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Higher Education in and for Rural Bolivia: Key Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Educational Experiences of Students who have Attended Unidad Académica Campesina Carmen Pampa.

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

HIGHER EDUCATION IN AND FOR RURAL BOLIVIA: KEY STAKEHOLDERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WHO
HAVE ATTENDED UNIDAD ACADEMICA CAMPESINA CARMEN PAMPA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILISOPHY

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

by

Claudio Roberto Merisio

2015

To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

This dissertation, written by Claudio Roberto Merisio, and entitled Higher Education in and for Rural Bolivia: Key Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Educational Experiences of Students who have Attended Unidad Académica Campesina Carmen Pampa, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Date of Defense: June 18, 2015

The dissertation of Claudio Roberto Merisio is approved.

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Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2015

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DEDICATION

To Michelle, Daniel, and Ania

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I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to all those who have encouraged and supported me. I am grateful to God for all the blessings in my life and I pray that I can be a blessing in the lives of others. A big thank you also goes to my parents and brothers who have always shown me unconditional love.

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school and family. Finally, I am forever grateful to my wife Michelle; you are the love of my life; I am proud of what we have built together. I would be much less than what I am today without you by my side.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

HIGHER EDUCATION IN AND FOR RURAL BOLIVIA: KEY STAKEHOLDERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WHO
HAVE ATTENDED UNIDAD ACADEMICA CAMPESINA CARMEN PAMPA

by

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Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP) is an institution of higher education located in the rural community of Carmen Pampa, in the Nor Yungas region of Bolivia. As articulated in its mission, the goal of UAC-CP is to prepare young Bolivians to serve their community as professionals with a commitment to bettering the lot of the poorest among them. This research attempted to answer a main question: What are the perceptions of key UAC-CP stakeholders of how the college prepares seniors and alumni to serve their communities as professionals? The sub-question was: What professional endeavors have seniors and alumni pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP?

In this qualitative single case study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with a former director of UAC-CP, three UAC-CP founders, one senior and nine of the college's alumni. In addition, the researcher conducted a document review and led a focus group session with seven UAC-CP faculty members. Upon analysis of

the data collected in the interviews and document review, the researcher identified seven themes that are directly linked to the research question and sub-question: perceived strengths and weaknesses of the college, professional endeavors pursued by seniors and alumni, living in community, community service and reciprocity (ayni), focus on value and spiritual enrichment, a unique opportunity, and financial challenges. The first theme had two subthemes: college strengths and college weaknesses. The second theme had two subthemes: financial need and service. The last theme also had two subthemes: the selection process, and rising costs and oscillating revenues.

In conclusion, stakeholders and documents indicated that in the two decades of its existence, UAC-CP has contributed both to the advancement of human capabilities of its students and to the development of potentialities of the communities that are served by the college's faculty, staff, and present and former students. In spite of some areas of concern, such as the college's finances and Internet access, the data collected and analyzed throughout this study indicate that UAC-CP has positively affected the lives of those who have been part of the college's creation, operations, and academic formation processes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative, single case study examined Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP) stakeholders' perceptions of the educational experiences of students who have attended the college. The study was undertaken to learn about the professional endeavors the students have pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP. Such exploration provides information about UAC-CP's goal of preparing young Bolivians to serve their community as professionals with a commitment to bettering the lot of the poorest among them, as articulated in the college's mission statement that is made available by Carmen Pampa Fund (CPF), UAC-CP's sister organization in the United States (Carmen Pampa Fund, n.d.). UAC-CP is an institution of higher learning that serves disadvantaged students. A large percentage of its student body comes from rural areas in Bolivia, and many students are of indigenous origin, particularly from the Aymara nation. The college aims to address the higher education and development needs of rural Bolivia.

This chapter begins with the background of the study, followed by an overview of education in Bolivia and a brief history of UAC-CP. Subsequently, it provides information on the research problem and purpose of the study, states the research questions, and explains the significance of the study. It concludes with the theoretical framework, definitions, delimitations of the study, and an overview of succeeding chapters.

Background of the Study

In the 1990s and 2000s many initiatives arose in Latin American countries to attempt to diminish social inequalities in the region. Due to their size and resources, governmental efforts, such as conditional cash transfer programs, have been able to benefit large segments of people living in different stages of adversity and social disadvantage (Reid, 2010). On a smaller scale, in the last two decades throughout the continent, non-governmental organizations have also carried out regional projects to improve the well-being of disadvantaged segments of the population. This study focused on one such regional project, UAC-CP, which provides higher education in five areas of study to impoverished students in rural Bolivia. UAC-CP was created in the 1990s to improve the lives of people in rural Bolivia by being a catalyst in promoting the development of areas in the Bolivian countryside through the provision of higher education to students from rural areas with limited financial resources.

Education in Bolivia

Overview and Literacy

Similar to the country's economy, education in Bolivia has gone through dynamic changes in the last two decades. Many of these changes have borne positive results, while others have failed to tackle persistent problems. Even though the increase of 10% in adult literacy rates in the last two decades shows signs of significant progress, old problems in the Bolivian educational system persist, such as achievement gaps between the sexes and between rural and urban dwellers. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) report "Youth, Skills and

Work” (UNESCO, 2012) statistics for 1985-1994 estimated the national adult literacy rate at the time as 80%--88% for adult male Bolivians and 72% for adult female Bolivians. Education data that were compiled by Bolivia’s Ministry of Planning, when it put in place the Technical Support Team of the Education Reform (ETARE), similarly showed that, in 1994, one in five adults in Bolivia was illiterate (Iriarte, 2004). Data from the World Bank (2008) about education in rural and urban areas showed that, in 2002, adults in rural areas received an average of 4.2 years of education, while the average attendance in urban areas during the same time period was more than double at 9.4 years. In 2005-2010, 90% of Bolivians ages 15 and over were literate. Adult male literacy was 96%, while adult female literacy rate was 87% (UNESCO, 2012). Recent improvements in the country’s educational system have not been distributed evenly among different population groups. The educational reform that started in 1994 decentralized educational funding, improved teacher training and curricula, changed the school grade system, and formalized and expanded intercultural and bilingual education. However, it has fallen short in addressing differences of attainment between genders and quality gaps between educational services available in rural and urban areas, in spite of ETARE’s identification of these problems as major concerns and priorities for the improvement of the country’s education system 20 years previously (Contreras & Talavera, 2003).

Primary and Secondary Education

Primary education in Bolivia lasts eight years and has been free and compulsory for children 6 to 13 years old since the early 1970s. However, attendance is seldom

enforced in some areas, and Iriarte (2004) has estimated that as much as half of the Bolivian adult population has not completed elementary education. Secondary education lasts up to four years and is not compulsory. Most education is state-supported, but private institutions are also permitted to operate in the country (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.a). In 2010 public expenditure on education amounted to 6.3% of the country's gross domestic product, and represented 18.1% of the total government expenditure; funds were allotted as follows: 3% for pre-primary education, 46% for primary education, 25% for secondary education, 23% for tertiary education, and 3% unknown. Also in 2010 net enrollment ratios (the number of students in the theoretical age group who are enrolled expressed as a percentage of the same population) were 88% for primary education and 71% for secondary (UNESCO, 2010). In 2006, the Bolivian government implemented the Bono Juancito Pinto program, which gives a stipend for each child for the first eight years of public schooling. This stipend stimulates school attendance by helping offset the costs of transportation and school supplies (Comisión Económica para América Latina y Caribe [CEPAL], 2012).

The quality of primary and secondary education continues to be a concern. According to Punch (2004), education in Bolivia, especially on the elementary level, remains caught in a downward spiral caused by constraints such as poor teaching quality, lack of resources, limited infra-structure, inadequate teaching materials, and low wages for teachers. In turn, a combination of these factors accentuates high rates of absenteeism, drop-out, grade repetition and failure. Additional circumstances, such as children's work responsibilities and harsh weather conditions, exacerbate already large

problems. Such an adverse scenario has a negative impact upon young people's school to work transitions.

Higher Education

Higher education in Bolivia has undergone significant changes in the last few decades. Until 1965 higher education in Bolivia was provided by seven public autonomous universities and a technological institute (Cohen, 1965). It was not until the mid-1980s that the number of institutions of higher education in Bolivia started to grow significantly. In an attempt to increase the number of programs available and to create competition to declining public universities, during his fourth and last presidency (1985-1989) Paz Estensoro instituted policies that promoted the growth of private universities. Such policies remained in place in subsequent years, and as a result, from the end of his term in 1989 until 2001, 35 private universities were built. In 2001 there were a total of 48 universities in Bolivia (State University, n.d.).

The number of accredited and unaccredited higher education institutions in Bolivia continues to grow. The number of unaccredited institutions is hard to obtain, and it changes constantly. There are four types of universities that are accredited by the Ministry of Education in Bolivia. Their categories and respective numbers of institutions are as follows: autonomous public universities (9), public universities under a special affiliation (such as a school of government or military academy) or regime (6), private universities affiliated with the Bolivian university system (3, one of them is Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo or Bolivian Catholic University-San Pablo with which UAC-CP is affiliated), and private universities (64; Virtual Campuses, n.d.).

