; and

- Produce successful students prepared for the workforce and higher education.

There are several examples of CTE delivery systems that are well thought out and ensure that all students can succeed in their future (See Appendix I.).

The CTE system is inclusive and addresses the needs for all students to develop career awareness, planning, and preparation for their post-high school education. The model or design here is perceived as a reform in our education system that addresses the changes in the 21st century world by including *all* students for high-quality college and career opportunities, and tapping into the individual talents, needs, interests, and motivations of all students within the California K-12 system. The following quote reflects the importance of this study:

CTE can no longer exist as a separate educational alternative; it must be woven into the very fabric of our educational delivery system. Access must therefore be assured for all students through a system that aligns programs, curricula, and services across educational segments, programs, and disciplines. In this spirit, the state plan for CTE presents a framework, including a vision, mission statement, set of guiding principles, goals, and needed actions, that provides both the scaffolding for the state Perkins plan and a blueprint for strengthening California's CTE system overall. (*California Department of Education, CTE State Plan, 2007, p. 50*)

If educators truly want to help children develop their potential, a pragmatic teaching philosophy must be legitimized and executed. The policies are in place, but the mindsets of many conventional educators and legislators are not. Educators need to realize that the old vocational education programs are defunct, and the new CTE programs are very rigorous. The new hope is that the Common Core State Standards will

draw attention to 21st century skills, enabling educators to teach students to reach their own unique potential (See Appendix J.).

Recommendations

Recognition of the value of PDE is just beginning to take hold in the United States, along with placing a higher value on a holistic education for its youth. The current study is only a beginning in understanding the role of PDE in bringing this authentic reform to education. Therefore, I have the following recommendations for topics that need closer or further examination to generate new rounds of questions. Here are my recommendations.

- ✓ **Implement Project Based Learning (PBL):** This learning structure supports students working together in small groups to solve real-world problems. The students actively engage in investigative work, drawing from what they already know to what they need to know. PBL encourages students to improve their problem-solving skills, research skills, and their social skills (University of Delaware, 2013). PBL is a natural way for the student to acquire 21st century and academic skills.
- ✓ **Conduct Longitudinal Studies:** 21st century skills are hard to define and quantify, rendering them difficult to assess. In education, teachers quantify learning from written formative and summative assessments; assessing human behavior is a real challenge. Therefore, I recommend creating longitudinal studies where educators can view the bigger picture on the participants' success in life. I envision designing a national quantitative study that surveys National BUILD students 5 years after their graduating from high school. Also, using the national organization of ACTE, quantitative surveys could be developed nationwide with participating CTE programs as to the validity of

PDE education. Also, a state-wide study could be designed that surveys California Partnership Academy graduates 5 or 10 years later, inquiring about their success at college and career. Studies could be developed using mixed methods of research and interviewing former students either by audio or video, asking them to share their stories since graduating high school. The inquiry would center on whether PDE was a contributing factor to their success in college and career. These findings, then, may yield data that could lead to more conclusive validity regarding PDE as a credible form of education.

- ✓ Study CTE as a vehicle for integrated education: Resources must support more studies in regards to the perceived value of CTE. Real world learning is very engaging for digital natives. We are at the precipice of authentic, holistic education that values CTE courses for all students as members of the future workforce. February 2013, California’s Department of Education started offering a speaker series on CTE. Some of the workshops are entitled “Connecting Education Experience to Life and Career Goals,” “California’s Partnership with P-21 for 21st Century Skills,” and “Doing What Matters for Jobs and the Economy” (CDE News Advisory, 2013, p. 1). These workshops are a sign that the CTE movement is taking hold in California as well as the rest of the United States. Therefore, more studies need to be conducted that share the success of this education, giving policymakers facts and knowledge to assist them in their positions initiating reform efforts.
- ✓ Prioritize teaching other 21st century skills: As this is one small study with the majority of its focus on only two skills, communication and collaboration, there is a plethora of skills to explore—critical thinking, creativity, problem-

solving, stress management, and risk-taking to name a few, so I would recommend more studies to explore other soft skills for further analysis, adding a new layer of knowledge in this domain.

