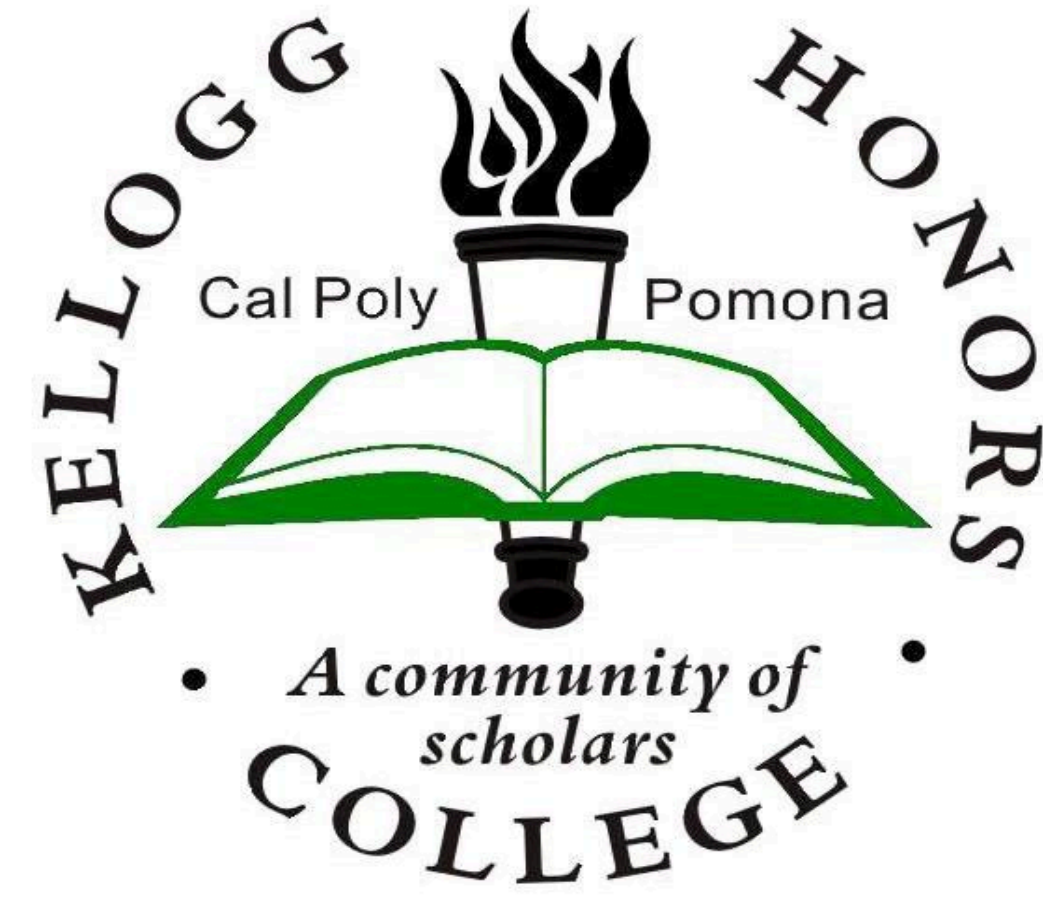




First-Generation College Students' Experiences of Resilience



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Introduction:

As institutions become increasingly aware of the importance of multiculturalism, diversity, and equity, it is equally valuable to understand the perspectives of first-generation college students. These students are the first in their families to attain higher education and thus face a unique set of obstacles in their pursuit. Previous research demonstrates that resilience among this group is not characterized by typical psychological understandings. Additionally, sociological theory would suggest that these students lack sufficient cultural capital to succeed in the education system. This interdisciplinary study combines feminist scholarship with contemporary sociological theory to understand and contribute diverse voices in both fields.

Research Questions: How do first-generation college students experience resilience? What contributes to first-generation college students' experiences of resilience?

Hypothesis: First-generation college students possess cultural capital that allows resilience and success communicated by the student's families, culture, and community.

Why first-generation college students?