Information about the quality of Bolivian institutions of higher education is scarce. Similar to other countries in the Americas where there is a proliferation of private universities, profit is often prioritized at the expense of quality of education. Public universities are also criticized often for providing obsolete education.

Public universities are increasingly inefficient; they only cater to a small percentage of Bolivian students at the rate of 30,000 new students a year and produce mediocre professionals without modern working skills. Private universities are able to compete by generally providing computer labs and better technology than traditional universities. They also try to address the needs of the country in more practical ways. (State University, n.d., p. 1)

According to the most recent statistical tables compiled by UNESCO, by the end of the 2007 school year, the estimated number of students enrolled in tertiary education programs in Bolivia was 353,000, of whom 45% were women (UNESCO, 2012).

Bolivian Unidades Académicas Campesinas or Rural Academic Units (UACs)

Five UACs or rural colleges were founded in the 1980s and 1990s—Tiahuanaco, Batallas, Escoma, Pucarani, and Carmen Pampa. More recently UAC Carmen Pampa became an independent regional unit under the Universidad Católica Boliviana, the Bolivian Catholic University (Satterlee, 2013). Little information has been published about the UACs. In 2008, an evaluation report was produced by McNeish and Böhrt for the CHR Michelsen Institute in Norway on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the cooperation of the Norwegian Student and Academics' International Assistance (SAIH) fund and all the UACs except for Carmen Pampa. UAC-Carmen Pampa, on the other hand, has received support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and was featured in Frontlines, the organization's newsletter, in an article about

United States sponsored alternative initiatives to prevent cocaine marketing in Bolivia (“Education Alternative to Cocaine,” 2004). In 2003 UAC-CP was recognized by the United Nations Sub-Committee for the Eradication of Poverty of the Non-Government Organization (NGO) Committee for Social Development as one of the best practices in poverty eradication (“Carmen Pampa Catholic Bolivia Project,” 2003). In 2011, the UACs were also recognized by the Education and Health Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Bolivia as Instituciones Meritorias del Estado (“Meritorious Institutions,” 2011).

The establishment of intercultural institutions of higher education in areas of high concentration of indigenous populations has been a common phenomenon throughout South America’s Andean countries, such as Ecuador and Bolivia, and in Mexico (Mato, 2008). The UACs’ focus on indigenous peoples was amply acknowledged by McNeish and Böhr (2008). The authors argued that the UACs are in tune with SAIH’s strategy for education for development. However, SAIH’s report pointed out that the four UACs that the organization supports need to make improvements to increase their sustainability, relevance and importance in the role they can play in the increasingly confusing and divided political environment in Bolivia. Also, the report praised UAC Carmen Pampa and identified the creation of the non-profit fundraising organization Carmen Pampa Fund in the United States to gather support for UAC-CP in Bolivia as a successful model that should be duplicated by the other four UACs, perhaps through the initiative and joint efforts of SAIH and other interested organizations and European universities.

In 2013 Satterlee conducted a case study research project that included an impact evaluation of UAC-CP that resulted from an assessment of the college's graduates. The report concluded that UAC-CP is responding to a lack of opportunity in rural areas, and has been successful in alleviating poverty.

History of Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP)

UAC-CP is located in the rural community of Carmen Pampa, 7.5 miles south of Coroico, Nor Yungas, Bolivia. It began in the 1990s as the fulfillment of a vision of American Franciscan nun Mary Damon Nolan, who had been a teacher and principal in rural Bolivia for over 10 years. Sister Nolan's observations of the deficiencies of secondary education in rural Bolivia led her to conceptualize a rural college to develop skilled professionals to become sensitive and impassioned leaders, who would be equipped to address the most pressing needs of their rural communities. Sister Nolan's order, the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, joined efforts with the Catholic University of Bolivia-San Pablo, the Catholic Diocese of Coroico, and sub-central Villa Nilo (the local governing body of the Aymara Indian nation) to create UAC-CP.

The identity of UAC-CP, then the only college located in the subtropical Yungas region of Bolivia, is closely linked to its surroundings and their inhabitants. The college has adopted the ayni (pronounced "eye-knee") philosophy of many indigenous populations of the Andes. Ayni is similar to a covenant in which parties assume shared responsibility to respond to mutual obligations. It is based on the premise that all will benefit by working together for the common good and serving a purpose greater than

self-interest (Porter & Monrad, 2001). It also entails sharing and preserving resources. Besides the training of skilled professionals, UAC-CP also contributes to the development of rural areas of the Yungas region in three main areas: production, research and extension projects (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2008a).

Two main strategic plans shaped up the creation and operations of UAC-CP. Before the inception of the college, the first plan was created to set forth the goals that needed to be accomplished for the creation and operation of the institution during its first 10 years (1992-2002). The plan mentioned the following three main goals that served as the initial pillars for the foundation of UAC-CP: (a) to build and equip facilities to house, teach and train college students to be selected exclusively from a pool of Bolivians of rural origin and scarce financial means, in a Catholic environment, (b) to secure accreditation from the Catholic University of Bolivia (located in the capital La Paz), and after accreditation is secured, modify the curriculum to focus on the needs and realities of the rural Bolivian Yungas, (c) to provide extension and outreach services to improve the quality of life in surrounding communities. After the facilities were ready, the accreditation was secured and the outreach program was established, a set of additional goals was created in the second plan to delineate the mission of UAC-CP:

1. To make higher education available to young rural students who would not otherwise have that opportunity. The college is located in a rural area and encourages students to return to their rural communities as agents of change.
2. To prepare young rural Bolivians to serve their community as professionals with a commitment to bettering the lot of the most poor.
3. To develop extension programs which address the critical needs of the surrounding rural communities. To help teams of students move out into the community in instruction and apprenticeship programs.

4. To strengthen progress and socio-economic liberation through academic research. To initiate research programs targeted to local needs and to integrate the successful research into the countryside. (Carmen Pampa Fund, n.d., p. 1)

Research Problem and Purpose

Problem

The curricula of all degrees offered at UAC-CP are geared to the needs and development of rural areas of Bolivia. Students are encouraged to work in rural communities after they complete their degrees. By doing so, seniors and alumni can become agents for the development of the nation's poorest regions, and in turn, help mitigate some of the numerous disparities in their country.

UAC-CP has been in contact with some of its alumni and seniors who have completed coursework but still have not fulfilled the college's culminating experience requirements. However, few efforts have been made to gather data about their perceptions and the perceptions of other key stakeholders of the educational experiences of students who have attended the college and their professional endeavors upon course completion and/or graduation. Without such information, it is difficult for UAC-CP administrators to gauge the impact that higher education has had on the lives of former students and the communities where they work.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine key stakeholders' perceptions of the educational experiences of students who attended the college and to learn about the

professional endeavors they have pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP. To be clear, in this study, seniors and alumni, founders, and faculty members are considered to be stakeholders of UAC-CP. Collectively, their perceptions can provide a thorough description of the endeavors, strengths, weaknesses, and challenges the college undergoes as a unique institution of higher education.

Research Questions

This study was undertaken to answer a main question: What are the perceptions of key UAC-CP stakeholders of how the college prepares seniors and alumni to serve their communities as professionals?, and a sub-question: What professional endeavors have seniors and alumni pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP?

Significance of the Study

Quantitative data are available to gauge UAC-CP's performance in the achievement of its first, third and fourth previously mentioned goals. This study will be significant to UAC-CP administrators and faculty because it will provide qualitative data to try to ascertain how successful the college has been in achieving the (second) goal of preparing young rural Bolivians to serve their community as professionals with a commitment to bettering the lot of the most poor. It will also be of significance to current students because they will be able to learn from the experiences of peers who graduated and/or finished their coursework, many of whom are now part of the Bolivian workforce.

From its foundation, UAC-CP has been shaped by its Catholic/Franciscan identity, which highly values service and social justice. UAC-CP serves impoverished rural families of Bolivia through education, research, production, community service, and leadership programs. Because of its location, mission, history, objectives, student body, faculty, and supporters, UAC-CP is a unique project that attempts to promote human development for impoverished students from some of the least developed areas of South America's poorest country. The study conducted by Satterlee in 2012-2013 has added a great deal of information to the limited existing literature about students who have pursued higher education in UAC-CP or similar institutions. This study will further add to the literature by employing the case study research methodology through the collection and analysis of qualitative data from one senior, nine alumni, and other stakeholders of UAC-CP on how they perceive the knowledge and skills students have acquired throughout their academic experience at the college.