- ✓ Develop assessment tools. To demonstrate and prove the importance and value of 21st century skills, assessment tools must be created. Studies need to be created for multiple forms of assessment. Researchers are working on this currently; for example, WestEd is the Project Management Partner for the multistate Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, the first collaboration of its kind to develop a common assessment system among a majority of states. Since the research is currently taking place, I recommend more studies that focus on multiple forms of assessment to develop tools and rubrics to measure PDE.
- ✓ Strengthen teacher training programs. During my teacher training experience at San Francisco State University, I had to take nine credits (three courses) in Special Education, Diversity Training, and Health Literacy in order to clear the credential. I envision another course called, “21st Century Behavior Studies for the Classroom” as an additional course for new teachers. New teachers would be instructed in practical implementation of behavioral 21st century competencies in their classroom. PDE could also be embedded into teacher training curriculum and not as a stand-alone course or curriculum. Not only would this help new teachers with classroom management, it would also prepare students for achievement in all areas of their life including college and career.

Reflection on My Position as a Researcher

I am a white, middle-age, half-Jewish female from working-class origins. Since I come from the dominant class, my hard work was easier to accomplish than if I had been born into another race or SES. Some say I am a self-made woman, whatever that means. It was significant that I did not pass the first qualifying exam because the readers said I was “hegemonic” in tone. This caused me much distress and forced me to look deep inside myself. I went to my former Theatre professor, and he told me that my drama training changed the way that I perceive the world, and that my B.A. in Theatre Arts influences the way that I perceive the world through an artist’s eye. I see shapes and tones and body language and textures and how people hold themselves; I notice their walk and their individual facial expressions. This heightened awareness is the training of a theatre artist. As a result of that conversation, I realized that not everyone perceives life the same way I do; therefore, I need to hone my advocacy skills to argue my position.

I am also the mother of an adult, autistic daughter. She was not diagnosed until she was 14, sending me on an incredible quest to understand her mysterious behaviors. Autistic people have communication disabilities, perception problems, and social interaction handicaps. I developed another awareness of socialization—the value of emotional intelligence and social intelligence—through trying to connect to and support my daughter.

Like all researchers, I brought individual sensibilities into the doctoral program. I have taught for 20 years in 12 subjects, working primarily with “at-risk” students from disenfranchised populations. Additionally, I was the Department Chair of a California Partnership Academy (CPA) for several years. This is a school-within-school program for marginalized populations. It is a student cohort with a team of teachers that provide sheltered instruction with a career focus. To supplement the focus on career, we CPA

teachers took our students on several field trips to local businesses and industries. During a visit to Genentech, a bio-tech company, I noticed my students' unruly and undisciplined behaviors. Concurrently, I took a workshop in soft skills, which gave me ideas on how to support my students by raising their awareness of how their behaviors influence others' perceptions of them.

As a team within the Academy, we did an experiment where each teacher took three soft skills to teach the cohort. Within three weeks the cohort's behaviors were noticeably more organized and self-disciplined in terms of their voice volume, tone of voice, body language, and social interactions. The necessity of this kind of education was reinforced while I served as the CTE Coordinator for my district: I conducted an informal survey of 13 local businesses, and representatives of each one remarked that lack of soft skills was the number one deficiency in their new hires.

When I came into the doctoral program, I had a clear idea of what I wanted to study, but my journey was challenging. Some cohort members did not understand my point of view, nor had they the privilege of reading 21st century workforce development literature that heralds emergent globalization changes. Therefore, I had to work very hard to hone my advocacy skills. During the second year, I reread some of Dr. King's literature and came upon his quote, "I have also learned that the inseparable twin of racial injustice was economic injustice." (Carson, 1998) which gave me a new avenue of argument for my work. I do believe that many in my cohort now understand my work and the importance of this study.

This study made me realize that PDE is larger, more necessary, and more profound than I had anticipated. The depth and breadth of my participants' responses were deep, insightful, and taught me new levels of trying to understand the paradox of human interactions and behaviors. The participants are quite eager to read this study once

it is published, and I am equally eager to share it with them as their wisdom, humor, intelligence and high-mindedness is quite inspiring.

I do believe in the Ed Code's creed for the purpose of education. Each student *is* a unique individual, and unlocking every student's potential for greatness *is* our job as educators. We must determine how best to help students unleash their own greatness. This study further motivates me to work in the field of education in the area of PDE to reform education within a 21st century context, enabling *all* students' individual success.