According to the Center for First-Generation Student Success:

- First-generation college students are students whose parents did not obtain a college or university degree
- 1/3 of all current undergraduates are first-generation
- 66% Work a part-time or full-time job while enrolled
- 30% Have dependents
- On average, first-generation take longer to complete 4-year degree program
- 58% of students at the university surveyed are first-generation

Relevant Literature:

Feminist Resilience

"The concept of resilience connects feminist rhetoric to the rich history of feminist discourse that attends to gender as well as other factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age" (Flynn, Brady, and Soritin 2012:2)

- *Consejos and cuentos* (Rocha 2020:11)
- "temporally-embedded process" (Sanchez, Lamont, and Zilberstein 2022:2)



Cultural Capital

- Set of tools used to navigate and succeed in a hierarchical education system, "very unequally distributed among children from the different social classes." (Bourdieu 1973:58)
- Alternative perspectives
 - Community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005)
 - *Familismo* and *educación* (Gonzalez 2012)
 - *Testimonios* (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona 2012)

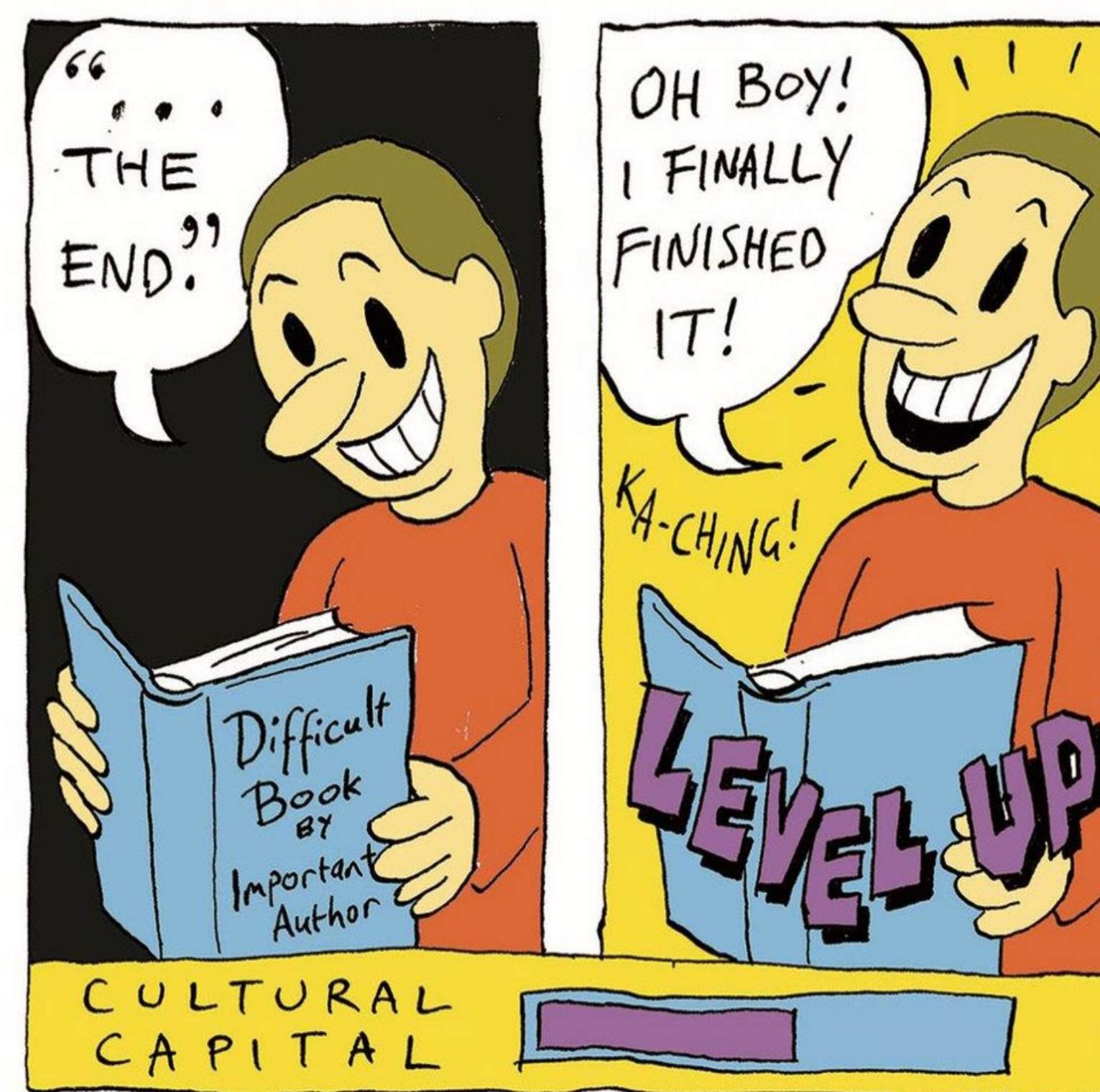


Fig. 1 McDougall, Keith. 2016. "Bourdieu's Cultural Capital."