Theoretical Framework

The human capability approach, that was conceived by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen in the 1980s and expanded upon by Martha Nussbaum in the 1990s and 2000s, was the theoretical framework of this study. According to Sen, a capability is "a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being; [it] represents the alternative combination of what a person is able to do or be" (Sen, 1993, p. 30). Sen (1985) initially identified five components necessary to assess capabilities: real freedoms, ability to transform resources, activities that generate happiness, a balance of materialistic and nonmaterialistic factors, and the concern for the distribution of opportunities within

society. Nussbaum (2000) expanded on Sen's concepts by identifying 10 capabilities: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses/imagination/thought, emotions, practical reasoning, affiliation, other species, play, control over one's environment (political and material). Similar to human capability, UAC-CP mission and goals view the welfare of its students as a complex equation that encompasses many factors beyond material wealth and resources.

Definitions

Ayni. Word of Quechua origin, (also spelled ayniy or aini), which is a traditional form of mutual help that is practiced in Andean indigenous communities.

Alumni. Students who have completed both coursework and culminating experience and have been awarded a diploma from UAC-CP.

Graduation requirements. In order to graduate from UAC-CP students are required to complete coursework and produce a thesis (or other type of culminating experience).

Seniors. The term seniors used throughout this study refers to students who have finished all their coursework, but have not yet completed their culminating experience (usually a thesis, but internships and guided research projects also qualify). Some seniors are able to find jobs and may end up not fulfilling the culminating experience requirement; consequently, they may never receive a diploma from the college.

Delimitations of the Study

Because UAC-CP is only two decades old and has an increasing but still small number of students, it also has a relatively small number of alumni. The college has launched a recent initiative to try to be in contact with its seniors and alumni, but not a great deal of information has been obtained about them. Because the recently created major ecotourism has not yet produced many seniors and alumni and is the only program that, until recently, was not equivalent to a Bachelor's degree, there were no ecotourism senior or alumni in this study. The study was delimited to collection and analysis of data about the educational experiences and professional endeavors of students who have attended the college. Informants were UAC-CP's founders, director, one senior, alumni, administrators, and leaders of academic departments.

Overview of Succeeding Chapters

The second chapter contains an overview and a review of relevant literature; the third chapter describes the methods of data collection and analysis that were utilized in the study. The findings of the study are presented in the fourth chapter and discussed in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into four sections: (a) socio-economic information about Bolivia (It starts with an overview followed by facts about two socio-economic aspects that differentiate the country from its neighbors: migration and race/ethnicity. In addition, the section has a review of relevant literature about disparities between rural and urban areas and aspects of internal and international migration); (b) human capability approach (including human development index and human capability and education); (c) education as a tool to fight poverty; and (d) Satterlee's survey of alumni of UAC-CP. A description of search procedures and an analysis about the relevance of each section precede the literature review findings. The chapter concludes with a summary.

This review of related literature was conducted primarily online from 2008 to 2014, through databases such as JSTOR, ERIC, Science Direct and Wilson Web. Books and articles were also accessed in print or electronically through the websites and libraries of Florida International University, Florida Atlantic University, and Nova Southeastern University. A few books and journal articles were obtained through interlibrary loans from the University of Florida and the University of South Florida. In addition, a few books were purchased through web retailer Amazon. Specific information about UAC-CP was obtained during yearly visits to the college and through the website of its U.S. non-profit sister organization Carmen Pampa Fund. Websites of Bolivian government agencies, such the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports, and the National Institute of Statistics were either unavailable or contained no relevant

information. The website of the Bolivian institute of statistics, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), was used to obtain information about the country's censuses. Websites of United States information agencies, such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and United States Department of State, and international organizations, such as the World Bank, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNESCO, were used to obtain additional census and statistical data about Bolivia. The main search terms used for review were "education (and) Bolivia", "higher education (and) Bolivia", "indigenous (and) education", "unidad academica campesina", "ayni", "ethnicity (and) Bolivia", "indigenous (and) college(s)", "indigenous (and) university(ies)", "migration (and) Bolivia", "rural (and) urban (and) Bolivia", "rural (and) Bolivia", "urban (and) Bolivia", "socio-economic (and) Bolivia", "human capabilities approach", "human capabilities approach (and) education", "human development index", "human capabilities approach (and) utilitarianism", "human capabilities approach (and) human capital", "education (and) poverty", and "education (and) fight poverty". The review included materials in English and Spanish, in which the researcher is fluent.

Socio-Economic Information about Bolivia

Overview

According the World Bank (2012a), Bolivia's gross domestic product per capita in 2011 was \$2,374, which was the lowest in South America. The last available census data from the Bolivian Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) indicated that the country's population was 10,027,254 inhabitants in 2012 (INE, 2014). According to the United States Department of State (2012), in 2010 the country's annual population growth rate was 1.69%, which is one of the highest in South America. Statistics compiled by

UNICEF (2006) indicate that the country's mortality rate for children under five is 61 per 1,000, and 50 per 1,000 for children under one; the life expectancy at birth of its citizens is 65. The share percentage of income received by the 20% of households with the highest income is 63%; conversely the share of income received by the 40% of households with the lowest income is only 7%.

Bolivia has made progress in the last 30 years, and has distanced itself from its alarming economic scenario of the 1980s, when hyperinflation reached 15,000% a year, poverty was widespread, coups d'état were numerous, coca production was rampant, and a de facto moratorium was imposed by the country on its foreign debt (Labrousse, 1990). In the 2000s the country benefited from a rise of mineral commodity prices in the international market. Because of it, remarkable accomplishments were made possible, such as a positive balance of trade, stability in the financial system, and a drastic reduction in the external debt. Most of the economy, however, continues to be based on revenue from hydrocarbons and minerals (\$2.3 billion and \$1.6 billion in 2006 respectively), and cash crops such as soybeans. All three are capital intensive and employ skilled labor, which are hard to come by (Saldaña, 2007).

Bolivia is a heterogeneous country with strong social contrasts and a great deal of poverty and inequality among its peoples and regions. According to the 2012 census, Bolivia only had four cities with a population above 500,000 inhabitants; they were: Santa Cruz (1,453,549 inhabitants), El Alto in the outskirts of La Paz (842,378 inhabitants), La Paz (764,617 inhabitants) and Cochabamba (630,587 inhabitants). The four cities combined accounted for over 36.8% of the country's population. The same census found 67.3% of the population of Bolivia to be urban and 32.7% to be rural (INE,

2014). In agreement with census information, analyses from UNICEF (2010) on territorial occupation and urbanization in Bolivia indicate the presence of a central population axis in Bolivia:

The urban development of Bolivia presents a particular characteristic, as we cannot observe the accelerated growth of only one city, such as Buenos Aires in Argentina. Urban growth is concentrated around a central axis formed by three main cities: La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. Poverty is a reality not only within these cities, but a ring has grown up around them of small towns with a population living in conditions of extreme poverty. (p. 1)

Migration

Migration numbers in Bolivia are staggering; it is estimated that 44.8% of the country's population is engaged in some type of migration (Roca, 2007). While official data on domestic migration are difficult to obtain, available data on international migration estimate that 3.4 million Bolivians (more than one third of the country's population) are living outside of the country's borders. Approximately 1 million are in Argentina, 500,000 are in the United States, 400,000 in Spain and Italy, and another 1.5 million are scattered elsewhere. In 2006, the country experienced a mass exodus to Spain as migrants were trying to arrive there before that country instituted the requirement of a visa for Bolivian nationals that went into effect in April 2007. It is estimated that only 20% of the Bolivians who live in Spain have a legal residency card (Saldaña, 2007).

Race and Ethnicity

Latin America is the area with the most unequal wealth distribution in the world (Reid, 2010). The Gini index, which ranges from 0 to 100 (0 representing perfect equality and 100 representing perfect inequality), is arguably the most common measure of inequality. Data available from the World Bank (2012b) about the Gini index of its

member countries show that, in 2011, Bolivia had a Gini index of 46.3, while Brazil's index was 53.1, and Colombia's was 54.2. In comparison, India (in 2011) and Ethiopia (in 2010) had the same index of 33.6, and the index for the United States was 41.1 (in 2010). One of the most obvious manifestations of uneven allocation of resources can be observed in the comparison of assets among the region's racial and ethnic groups.

Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (1994) in a report on inequalities that was published by the World Bank concluded that indigenous people are systematically poorer than non-indigenous people, as the former usually have fewer "endowments," such as education, job experience, family structure, and occupation. In addition, indigenous peoples endure disadvantages caused by differential preferences, institutions, social relations, cultural norms, and discrimination. Bolivia's ethnic distribution is estimated to be 62% indigenous and 38% non-indigenous (United States Department of State, 2012).