Final Thoughts

What makes America exceptional are the bonds that hold together the most diverse nation on earth. The belief that our destiny is shared; that this country only works when we accept certain obligations of one another and to future generations.

– (Barack Obama, 2012)

I came into this study knowing that 21st century skills are needed for the student's learning. I knew that that world has changed and students need more than just academic content taught to them in school. What I was surprised to learn was the depth of reach that this learning had on these participants. Marrying the philosophies of Dr. King, Paulo Freire, and others, I realized that soft skills education is a liberating education, giving marginalized populations strategies and tools to free themselves from the oppression of economically disadvantaged populations, speaking their truth to power while possessing basic human dignity. These 21st century behavioral competencies are the key to unlocking the power within a person, specifically a person from a marginalized population that has been oppressed and rendered silent.

This work is about power—who has it, who does not, who wants it, and how to access it. PDE is sophisticated education centering on human empowerment that teaches

students how to access the power that lies within them. My thinking is a philosophy that I call “Revolution from Within,” where I foresee empowering disenfranchised populations able to access power for themselves and later for their communities. I do believe that we are living through a power shift: for the last 2,000 years, the power remained in the hands of white, Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexual males. In our own country, we have a second-term, bi-racial President, more women in Congress than ever before and more openly gay Congress members as well. The Latino population is rising at a sustained pace, helping to create this new shift of power.

While this study is about power, it is also about basic human dignity. Dignity is the quality or state of deserving respect. All people deserve dignity, but without effective communication skills, without a voice or being heard or understood, dignified treatment rarely occurs. Simply stated, effective communication leads to self-empowerment which produces an expectation of dignified treatment. Self-empowered people expect to be treated with dignity—they demand it. Therefore, it is in this expectation that they receive it. Conversely, when people are oppressed or disempowered, they do not expect or demand being treated with dignity and thereby never receive it.

Empowering socio-economically disadvantaged (SED) populations to unlock their own potential for greatness was one motivation for this study. The participants eagerly shared their stories of growth, challenges, and changes while experiencing PDE. The skills taught in PDE have many names already, such as professional skills, 21st century behavioral competencies, SCAN skills, people skills, and soft skills. I prefer to call these skills “achievement skills” as they are skills that enable students to achieve what they desire, both in college and career. The education system can empower SED students by embedding the core curriculum of K-12 institutions with three types of education—academic, career and technical and personal development. Then educators

and communities could disrupt the status quo, allowing disenfranchised populations more access to education, and placing a higher value on the cultural capital that allows the wide array of social, economic, and cultural opportunity. These students could then enter a different class status enabling their children, from birth, to experience life not lived within the hardships of poverty but in a more comfortable middle class status or beyond.

The United States invented free, public, high school education. In a democracy, all people must be well informed and prepared to take part in decision-making that enables citizens to live within a free society. To maintain a democracy in this country, free thought must be encouraged and nurtured. Additionally, the world continues to change at a rapid pace and we, as educators, must go forward to meet the demands of not only democracy, but also an ever-changing globalized world. Educators can and are meeting these demands: PDE is a domain that is taking hold globally in education but slowly in the United States. The United States has rich potential in its diverse human capital that can be unlocked for all its residents, if its education system can enable people to access their greatness and contribute to the nation and to the world. The education system is awakening to the dawn of this new era, and I do believe this work is seminal in helping birth a new domain of education.

In conclusion, I have illustrated how perceptions about 21st century skills can develop over time by renaming this study three times. The official name as filed with the Institutional Review Board is “Empowering Marginalized Youth through Learning 21st Century Skills—A Study of PDE from the Student’s Perspective.” I then changed the name to “Your Voice Matters” in order to recruit participants for the study. While doing the study, however, I focused on a phrase used by one participant: “to just reach farther.” It is only four words long—far shorter than the original title, but it simply reflects the value of PDE as seen by the participants. Do these young people think that soft skills are

valuable learning for their own success? After conducting this study, I can safely say yes, they do. Soft skills education teaches them how to access their own power and experience human dignity. PDE permanently transforms and liberates students who now speak with confidence and credibility. In turn, they can influence their families, friends, and communities working to create a more inclusive, diverse middle class in the 21st century. The links between education, individual students, and their communities is best shown in the voice of Ronesha, speaking her truth:

For me it's necessary to be teaching it in school because where I come from, it's, like, its different because—well, not different—but most people aren't exposed to these types of good skills that they should be having.