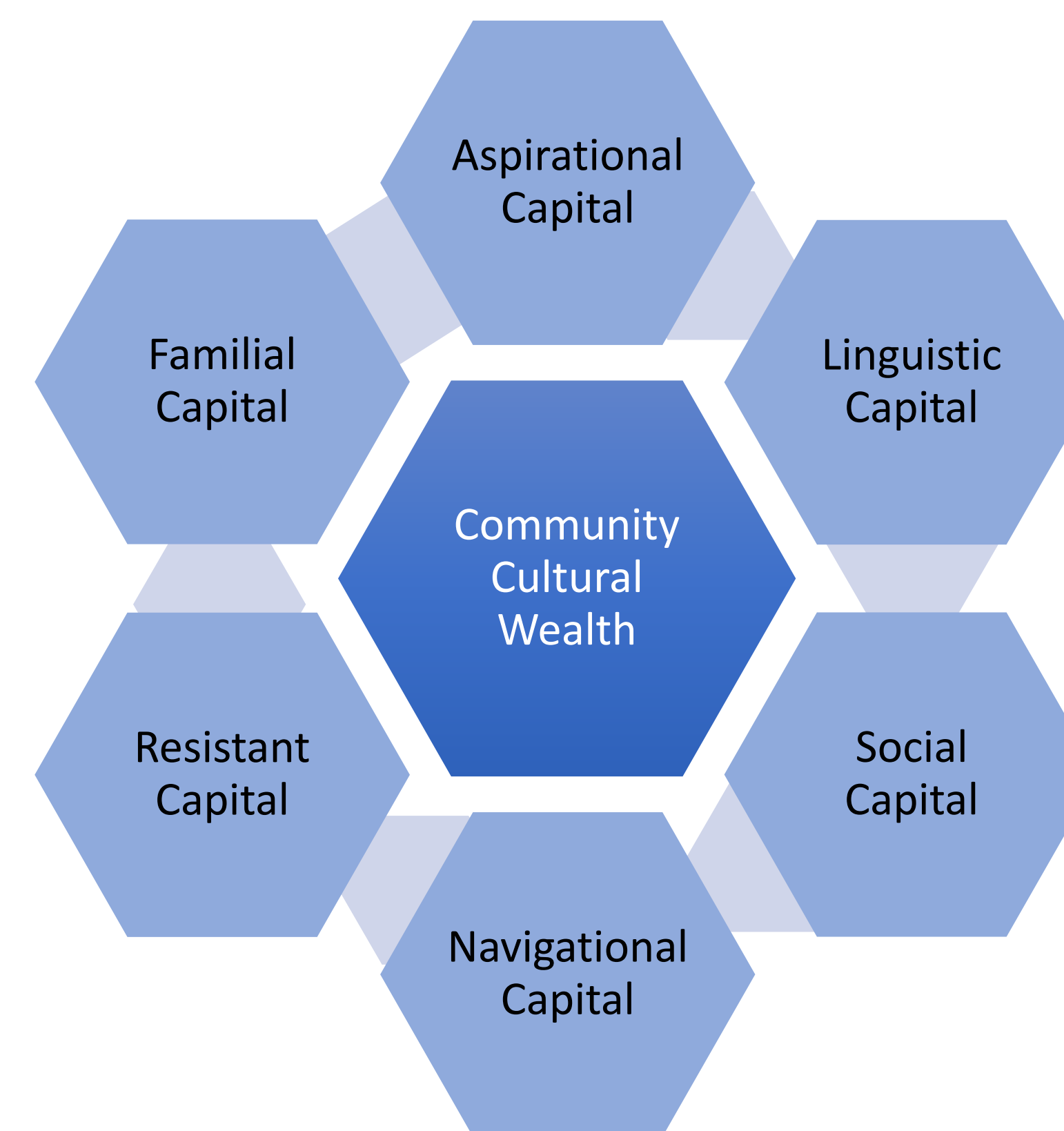


Fig. 2 Adapted from Yosso, Tara. 2005 "Whose Culture Has Capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth"

Methods:

- Qualitative study that uses two methods of data collection
- (1) online survey hosted by Qualtrics with questions covering topics that include family, community, culture, and resilience

How do you define resilience?

Who is someone in your life that you believe to be resilient?

What makes a person resilient?

- (2) in-depth semi-structured interviews
- Participants had the choice between in-person or Zoom interviews
- Interviews allow participants to expand on survey responses and give rich descriptions.

Sample:

100 current first-generation college students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution in Southern California for survey, 5 of which were contacted to be interviewed.



Initial Findings:

- Participants report the importance of family communicated by culture
- Recurrent themes of continual resilience
- Participants report identifying as resilient when confronted with obstacles in higher education
- Key words used to define resilience:

"Adapt, Recover, Try again, Keep going"

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