Psacharopoulos's (1993) analysis of income in Bolivia and Guatemala has indicated that there is a statistically significant gap of approximately 23% in earnings of the indigenous versus the non-indigenous groups. Unlike Guatemala and other countries in the Americas, Bolivia has a significant number of its indigenous people (34%) living in urban areas. Only 13% of the indigenous population in Guatemala lives in urban areas. More recently, however, the election in 2005 and reelection in 2009 of the first Amerindian president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, and the social revolution he has led have given greater constitutional rights to indigenous peoples, and have extended state control over the economy ("Bolivia's Presidential Election," 2009). According to Webber (2011), cash transfer programs such as the 2006 Bono Juancito Pinto, the 2008 Renta Dignidad and the 2009 Bono Juana Azurduy (for poor families with young children, for

the elderly, and for uninsured expecting mothers in need of health care, respectively) have decreased extreme poverty in the country and slightly diminished some gaps between the elite (mostly descendants of Europeans) and the majority of the population (mostly descendants of indigenous peoples).

Statistics on race and ethnicity in Bolivia can be confusing. In an attempt to create a more egalitarian society, Bolivian government leaders unsuccessfully tried to invent a universally mestizo (mixed) society in the aftermath of the social upheaval movement that became known as the Bolivian national revolution of 1952. Similarly, more recent attempts by Evo Morales's government to establish an all-encompassing indigenous label in the 2000s also seemed to have failed. Data from the 1900 census indicate that 51% of the Bolivian population is indigenous, 27% mestizo and 13% White. In the 1950 census, White was not a category, and findings showed that 63% of the population was indigenous and 37% mestizo. In 1996 United Nations Development Program (UNDP)'s Human Security Survey asked Bolivians to identify their ethnicity: 16% considered themselves indigenous, 67% mestizo and 17% White. The 1998 Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) indicated that 9.8% of the Bolivian population was indigenous, 60.6% mestizo and 23.3% White (Roca, 2007). Data from the 2001 census indicate that 55% of the population is indigenous, 15% European, and 30% mestizo (United States Department of State, 2012). The 2012 census indicates that out of the 6,916,732 Bolivians 15 years or older, 2,811,011 (40.6%) say they belong to an indigenous ethnic group, 4,032,014 (58.3%) say they do not belong to any group, and 73,707 (0.1%) of the people who were tallied in the census said they were not Bolivians (INE, 2014).

In Bolivia, indigenous status has been closely linked to linguistic competence. In the 1992 census, 34% answered that they knew Quechua, and 23% reported knowledge of Aymara; a far smaller percentage claimed to know Guarani or another language (McEwan, 2004). The same census indicated different numbers for monolingual speakers of indigenous languages: 8.1% of the population 6 and up speaks only Quechua and 3.2% speaks only Aymara. The 2001 census asked Bolivians aged 15 or older if they considered themselves Quechua, Aymara, Guarani, Mojeño, or another indigenous ethnicity; 62% of the respondents claimed to belong to one of those indigenous groups. However, only 11% of the population speaks an indigenous language; therefore, 51% self-declared indigenous speak only Spanish (Roca, 2007).

In Bolivia, similar to many other countries, non-White ethnic groups have lower incomes. Kelley (1988) estimates that inequalities between citizens of indigenous ethnicity and those of European descent are even greater than those between Blacks and Whites in the United States. In the future, however, income disparities may be reduced, as people of indigenous ethnicity are starting to have more access to formal education. In the Bolivian national revolution of 1952, the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement party gathered support from mining unions and joined forces with armed workers, civilians, and peasants to overthrow the military regime that ruled the country at the time. The 1952 revolution helped improve the living conditions of indigenous ethnic groups in Bolivia and led to the establishment of universal suffrage and mass education (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.b). Prior to the revolution, most of the indigenous population was part of an indentured servitude system through which they used to provide labor to landowners in exchange for rudimentary housing and food. Advances

towards social equality continue to take place gradually, but great differences still exist. Education remains the main factor influencing occupational success for descendants of Europeans. On the other hand, the father's occupation remains the most influential determinant of future occupational success for people of indigenous ethnicity.

Significant differences also exist in the academic achievement of children of indigenous background and their counterparts of European descent. Among the factors linked to lower achievement of children of indigenous ethnicity, McEwan (2004) identified parents' lower education, rural dwelling, neglected schools and negative consequences for use of indigenous languages in educational settings. Data collected in Chile and Bolivia indicated the existence of a gap in test scores of non-indigenous and indigenous students in the magnitude of 0.3 to 0.5 standard deviations depending on grade level and type of test. It is estimated that 50-70% of such gaps can be attributable to differences in the quality of schools and classrooms that are attended by indigenous and non-indigenous students. A combination of family variables, such as income and parental education, accounts for 20-40% of the gaps, and 10-20% of the gaps remain unexplained. Family structure and parental education achievement are some of the most significant factors regarding access to higher education. A study about status attainment models that analyzed the effects of family, peers and school factors on expectations to graduate from a sample university concluded that family structure is the primary factor influencing graduation expectations in Bolivia's administrative capital La Paz (Forste, Heaton, & Haas, 2004).

Review of Related Literature

Disparities between rural and urban regions. Great economic and social differences exist among Bolivia's nine regions or departments. However, throughout the whole country, there is a remarkable gap between living conditions in rural and urban areas, regardless of region or department. According to the CIA (2010), the poorest segments of the Bolivian population reside in rural areas, and disproportionately account for the majority of the 60% of the Bolivian population that live below the poverty line and almost 40% of the population that live in extreme poverty.

Few efforts exist to diminish the perennial gaps in development between urban and rural areas in Bolivia. Some studies have been carried out to elicit clues on potentially successful ways to develop rural areas in the country. Kessler's (2008) analysis of a developmental project carried out in five mountain villages in the northern part of the Chuquisaca department concluded that sustainable development in rural Bolivia with genuine participation of local populations and sensible management of natural resources will only be possible if a solid foundation is laid. Such foundation would include five basic conditions: leadership and organization, responsible participation, effective collaboration, mutual trust and environmental awareness. Kessler suggested that the best way to achieve this foundation is through a partnership of local municipalities and international development agencies with effective collaboration and accountability.

Liberato, Pomeroy and Fennell's (2006) study about the different factors that account for well-being outcomes in Bolivia drew similar conclusions regarding regional location and ethnicity. The authors defined well-being outcomes as housing quality,

material wealth, sanitation and educational achievement. In their research, they tested the hypothesis that indigenous ethnicity and highland location negatively affected well-being in Bolivia. The study concluded that rural-urban location indeed had a significant influence on well-being outcomes which were found to be higher in non-indigenous households. Also constant was the superiority of housing quality and sanitation of people living in the lowlands compared to those living in the highlands.

Krishnakumar and Ballon's (2008) study of Bolivian children's knowledge and living conditions showed a large interdependence between the two. They also found the predictable crucial role played by factors such as availability of schools, social investment and family support for children. Also very influential were some exogenous factors, such as living in rural or urban areas, ethnicity, and sibling structure. Disparities in health care are similar to those found in the educational achievement gap between indigenous and non-indigenous segments of the population. Bender, Rivera and Madonna (1993) argued that women of rural origin are more likely to have poorer health outcomes for themselves and their children than their lifelong urban counterparts.

Internal and international migration. Stark contrasts of resources available in cities compared to those available in rural areas have caused intense internal migration. For many years Bolivia has been experiencing a fast-paced rural-urban migration, that, in turn has led to the urbanization of poverty. O'Hare and Rivas (2007) have studied the role of rural-urban migration in Bolivia and its impact on poverty distribution and human services. In spite of social problems and strains in services such as water supply in El Alto near La Paz and other areas with a great influx of migrants, the flow of migrants to better-serviced urban and suburban areas has contributed to the alleviation of national

poverty. Such outcome is perhaps an indicator that rural-urban migration may continue to take place in Bolivia for many years to come. Even though urban poverty increases with migration, many migrants manage to be better off in the cities and some even send money to help relatives who remain in the countryside. Research conducted by Yarnall and Price (2010) pointed out that intra-national cash remittances may be as important as international ones.

Most attempts to diminish migration from rural areas have proven unsuccessful. Bolivia's structural adjustment policies in agriculture that were initiated in 1985 contributed to large-scale forest clearing for soybean production and lumber extraction. However, these policies fell short on their goal of attracting workers from other parts of Bolivia to the country's scarcely populated agricultural frontier (Kaimowitz, Thiele, & Pacheco, 1999). Gisbert, Painter and Quito's (1994) analysis of human organization in Bolivia pointed out that, in rural areas, farm families remain dependent on off-farm income. Men migrate and women, who are often left by themselves, have to face the overwhelming challenges of simultaneously taking care of the children, households and farms. Consequently, land management often suffers, and a self-perpetuating cycle of impoverishment and environmental degradation is established. Collective action and mutual help are mentioned as possible keys to breaking the cycle created by such counterproductive family survival strategies. Stoian (2004) has identified a few successful small scale initiatives in rural areas to sustain livelihoods, such as the extraction of plants from the jungle, as noteworthy exceptions.

Reasons for rural-urban migration in Bolivia have been the focus of a few studies. Punch (2002) identified factors that may influence migration; the most significant of

which were the lack of opportunities for migrants in their native rural locations, economic resources, parental attitudes, family background, gender, birth order, social networks, and role models. Besides the obvious drive of seeking work in urban areas or in other countries, the author also identified access to formal education and working in a community of fellow migrants as additional motivators for migration.