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APPENDIX A

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN THE CALIFORNIA EDUCATION CODE

California's Education Code includes the following regarding CTE:

Education Code Section 51226 provides legal authority to develop the CTE standards and framework. This legislation requires the development and adoption of CTE standards that incorporate the integration of career technical and academic education no later than June 1, 2005. The California CTE Model Curriculum Standards were adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) on May 11, 2005. The standards, written for grades seven through twelve, specify learning goals in 58 career pathways organized around 15 industry sectors.

On January 10, 2007, the SBE approved the *Education Code* Section 51226.1 which stipulates that the framework will prepare pupils for both career entry and matriculation into postsecondary education. The framework is a guide to implementing the groundbreaking CTE Standards at the local level in rigorous and relevant ways. The CTE Framework structure and contents are designed to assist the field in planning and delivering a rigorous and relevant CTE curriculum that increases student achievement. The framework draws on all 15 of California's CTE industry sectors to provide examples of practices and research-based guidance for implementing the CTE Model Curriculum Standards.

The legislation stipulates that adoption of the model curriculum framework by local educational agencies is voluntary. For additional requirements, see *Education Code* sections 51226 and 51226.1 and related sections 51228. (California Department of Education, 2009, p. 1299)

APPENDIX B

CALIFORNIA'S 15 INDUSTRY SECTORS

1. Agriculture and Natural Resources: The pathway includes Agricultural Business, Agricultural Mechanics, Agricultural Science, Animal Science, Forestry and Natural Resources, Ornamental Horticulture, and Plant and Soil Science.
2. Arts, Media and Entertainment: The pathway includes Media and Design Arts, Performing Arts, and Production and Design Arts.
3. Building Trades and Construction: The pathway includes Cabinetmaking and Wood Products, Engineering and Heavy Construction, Mechanical Construction, and Residential and Commercial Construction.
4. Education, Child Development, and Family Services: The pathway includes Child Development, Consumer Services, Education, and Family and Human Services.
5. Energy and Utilities: The pathway includes Electromechanical Installation and Maintenance, Energy and Environmental Technology, Public Utilities, and Residential and Commercial Energy and Utilities.
6. Engineering and Design: The pathway includes Architectural and Structural Engineering; Computer Hardware, Electrical, and Networking Engineering; Engineering Design; Engineering Technology; and Environmental and Natural Science Engineering.
7. Fashion and Interiors: The pathway includes Fashion Design, Manufacturing, and Merchandising; and Interior Design, Furnishings, and Maintenance.

8. Finance and Business: The pathway includes Accounting Services, Banking and Related Services, and Business Financial Management.
9. Health Science and Medical Technology: The pathway includes Bio-technology Research and Development, Diagnostic Services, Health Informatics, Support Services and Therapeutic Services.
10. Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation: The pathway includes Food Science, Dietetics, and Nutrition; Food Service and Hospitality; and Hospitality, Tourism, and Recreation.
11. Information Technology: The pathway includes Information Support and Services, Media Support and Services, Network Communications, and Programming and Systems Development.
12. Manufacturing and Product Development: The pathway includes Graphic Arts Technology, Integrated Graphics Technology, Machine and Forming Technology, and Welding Technology.
13. Marketing, Sales, and Service: The pathway includes E-commerce, Entrepreneurship, International Trade, Professional Sales and Marketing.
14. Public Services: The pathway includes Human Services, Legal and Government Services, and Protective Services.
15. Transportation: The pathway includes Aviation and Aerospace Transportation Services; Collision Repair and Refinishing; and Vehicle Maintenance, Service, and Repair.

(California CTE Model Curriculum Standards, 2006 pp. vi-vii)

APPENDIX C

FIVE WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES

Resources:

Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources

- *Time*—Selects goal-relevant activities, ranks them, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules
- *Money*—Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes adjustments to meet objectives
- *Material and Facilities*—Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or space efficiently
- *Human Resources*—Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance and provides feedback

Interpersonal:

Works with others

- *Participates as Member of a Team*—contributes to group effort
- *Teaches Others New Skills*
- *Serves Clients/Customers*—works to satisfy customers' expectations
- *Exercises Leadership*—communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies
- *Negotiates*—works toward agreements involving exchange of resources, resolves divergent interests
- *Works with Diversity*—works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds

Information:

Acquires and uses information

- Acquires and Evaluates Information
- Organizes and Maintains Information
- Interprets and Communicates Information
- Uses Computers to Process Information

Systems:

Understands complex inter-relationships

- *Understands Systems*—knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them
- *Monitors and Corrects Performance*—distinguishes trends, predicts impacts on systems operations, diagnoses deviations in systems' performance and corrects malfunctions
- *Improves or Designs Systems*—suggests modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance

Technology:

Works with a variety of technologies

- *Selects Technology*—chooses procedures, tools or equipment including computers and related technologies
- *Applies Technology to Task*—Understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment
- *Maintains and Troubleshoots Equipment*—Prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies

APPENDIX D

21ST CENTURY SKILLSTable D-1: 21st Century Skills

Author	Skill sets	Definitions
Bancino	Personality Traits	Social graces Facility with language
	Interpersonal Skills	Self-awareness Social awareness Relationship management skills Conflict management skills Diversity awareness
Equipped for the Future	Communication skills	Reads with understanding Listens actively Observes critically
	Interpersonal skills	Cooperates with others Conveys ideas in writing Guides others Advocates & influences Resolve conflicts & negotiates
	Decision-making skills	Takes responsibility for learning Plans & communicates Uses math to solve problems
	Lifelong learning skills	Solves problems Makes decisions Reflects & evaluates Uses information & communication technologies
P21	Learning & innovation skills	Creates & innovates Engages in critical thinking & problem-solving Communicates & collaborates
	Information, media & tech skills	Information literacy Media literacy Information, Communication, & Technology literacy (ICT)
	Life & career skills	Flexible & adaptable Possesses initiative & self-direction Social & cross-cultural awareness?

Author	Skill sets	Definitions
		Productive & accountable Sense of leadership & responsibility
ABET	Professional skills	Engages in critical thinking & problem-solving Creates, collaborates communicates Possesses agility, adaptability, entrepreneurship, initiative, curiosity, imagination
Trilling & Fadel	7 C's	Critical Thinking Creativity Collaboration Cross-cultural understanding Communication Computing Career Education
SCANS	Resources	Time Money Material & facilities Human resources
	Interpersonal	Teaming Teaches others Customer-care oriented Leadership abilities Negotiates diversity
	Information	Acquires, analyzes, organizes, maintains, interprets, communicates, and processes
	Systems	Understands, monitors, corrects, improves, designs
	Technology	Selects, applies, maintains, trouble-shoots
Overtoom	Employability skills	Communication Adaptability Developmental (?) Influencing Group effectiveness

Note. Author's table. Data adapted from *Work readiness credential*, by Equipped for the Future. (2009) p.20.; Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2003). *Learning for the 21st century: A report and MILE guide for 21st century skills.; Employability skills: An update* Overtoom, C. (2000). Educational Resources Information Center Digest 220.: Schuman, L., Besterfield-Sacre, M., & McGourty, J. (2005). The ABET "professional skills"—Can they be taught? Can they be assessed? *Journal of Engineering Education*, 94, 41–55.; States Department of Labor, Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). (1991). *What work requires of schools: A SCANS report for America 2000.*; Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for our life in our times.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Bancino, R., & Zevalkink, c. (2007). Soft Skills: The New Curriculum for Hard-Core Technical. *Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers*, 82(5), 20-22.

APPENDIX E

PERMISSION REQUEST FOR PILOT STUDY

Dear Parent and Student,

This letter is to inform you that your child is being asked to participate in a pilot study and will be asked to take a survey. The survey is part of my doctoral dissertation and will measure what types of learning the student finds helpful in the BUILD program. The purpose of the study is to examine how different types of 21st century skills are changing the student's perception of school and their future goals.