In spite of long distances, migrants tend to make strong efforts to keep family ties and cultural traditions alive. Even though rural young people in Bolivia may achieve economic independence sooner than those members of other minority groups throughout the world, long-term family interdependence tends to be maintained throughout the life course. Guss (2006) has studied cultural aspects of the massive migration from rural areas to the administrative capital La Paz starting in the beginning of the 20th century. Migrants have created enclaves in urban centers where they keep alive the cultural traditions from their places of origin. Such has been the case of the gran poder celebration that has become a new tradition in La Paz.

Although both internal and international migration have often brought about economic benefits to migrants and their extended families, they have produced negative consequences as well. The magazine *The Economist* ("Bolivia Go South," 1999) denounced the existence of Bolivian rings of traffickers who smuggle some of the country's children to work sweatshops in Peru, Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Also, family units have been severed, as parents often migrate by themselves and leave children with relatives, who are not always willing and/or able to take care of them. In the cases of illegal international migration, Bolivians are not able to return to their communities of

origin to visit their families, because once they cross international borders, it is unlikely that they will be able to go back to the foreign country where they work.

Human Capability Approach

Human capability approach, which was developed by Sen in the 1980s and broadened by Nussbaum in the 1990s and 2000s, provides a theoretical basis for inequality, poverty and policy analysis. It serves as a framework for the evaluation of individual welfare (Kuklys, 2005). Sen's concept of capabilities was a pioneer approach to welfare economics because it included a range of ideas that were previously absent in other welfare and development indices. The core concept of capabilities is what individuals are able to do. As mentioned previously, Sen (1985) initially identified five components necessary to assess capabilities: real freedoms in the assessment of a person's advantage, individual differences in the ability to transform resources into valuable activities, the multivariate nature of activities giving rise to happiness, a balance of materialistic and non-materialistic factors in evaluating human welfare, and the concern for the distribution of opportunities within society.

Initially, Nussbaum (2000) identified 10 capabilities that she argues should be supported by all democracies: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses/imagination/thought, emotions, practical reasoning, affiliation, other species, play and control over one's environment (political and material). Nussbaum (2011) has argued that these 10 capabilities are closely linked to what is required of lives worthy of human dignity. She added that:

Given a widely shared understanding of the task of government (namely, that government has the job of making people able to pursue a dignified and

minimally flourishing life), it follows that a decent political order must secure to all citizens at least a threshold level of these ten capabilities. (pp. 32-33)

The Human Development Index (HDI)

Measuring capabilities and the potential to develop them remains a challenge. In 1990 late Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, his counterpart Amartya Sen from India and other leading development thinkers produced the first Human Development Report. From their work a new index emerged, the Human Development Index (HDI), which is a composite statistic that measures achievements in three basic aspects of human development: health, knowledge, and income. The HDI uses a combination of data such as life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living, which are calculated according to specific formulas. It was introduced as a more thorough alternative to conventional measures of national development, such as level of income and the rate of economic growth.

The first Human Development Report introduced a new way of measuring development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite human development index, the HDI. The breakthrough for the HDI was the creation of a single statistic which was to serve as a frame of reference for both social and economic development. The HDI sets a minimum and a maximum for each dimension, called goalposts, and then shows where each country stands in relation to these goalposts, expressed as a value between 0 and 1. (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2013, p.1)

Figure 1 below provides a graphic summary of the four indicators and three dimensions that are used to calculate the Human Development Index (HDI). Four indicators are used as parameters to determine numeric values for the three dimensions that are combined to determine the HDI.

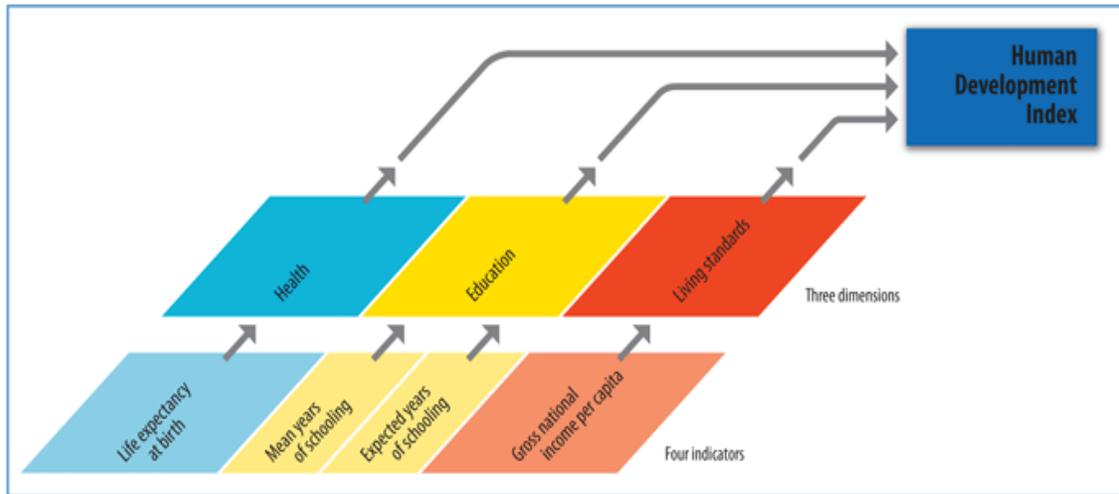


Figure 1. Human development index (HDI). Adapted from “United Nations Development Program [UNDP],” *Human development index (HDI)*. Retrieved in 2013 from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/>

Human Capability and Education

Education offers a platform for the development of freedom and human capabilities. As Sen (1992) argues, freedom and education are part of development, which increases the capabilities of people. Tilak (2002) has argued that human capability provides for the analysis of poverty beyond economic aspects. Sen’s concept of capability poverty “refers to the deprivation of opportunities, choices, and entitlements. The latter can be regarded as an extension of human freedom... Education constitutes a part of human freedom and human capability” (p. 196).

In addition, education allows for democratic dialogue and freedom of choice, which are closely linked to human agency. According to Nussbaum (2006), education is crucial to the health of democracy; it needs to move beyond the internalization of information and focus on students’ critical and imaginative capacities. She suggested a “three-part model for the development of young people’s capabilities through education

focusing on critical thinking, world citizenship, and imaginative understanding” (p. 385). The three pillars on which Nussbaum (2006) has based her concept of education for freedom are part of the educational experience of students who attend UAC-CP. The first pillar is the critical examination of oneself and one’s tradition and development of logic reason. The second pillar is a multicultural education that is adequate for citizens of a pluralistic democracy. At UAC-CP, both pillars are fostered through the study of indigenous languages of Bolivia, such as Aymara, Catholicism and world religions, and social aspects of Bolivian society, such as laws, institutions, race and gender issues. One of the main goals of the college is to enable students to break free from the effects of the heritage of a past of rural indentured servitude that was common in the region where the college is located. The third pillar, which is the narrative imagination based upon empathy, is fostered through the sense of community and the experiences of service that are part of students’ lives at UAC-CP.

Landorf, Doscher, and Rocco (2008) have argued that educational initiatives that are grounded on the human capabilities approach both teach students the skills necessary to earn a living and equip them to be agents of their own human well-being-- “a holistic concept, in that it involves multiple capabilities and the agency necessary to transform these capabilities into personally valued functionings” (p. 231). Flores-Crespo (2007) has argued that education is a multi-dimensional process that involves philosophical, pedagogical, institutional, and policy issues. He has proposed a list of functionings that focus on personal achievements as well as professional ones. Personal achievements are characterized by the following abilities: to feel confidence and self-reliance, to visualize life plans, to develop further abilities, to transform commodities into valuable

functionings. Professional achievements are characterized by the following abilities: to acquire knowledge required in a job position, to look for and ask for better job opportunities, and to choose desired jobs.

Because of its holistic nature, education centered on human capabilities requires self-awareness, constant dialogue, and exposure to conflicting ideas and cultural diversity. Democratic dialogue should be multi-layered, as argued by Sen (1999), who identified its three levels as direct, instrumental, and constructive. Students who are active agents of a transformational educational experience understand their capabilities and are aware of what they must know and do so that they can become who they want to be (Landorf et al., 2008). Unterhalter (2009) has argued that besides being instrumental, educational practices that lead to development are also empowering and redistributive; they promote public debate, foster participation in decision-making processes, and enable disadvantaged groups to organize politically and make progress in social justice issues. According to Walker and Unterhalter (2007), “the capabilities approach offers a freedoms-focused and equality-oriented approach to practicing and evaluating education and social justice in all education sectors and in diverse social contexts” (p. 251).