The survey will be taken with paper and pencil and will take about 15 minutes. It will be administered during the BUILD class.

Your student's identity will be kept confidential and they may stop taking the survey at any time. If your student ends the survey early, I would still like to use the incomplete information from the survey in my study. The information from this survey is only a pilot and therefore will not be used for data and no injury will be enacted on the student as part of this pilot.

If you do not want your student to take this survey please contact me below. I understand that by allowing my student to participate in the pilot I will hold harmless Ms. Jacobson, Carlmont High School and Sequoia Union High School from any litigation, but not limited to any other proceedings.

Thank you for your consideration and cooperation,

Sincerely,

Ms. Vera L. Jacobson, MA _____

[withheld for privacy]

Parent Signature

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, PILOT STUDY FOR DISSERTATION PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH

1. Why did you join BUILD and is it what you thought it would be?
2. What are your school goals? Can you give me some examples? After high school? Examples?
3. Why should other students join BUILD? Can you tell a personal experience in BUILD that reflects what the program is about to you?
4. Is there something not working for you in BUILD? What would you change about BUILD?
5. Any more comments or thoughts you might have:

Thank you! Your voice matters!!

APPENDIX G

RESULTS OF PILOT INTERVIEWS

Results of Freshman Pilot Interviews

I interviewed two freshmen students, a male and a female. The first interview is the male student I shall call “P.” P is a small, white male and likes to project the image of “skater-dude” among his classmates. I interviewed him alone in the BUILD teacher’s office. Currently, I have this student in my classroom. He presents himself in class as a non-caring, unmotivated, slightly rude student. By way of this interview I learned many things about P that were unknown to me prior to this experience. This is the only interview that I transcribed verbatim. What was notable was how frequently he expressed his need for “making my ideas happen.” I coded this transcription as well, and he mentioned that 7 times within ten minutes during the interview. The other theme that emerged from this interview was “making money” as BUILD offers this opportunity to students and I am now curious about his focus on making money. He mentioned that BUILD has allowed him a creative space, and when I asked him to explain he said, “Oh, like you get to be able to think like, oh you should make that, and add on to that, and think what can you add on to and stuff like that. And actually be able to build it.” When I asked him for a personal definition of entrepreneur he said, “Having your own idea and being able to make it and do it. I guess I am an entrepreneur myself. I like to make things. I like to have ideas and just be able to go out there and make it.”

From this short interview I was able to identify a strong need for individualism, a large sense of self-efficacy, and a healthy amount of self-confidence. A variable of this information is that he is my student in a daily classroom experience. What is interesting is

that he does not manifest any of these qualities or traits in the regular classroom, and without doing this interview; I might not have known P had these traits.

The rest of the interviews were not transcribed verbatim. The students were unknown to me. The second freshman I interviewed was a Tongan girl who I called “M.” She was willing to do the interview, pleasant and friendly. What quickly surfaced in this interview was her willingness to stay in BUILD because she did not want to go home and get into trouble or as she put it, “do bad stuff.” She stated that BUILD was like a family, which seemed very important to her as this was peppered throughout her interview. Her personal definition of an entrepreneur states, “I think one who uses what they have to make money. The start from the bottom up and work your way up. . . . you know. . . . expand like Steve Jobs. You need a strong mind, a strong mind set and not let put downs stop you.” What I found poignant was amidst her talk about how joining BUILD keeps you away from doing “bad stuff” were that her career goals included helping others, “helping people be heard whose voices aren’t heard.” When I asked her to explain she said, “Maybe help illegals (immigrants) to have their justice.” She concluded her interview by thanking the person that invented BUILD because, “(1) You can make money legally. (2) You learn how to run a business. (3) You learn how to work on a team. (4) You learn to speak in front of others. (5) You learn math skills like COGs (cost of goods sold) and (6) It can give you confidence.” When I asked her about the teaming experience she said, “I did not always get along. But we learned how to argue. Like a family. We used to curse. Now we say please be quiet.” Although many of M’s responses were similar to P’s her more dominant themes were a need to belong, a need for unity, and a need for family.

Results of the Sophomore Pilot Interview

This interview was a pair interview with a senior male student. The sophomore was a Latina female who was willing to talk with me and I called her “Q.” When asked about her own definition of entrepreneur she replied, “To be someone in life—your own boss—to work for yourself instead of others—to be someone who wants to be something in life,” which seemed to be a value for her. Her goals included getting better grades as she “messed up” in her freshman year and eventually to become a doctor or to work for the FBI. When I asked about any changes that BUILD had on her she replied, “I did not like school and was thinking about dropping out but BUILD taught me about college,” and therefore she is satisfied with school now. She also commented that her “family is really proud of me” which is another value for her. Of all the interviews she was the least talkative and I only can wonder that if she interviewed alone she might have felt more comfortable sharing information with me.

Results of the Junior Pilot Interviews

The two junior students were Latino males and interviewed together. I called them “W” and “G” respectively. Both were open and eager to talk with me. Both students spoke highly of the BUILD program/education, but of note was that W was able to express his learning succinctly and with a business mindset, whereas G spoke more about the support received from the program and was very grateful for the experience. W described his definition of entrepreneur as “the ability to make a business using your own ideas and success life.” He continually spoke about his “ideas” which surfaced as a theme and therefore, a value for him. G spoke of learning to “take initiative and necessary risks to grow a business.” When I asked him about taking risks he stated, “Oh, like sending an email to someone and if they don’t respond—oh well—just try again.” Both clearly expressed their distinct desire to attend college. G said his family had “a bad history with

school,” and he would be the second in his family to attend college. As mentioned, W continually stated that BUILD allows you to “express your ideas” and “ideas will never be shunned—you learn how to explore your individuality and expand it and make money.” On the other hand, G expressed the benefits of BUILD as “you learn about yourself and how to manage a relationship.” When I asked what that meant he replied, “You learn to balance other people’s ideas and work together in a team equally.” When I asked them about their experiences about the events W replied, “Yeah, we were nervous but then, I like to say, we became one person.” G felt more strongly about this and said, “I hated it. I didn’t want to go but I didn’t want to let anybody down. Now I have no problem talking in all my classes.” Because these two students spoke of community, I asked them how BUILD might affect their community. W replied, “Teens have problems world-wide and BUILD helps teens with their problems.” G explained, “BUILD has helped him become a better person who will help his future family and community. I want to help others get an equal chance.”

Results of the Pilot Senior Interview

This student is a Latino male student who interviewed with the sophomore female student. He was much more talkative and seemed eager to answer my questions. When I asked him why he joined BUILD, he replied, “I wanted to learn about a business not college.” When I asked him his personal definition of entrepreneur he replied, “BUILD teaches you that when life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” His goals include either attending San Francisco State University or Academy of Art as he is interested in music production or having his own studio. When I asked him how does BUILD change you, he said, “BUILD changes your mind—before I did not know about the difference between a community college and a four-year one.” When I asked him about the effect of the events he replied, “It puts you on the spot but you get better the more you do it. The effect

BUILD has had on me is with my family. Not impossible anymore for me to go to college—it is a real reality.” As a senior he was very focused on his career, his goals, and spoke very well. It would be interesting to gather seniors together for my research as they are the end of the four-year experience and may have much to share.

Findings

The findings are an outcome of the research questions. The following chart lists the themes that emerged from the pilot and the number of various students who mentioned them in their interviews:

Table G-1

Themes Discovered Through the Pilot Interviews

Emergent themes	No. of students
Value my ideas	6
Making money	6
Value of success/achievement	6
College as a goal	6
Value of individualism	5
Value of an entrepreneur	4
Resiliency	4
Power of teaming	4
Confidence	5
Value of family/community	3

Note. Author’s table.

I received much student input during the interviews, which kept giving me ideas for the research design. I am pleased to say as an outcome of this pilot I want to have the student focus group actually work on devising a student-generated assessment tool for

evaluating personal development education, specifically critical thinking, communication, creativity, courage, collaboration. The students all spoke easily and readily about these topics. PDE is hard to evaluate and having students create such a tool could be fresh, innovative, and useful in validating PDE education. Finally, because of this new awareness that the pilot gave me, I have decided to only focus my inquiry on 21st century behavioral competencies within their entrepreneurial education.