In sum, there is a consensus that education has been intimately connected to capabilities (Flores-Crespo, 2007). Results of the case studies that were conducted by Schischka, Dalziel and Saunders (2008) showed that significant changes in capabilities can be achieved both by learning new skills and by (re)discovering capabilities one already has. The authors have argued that “the key issue is how to increase the capabilities of participants to choose a life that they themselves have reason to value”

(p. 229). The transformative potential of education, as highlighted by Freire, calls for educator involvement and responsibility for making positive changes in the lived cultures of students and for students' ownership of their educational processes (Spring, 1994).

Education as a Tool to Fight Poverty

A clear link exists between the gross national product of nations and their ratios of educational enrollment, especially at secondary and tertiary levels (Hunnam & Buchmann, 2003). Less variation exists, however, in primary educational levels between poorer and wealthier nations. Although literacy represents a life-changing skill for those who obtain it, it is only one of the initial steps in the educational process. An overall consensus exists that higher levels of education attainment yield greater benefits in terms of productivity and income generation. Grootaert and Narayan (2004) from the World Bank have estimated that, in order for workers to obtain tangible benefits from education, they need to go much beyond primary education. Their research in Bolivia suggested that other assets, such as social capital have a greater effect on household welfare for poor Bolivians than the investments that are made in primary education. Additional research conducted on education in Bolivia has also painted a discouraging picture for the citizens of that country who do not go beyond elementary education. Punch's (2004) analysis of elementary education in Bolivia argued that "although children may appreciate school, and literacy and numeracy skills, formal [elementary] education is unlikely to increase their future livelihood options" (p. 163). Comparisons made by Petrakis and Stamatakis (2002) between less and more developed nations in regards to their citizens' educational levels and the countries' overall growth also pointed out that

higher education seems to stimulate economic growth at a much higher pace than primary and secondary education.

In the current globalized economy where jobs are frequently outsourced and competition even among geographically distant countries is constant, the need for education that focuses on global production, horizontal integration and global market share is dire (Ilon, 2008). Hunnam and Buchmann (2003) have predicted that education is a positive influence on behaviors, health practices, fertility, mortality and political stability. Ilon (2008) has argued that each level of schooling has its own effects: “Schooling clearly contributes to increased participation in markets (increased economic activity), increased global integration (increased Internet usage), improved health (increased life expectancy, decreased fertility rates, reduced infant mortality) and democratization” (p.16).

In the case of education in developing countries, Carnoy’s (1982) recommendations for educational policymakers remain valid today and summarize the strategies that have been adopted by UAC-CP:

Third world educational policymakers and planners are therefore prompted to attempt to increase the efficiency of revenue allocation in education (better management techniques), to increase the quantity and quality of educational resources, to shift the distribution of educational expenditures to the disadvantaged (rural, marginal urban) groups in society, to orient students to more employable careers, and to limit themselves to such efficiency reforms not only in education but also in the nature of production. (pp. 161-162)

In the specific case of UAC-CP, Satterlee’s research (2013) with a non-randomized sample of 180 UAC-CP graduates showed significant increases in the incomes of students when compared to the income of their parents. Such gains were

paired with a decrease in conditions of deprivation (measured through quality of flooring, cooking fuel, family assets, and access to water), as explained below.

Satterlee's Survey of Alumni of UAC-CP

In 2012-2013 Rachael Satterlee conducted a survey of graduates of UAC-CP. In 2013, she submitted the paper "Higher Education in a Rural Bolivian Indigenous Community: The Effects of a Context-Specific Education Model on Relieving Poverty, Promoting Community Development, and Improving Sustainable Livelihoods." as a requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Sustainable Development she obtained from Brandeis University. Satterlee's study employed field research in the form of a survey of UAC-CP graduates; site visits and semi-formal interviews with UAC-CP graduates; informal conversations with UAC-CP students, faculty, and Carmen Pampa community members; and a review of UAC-CP institutional records, CPF documents, and relevant literature.

A survey with 88 questions was answered by 180 of the 423 titulados (referred to as alumni in this study) UAC-CP had as of March 2013. The survey had seven sections: basic information, family history, information on current home, education and experience at UAC-CP, employment since graduation from UAC-CP, additional education, and graduate support and feedback. Three impact areas were identified: educational empowerment, career and economic empowerment, and broad long-term effects.

Education Empowerment

Respondents identified spiritual life, student life, and professional preparation as the key strengths of UAC-CP programming, while lab resources, quality of administration, and psychological support were identified as weaknesses. When asked about preparedness, 52% of respondents felt very prepared, 37% felt somewhat prepared, and 11% felt little prepared.

Career/Economic Empowerment and Broad Long-term Effects

Data collected on employment rates indicated that 95% of respondents were employed within the previous year, 91% were employed at the time the survey was conducted, and 82% were employed full time within the previous month, 8% less than full time, and 10% half time or less. In addition, 94% indicated that they were at least somewhat satisfied with their jobs, 3% were unsatisfied, and 3% were neutral. A total of 89% of the respondents were working in a job related to their degree area.

Results of the survey showed that a large number of respondents (74%) were working in rural areas and 91% reported that their jobs provide support to rural areas. In agreement to the mission of UAC-CP, 59% of respondents originated from rural areas and remained in rural areas; 6% were from rural areas and moved to urban areas; 21% were from urban areas and returned to urban areas, and 14% were from urban areas and moved to rural areas after graduation. The survey used four indicators that provided evidence of deprivation: dirt flooring, use of guano (animal waste) as cooking fuel, restricted access to water, and limited family assets. According to the survey,

comparisons of the presence of those indicators before and after UAC-CP graduation showed the following decrease in deprivation: 29% for flooring, 2% for guano, 1% for water, and 17% for assets. The survey also showed great gains in education achievement between generations; only 6% of the graduates who answered the survey had a parent with a college degree, and 73% of the graduates had mothers and 54% had fathers with primary education or less. Finally, the survey showed an average increase of 320% in the income of female graduates compared to the income of their mothers, and 305% increase between the income of male graduates and the income of their fathers.

Summary

As it pursues its goal of preparing young rural Bolivians to serve their communities as professionals with a commitment to bettering the lot of the most poor, UAC-CP tries to mitigate many of the adverse socio-economic conditions of Bolivia that have been discussed previously in this paper. It is one of the few institutions of higher learning in Bolivia that is located in a rural community, approximately three hours away from a departmental capital. Instead of contributing to “brain drain” and to the constant increase in the numbers of internal migration from the countryside to urban areas, it helps prevent them by attracting young Bolivians to its campus and training them to work as professionals in rural settings. The college aims to promote development, and consequently fight poverty in rural Bolivia through outreach programs, training and higher education. Although UAC-CP is an *unidad académica campesina* (or a rural academic unit) and not an indigenous college/university, many of its students are of indigenous origin, particularly from the Aymara nation. Similar to many Andean

indigenous peoples, the college adopts the ayni philosophy of shared resources and responsibilities. UAC-CP is in tune with Walker and Unterhalter's (2010) view, which is linked to the human capabilities approach:

One must look at each person not as a means to economic growth or social stability but as an end... conditions will vary in different contexts, but the approach sets out to be sensitive to human diversity; complex social relations; a sense of reciprocity between people; appreciation that people can reflect reasonably on what they value for themselves and others; and a concern to equalize, not opportunities of outcomes, but rather capabilities. (pp. 2-3)

Education is a basic capability that affects the development of other capabilities and expands human freedom (Walker & Unterhalter, 2010). Nussbaum (2006) has associated three key capabilities with education: critical thinking, the ideal of the world citizen, and the development of narrative and imagination.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter opens with the purpose of the study and the research questions that were previously mentioned in Chapter 1. Next, the assumptions, the researcher's role and the research design (setting, population, informants, data collection, data analysis, integrity measures) are discussed, followed by a brief summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine UAC-CP stakeholders' perceptions of the educational experiences of students who have attended the college and to learn about the professional endeavors the latter have pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer a main question: What are the perceptions of key UAC-CP stakeholders of how the college prepares seniors and alumni to serve their communities as professionals? The sub-question is: What professional endeavors have seniors and alumni pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP?

Assumptions

As the researcher, I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2005). Because I have been in constant contact with administrators of UAC-CP and visited the college at least once a year for the past five years, I have been able to learn about and observe the institution both on-site and from a distance. I have had previous contact with UAC-CP founders, faculty, staff, and students. Other than two

staff members who were also alumni, I had not met any alumni or seniors. One of the preconceived notions that I had was that, similarly to the people that I met who were affiliated to UAC-CP, the senior and alumni whom I would interview would have high esteem for UAC-CP, believe in its mission, and have positive recollections of their experiences at the college. Also, because the latest unemployment rate the World Bank has for Bolivia is only 3.2% in 2012 (World Bank, 2014), I assumed that most, if not all, participants that I interviewed would be employed. I also assumed that UAC-CP's emphasis on the Franciscan ideals of peace and service had a significant impact on its students and instilled in them the drive to provide assistance and service to fellow Bolivians. Therefore, I assumed that the senior and alumni that I interviewed would be employed in service or social assistance activities.

Although I have great admiration for UAC-CP and for the last five years I have recommended the yearly renewal of my organization's assistance to the college's student food program, I followed Creswell's (2007) suggestion to use Husserl's concept of epoché or bracketing, which is further developed by Moustakas (1994). The concept of bracketing states that to the best of their abilities researchers should set aside their own experiences and try to engage in a fresh perspective as they collect and analyze the data. I endeavored to maintain neutrality and impartiality as I listened to interviewees and guided them through the interview questions.

Researcher's Role

I was born and raised in a suburb of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At the age of 17 I came to the United States as an exchange student and stayed for a year. I went back to

Brazil for two years to start my undergraduate education. I then transferred to a Presbyterian liberal arts college in the United States, where I finished my Bachelor's degree. Upon graduation, I worked in human rights and electoral missions in Haiti for five years, and in an electoral mission in Nicaragua for approximately one year. Later I pursued two Master's degrees at Florida International University (FIU--Public Health 1996-1997 and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages 2004-2005). I was an adjunct professor at Broward College and a graduate teaching assistant at FIU.

My native language is Portuguese and I am able to communicate fluently in Spanish. I have studied Spanish formally for more than three years and received, in 1995, the Diploma Superior de Español como Lengua Extranjera, a language proficiency certificate that is issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kingdom of Spain. I have lived and worked in two Spanish speaking countries (Nicaragua and Dominican Republic) for more than a year. For the last eight years I have worked as an international projects officer for a Christian charity organization and have been responsible for monitoring assistance to projects in Latin American countries that I visit at least once a year. Most of my communication with aid recipients has been done in Spanish.

The organization where I work supports UAC-CP by subsidizing part of the cost of the free breakfast and the discounted lunch and dinner programs of the college. Because of the time of the completion of their coursework or graduation, most interviewees were not direct beneficiaries of my organization's subsidy. Because it is part of my organization's philosophy to support its partners for many years, the information provided by participants of the interviews and focus groups session has not

had any influence on the funding that UAC-CP receives from my organization; it is unlikely that it ever will.

I have been intrigued by UAC-CP's potential to fight poverty through the provision of higher education to economically disadvantaged students from rural communities in Bolivia. This study was undertaken in an attempt to learn more about the experiences, perceptions, and professional endeavors of students who have attended the college.

Case Study Research Design

According to Flyvbjerg (2011), the decision of doing a case study is not so much a methodological one, but rather a choice of what is to be studied. Case studies are demarcated by the boundaries of the unit of the study; they possess great detail, richness, completeness, variance and depth. Creswell (1998) enumerated similar characteristics as indispensable components of a case study, such as the continuous exploration of a "bounded system", the use of deep and detailed data collection, rich context, and multiple sources of information.

UAC-CP was the unit of analysis of this study. As suggested by Yin (2003), descriptive case studies describe an intervention or phenomenon (the educational experiences of UAC-CP seniors and alumni and the professional endeavors they pursued as a result of their education) and the real-life context in which it occurred. This study is a single case study, which, as Yin (2003) has argued, is a suitable format for case studies that represent unique cases. Because of its location, mission, history, objectives, student body, faculty, and supporters, UAC-CP has been an uncommon project that attempts to promote human development for impoverished students from some of the least developed

areas of South America's poorest country. From its foundation, UAC-CP has been shaped by its Catholic/Franciscan identity that highly values service and social justice. UAC-CP serves impoverished rural families in Bolivia through education, research, production, community service, and leadership programs. UAC-CP's history and foundation, its partnership with Carmen Pampa Fund in the United States, its Franciscan identity, and its location and focus on rural Bolivia are some of the characteristics that make it a unique institution.

Setting

UAC-CP is located in the town of Carmen Pampa, which is approximately 7.5 miles from Coroico, the administrative site of the Nor Yungas region in the Bolivian department of La Paz. According to the latest census information available, Carmen Pampa had 152 inhabitants (82 male and 70 female), and Coroico had 14,548 (8,093 male and 6,455 female) in 2011 (INE, 2014). According to Carmen Pampa Fund (2013a), 40% of the population of the municipality of Coroico lives in poverty. Subsistence farming is the region's main economic activity, and although the average annual income for families is approximately \$2,000, some UAC-CP students come from households that earn as little as \$1 per day.

Figure 2 below shows a map of Bolivia with its administrative capital La Paz and the town of Coroico. UAC-CP is located in Carmen Pampa, a small town 7.5 miles from Coroico, that is depicted in the map below. Bolivia has borders with five South American countries: Argentina and Brazil (depicted in the map), Paraguay (Southeast), Chile (Southwest), and Peru (Northeast).



*Figure 2. Maps of Bolivia and Bolivia within South America. Adapted from the maps found in the 2002 article “Bus tragedy in Bolivia’s ‘death road’,” *BBC News World Edition*. Permission to use it was obtained from BBC News website. Retrieved in 2013 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2233635.stm>*

UAC-CP Population

In 1993 UAC-CP started its first year with 54 enrolled students. In 2007, approximately 700 students were enrolled in the five degree programs offered by the college: agronomy (sustainable agriculture), ecotourism, primary education, public health nursing, and veterinary science. Since then, enrollment numbers have oscillated between 600 and 800 students. The majors offered at the college are aligned with the four main challenges of the region: health, education, the environment, and income generation. The majority of the student body comes from surrounding areas or similar rural communities (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2008c). UAC-CP enrollment records indicate that in 2013 there were a total of 660 students enrolled at UAC-CP (366 women and 294 men), of whom 212 were agronomy majors (83 women and 129 men), 182 nursing majors (148 women and 34 men), 110 were veterinary science majors (38 women and 72 men), 96 were

education majors (61 women and 35 men), 16 were ecotourism majors (12 women and 4 men), and 44 students participated in the pre-U transition from high school to college program (24 women and 20 men). In the same period, the college had a total of 78 faculty members (some teach in more than one department): 24 in the department of agronomy (8 women and 16 men), 22 in nursing (18 women and 4 men), 20 in veterinary science (5 women and 15 men), 19 in education (6 women and 13 men), 5 in ecotourism (4 women and 1 man), and 7 in the pre-U program (3 women and 4 men). In addition, at that time UAC-CP had a total of 27 administrative staff members.

Informants

I recruited four types of informants to participate in this study: a key informant, founders, a senior and alumni, and faculty.

Key informant. Key informants usually have a previous relationship with the researcher, special knowledge of the research problem, and access to information or data sources. They often have excellent interpersonal skills which allow for great collaboration between them and researchers (Johnson, 2004). Key informant interviews are especially beneficial as part of an initial assessment of an organization because they can provide an informative overview of its issues (Parsons, 2008).

Dr. Hugh Smeltekop, the director of UAC-CP in 2013 and a member of my dissertation committee, was the key informant for the study. As such, he provided in-depth expert opinion about the college, its students, faculty, seniors, and alumni. I asked Dr. Smeltekop to compile and send me an updated contact list of seniors and alumni, provide feedback about my interview questions, assist in recruiting participants, and suggest the names of faculty members to participate in the focus group interview.

As suggested by Johnson (2004), I conducted an initial informal unstructured recorded interview with him to obtain his insights and suggestions about the research project, especially in regards to data collection.

Founders. Three UAC-CP founders, Sister Damon Nolan and Richard and Ann Leahy, were recruited as informants. UAC-CP is the fruit of the vision of Sister Mary Damon Nolan, who, in the earliest stages of the conceptualization of the college, gathered the support of seed grant donors and fundraisers Richard and Ann Leahy, whom Sister Damon considers to be co-founders of UAC-CP.

Senior and alumni. One UAC-CP senior and nine alumni (five men and five women, at least two from each of the four 4-year degree programs) were invited to participate in this study. They played a critical role in answering the research question and its sub-question.

Faculty. Seven UAC-CP faculty members (the heads of the departments of veterinary science, education, ecotourism, nursing, and pre-U, the academic director, and the newly appointed UAC-CP director) were invited to reflect upon the accounts of the educational experiences of seniors and alumni. Initially only the heads of the departments of agronomy, veterinary science, education and nursing were invited to the focus group discussion. On the day of the session, however, the head of the department of agronomy had a family emergency and was not able to participate in the focus group session. Four of his colleagues (the director of UAC-CP, the academic director and the heads of the pre-U and ecotourism departments) came to the venue of the focus group session to serve as replacements. The three original participants agreed that inviting the replacements to join the discussion would be beneficial, so all four were invited to

participate. The director of UAC-CP (and key informant) who was interviewed in 2013 became the executive director of the Carmen Pampa Fund in 2014; his replacement was one of the participants of the focus group interview.