I enjoyed this experience as it gave me a chance to engage with students regarding my inquiry. I work best in a collaborative environment, and this small pilot experience gave me a chance to talk to students about my inquiry. I look forward to developing this research study with the students as co-researchers and am eager to discover new findings from this work. To quote one of the female students, “To be someone in life—your own boss—to work for yourself instead of others—to be someone who wants to be something in life.”

APPENDIX H

ASSEMBLY BILL 1330 IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and High School Principals:

IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSEMBLY BILL 1330

The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance on the implementation of Assembly Bill 1330 (Chapter 621, Statutes of 2011) in districts and schools offering instruction in any of grades nine through twelve, inclusive.

Existing state law requires all graduating high school students to complete one course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. Beginning with the 2012–13 school year (class of 2013), AB 1330 authorizes local educational agencies to accept a Career Technical Education (CTE) course as an optional high school graduation requirement in lieu of one course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. Please note that AB 1330 does not require a district or a school to start new CTE programs.

AB 1330 also requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to submit a report to the Legislature by July 1, 2017, concerning the impact of AB 1330. In addition, the provisions of AB 1330 will be repealed on January 1, 2018, unless its provisions are extended by legislative action.

If a local governing board elects to adopt an optional CTE graduation requirement pursuant to AB 1330, the governing board, prior to offering the optional CTE graduation requirement to students, shall notify parents, teachers, pupils, and the public at a regularly scheduled meeting of the governing board. This notification shall include the following:

The intent to offer CTE courses to fulfill the graduation requirement.

The impact that offering CTE courses will have on the availability of courses that meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) systems, and whether these CTE courses would satisfy those eligibility requirements.

The distinction between the high school graduation requirements of the school district or county office of education and the eligibility requirements for CSU and UC admission.

For more information about California's high school graduation requirements, including more detailed guidance for complying with the provisions of AB 1330, please visit the CDE State Minimum Course Requirements Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gc/hs/hsqrmin.asp>.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Terrie Poulos, Education Programs Consultant, High School Innovations and Initiatives Office, by phone at [withheld for privacy] or by e-mail at [\[withheld for privacy\]](#).

Sincerely,

Tom Torlakson

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APPENDIX I

CALIFORNIA CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

The Board's vision stems from a more pragmatic approach to authentic teaching and learning, meeting all the student's needs with the embedding of career education in our school system (California Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards, 2005). In 2007 the California Department of Education adopted new CTE standards, launching the movement throughout the state. The Sequoia Unified High School District was quick to recognize the need for and importance of bringing such vital curriculum to the district's students. I provide a more thorough definition of CTE below, since CTE can be a vague term.

Career Technical Education Framework for California Public Schools

Vision: "Career technical education engages all students in a dynamic and seamless learning experience resulting in their mastery of the career and academic knowledge and skills necessary to become productive, contributing members of society" (California CTE Standards and Framework Advisory Group, 2007, p. xi).

Mission: "California's education system delivers high-quality programs, resources, and services to prepare all students for career and academic success, postsecondary education, and adult roles and responsibilities" (California CTE Standards and Framework Advisory Group, 2007, p. xi).

The combined vision and mission statement clearly address the need to prepare students for their future as the CDE is cognizant of the fast-paced changes of our 21st century world and how best to serve all the students for their success as they transition into college and, eventually, the world of work. To achieve the vision and the mission for CTE there are nine guiding principles for California's CTE delivery system:

1. Inclusion
2. Students and the economy
3. Preparation for success
4. Career planning and management
5. Integration
6. Programs of study
7. Innovation and quality
8. Future orientation
9. Collaboration

(California CTE Standards and Framework Advisory Group 2007, p. xi)

APPENDIX J

CTE STANDARDS

In 2007 the California Department of Education adopted new CTE Standards, launching the movement throughout the state. The standards were just approved for revision in spring, 2013. The CTE Standards integrate rigorous academic content with industry-specific knowledge and skills to prepare students for both college and career. The standards are researched-based, drawing heavily from the 1991 U.S. Secretary of Labor's report titled *Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)*. This report identified knowledge and skills needed to compete globally in the 21st century, globalized, high-tech world. These standards are much broader in scope than the previous vocational-education-centric ones since they prepare students for *both* college and the world of work.