Data Collection - Interviews

Interviews (individual and focus group) were one of the two sources of data that were collected in this study. Interviews represent a common strategy for data collection in qualitative research, which, as argued by Merriam (2002), is based on the premise that “meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). In addition to the key informant and UAC-CP founders, I conducted in-depth individual interviews with one UAC-CP senior and nine alumni and asked them to describe their educational experiences at UAC-CP, especially how the college prepared them to serve communities in Bolivia. All interviews were recorded with two voice recording devices. Because of my previous visits to the college, I already had the contact information of the key informant and founders and contacted them by e-mail or phone and asked them to participate in an interview in a mutually convenient location. The senior and alumni were selected from a contact information list that I received from the key informant. I contacted potential interviewees by e-mail and invited them to participate in individual interviews that were carried out in person in a mutually convenient location in the fall of 2013. During the interview, I asked them a series of questions about their educational experience at UAC-CP, their commitment to helping disadvantaged populations, and their professional endeavors upon graduation or completion of their coursework.

I conducted the interviews with key informant Hugh Smeltekop and founders Sister Mary Damon Nolan and Richard and Ann Leahy in English; subsequently, I

transcribed the interviews verbatim and analyzed their transcripts. I conducted the interviews with the senior, alumni, and faculty in Spanish, transcribed them verbatim, analyzed the transcripts, and translated themes from Spanish to English.

Sister Mary Damon Nolan. When I interviewed Sister Damon I asked her to share her perceptions and recollections of the history of UAC-CP, such as: how she came to the vision of creating UAC-CP, the steps she took to make the vision become a reality, the challenges and obstacles she had to overcome, how she engaged the Leahys, how the first students were recruited, the curricular and ideological pillars of the college, her involvement, her strategies to gather buy-in from the local community, what motivated her, what lessons she learned, what brings her satisfaction, her worries, victories and defeats, expectations, desires and predictions for the future of the college.

Richard and Ann Leahy. In my interview with the Leahys I asked them to recount the following aspects: their involvement with the college, their memories of UAC-CP beginnings and the initial phases of its foundation and operations, what motivated them to support it and raise funds for its creation and ongoing operations, the inception of Carmen Pampa Fund, their perceptions of the impact of UAC-CP in the region, and main challenges, milestones, and accomplishments that they have experienced and/or witnessed.

Senior and alumni. As in most qualitative research projects, in order to obtain an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon of the study, a non-random sample of alumni and seniors was purposefully selected (Creswell, 2007). Because specific criteria were set for the selection of participants, the study had a criterion sample, which is useful to investigate phenomena in a specific set of people

(Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) has argued that for most qualitative studies the sample is not randomly selected, and consequently there is less of a concern to generalize findings from a sample to a population. Similarly, he has suggested that researchers choose a sample that contains participants who have closely lived the experiences that the study aims to describe. “Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (Patton, 2002, p. 244). A total of one senior and nine alumni were selected for this study. The following criteria were used to select participants: (a) an equal number of men and women (five each), (b) at least two from each of the four 4-year programs, (c) at least one alumnus and one senior.

A guided interview format was followed in the interviews and participants were asked the following questions:

1. Please tell me briefly about your background and education. For instance, where you were born, your age, where you grew up, your family life, what schools you attended prior to enrolling at UAC-CP...
2. How did you find out about UAC-CP?
3. When did you start attending UAC-CP?
4. When did you graduate/complete your coursework?
5. What was your major?
6. Please tell me about all employment/positions you have held ever since you graduated/completed your coursework at UAC-CP (i.e. job descriptions, employers, location).
7. What are your overall perceptions of your educational experience at UAC-CP?
8. How well do you believe UAC-CP prepared you to join the workforce?
9. (If employed) Do you believe your current (and/or previous) job provides a needed service to specific segments of the population? If so, please explain what service and what segment.
10. Please tell me how UAC-CP prepared you to help improve the lives of disadvantaged populations.
11. Please tell me how your formation at UAC-CP involved theory and practice.

12. Please describe aspects of theory and practice in your formation at UAC-CP (i.e. time commitment, what types of activities, rough estimate of a percentage for each)
13. Please tell me about community service activities and work/study programs in which you participated while you attended UAC-CP.
14. Please tell me about the values that you were taught when you attended UAC-CP.
15. Please tell me about the fondest memories of the time you attended UAC-CP.
16. Please tell me about the main challenges you experienced while you attended UAC-CP.
17. What do you believe to be UAC-CP's main strengths?
18. What do you consider to be UAC-CP's main weaknesses?
19. Please tell me about aspects of your experience at UAC-CP exceeded your expectations.
20. Please tell me about aspects of your experience at UAC-CP that disappointed you.
21. Please tell me about deficiencies in your education at UAC-CP.
22. Please describe changes that you suggest UAC-CP implements.
23. Please describe your involvement with UAC-CP after you graduated/completed your coursework.
24. Is there anything else you would like to add?
25. Is there a question I should have asked you but did not?

Faculty. I invited seven faculty members (the heads of the departments of veterinary science, education, ecotourism, nursing, and pre-U, the academic director, and the newly appointed UAC-CP director) to discuss the findings of the individual interviews that were conducted with the senior and alumni. After the data from the interviews with the senior and alumni were collected and analyzed, I obtained a list of faculty members recommended by the key informant Dr. Smeltekop, and I contacted potential interviewees by e-mail and invited them to participate in a focus group interview session that was carried out in person in a mutually convenient location in the spring of 2014. Before the focus group session each faculty informant was provided with analyzed data from the interviews with the senior and alumni, including a list of main themes, a definition of each theme, and the raw data supporting each theme, which

faculty informants were asked to read prior to the focus group interview. The focus group discussion was recorded by two voice recording devices. During the discussion I reviewed the themes and supporting data with faculty informants and asked them to provide feedback about each theme, such as: Is the information surprising to you?, Why do you believe the senior and alumni feel this way?, Is this information useful to you? If so, how?, What are some possible implications that could arise from the knowledge of this information?, Do you believe there are significant differences in the experiences of current students and those of the senior and alumni? If so, what are the perceived differences?

I used the components/description of a focus group interview that have been identified by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2002) as a guide to plan and conduct the interview with faculty members: (a) an interactive interview setting, (b) a small number of respondents, (c) engagement in discussions in response to the questions posed by a moderator. Focus group research provides opportunities to collect data from group interaction (Morgan, 1988) and generate ideas through brainstorming (Edmunds, 1999). Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) have identified additional advantages that confirm the relevance and utility of focus group research in this study: (a) enabling quick and low-cost data collection, (b) allowing the researcher to interact directly with respondents (which in turn allows for clarification of responses, follow-up questions, and probing of responses), (c) providing the opportunity to obtain large amounts of data in the respondents' own words by using an open response format, (d) allowing respondents to react and to build upon the responses of other group members, (e) being very flexible, and (f) yielding results that are easy to understand. As I played the role of moderator, I

was careful not to lead participants; at the same time I followed Barbour and Kitzinger's (1999) suggestions to be actively encouraging of and attentive to any group interaction.

Data Collection - Documents

There are few sources of printed and electronic information about UAC-CP. They are: newsletters Wipala and Carmen Pampa Fund (CPF) Scholarship Partners, CPF annual reports, Cross Catholic Outreach (CCO) trip reports and CPF website.

Carmen Pampa Fund's publications. With the help of the development consultant of CPF I was able to obtain all available previous issues of the CPF's annual report, as well as the newsletters Wipala, Carmen Pampa Fund Scholarship Partners, and Graduate Feature Partners News. As part of the data that were collected and analyzed in this study, I reviewed issues of Wipala from 2000 to 2014, Carmen Pampa Fund Scholarship Partners newsletters from 2009 to 2013, the only issue of Graduate Feature Partners News which was issued in 2013, and CPF annual reports from 2000 to 2014.

Cross Catholic Outreach trip reports. I first visited UAC-CP in August 2007 during a work trip to identify potential humanitarian assistance projects in Bolivia that could be eligible to apply for assistance from the organization where I work. In December 2007 UAC-CP started receiving assistance from my organization, and since then I have visited UAC-CP either once or twice a year to monitor the college's use of the funds provided by my organization. After my visits, I wrote trip reports with the information I collected during the trip. All trip reports were analyzed and coded.

Carmen Pampa Fund website. I revisited the website of UAC-CP's American sister 501(c)(3) organization CPF and thoroughly examined each of its links and pages,

and recorded information from them that I deemed to be relevant to the study. The information that I gathered was also analyzed and coded.

Data Analysis - Interviews

All transcripts were analyzed through open coding, which Rubin and Rubin (2005) define as “coding as you go along... a systematic approach that often results in fresh and rich results” (p. 222). I used Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) step by step procedure to analyze the data from the interview transcripts. First, I found concepts and themes and coded them accordingly. Second, I looked for relationships among different codes. Third, I compared how ideas were expressed across interviews. Fourth I refined the meanings of ideas. Finally, I elaborated concepts and themes, which were e-mailed to informants, who were asked to assess the accuracy of findings from their interviews.

The themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis of individual interviews with the senior and alumni were compared across interviews and summarized. Subsequently, the summary of the themes and subthemes of the interviews with the senior and alumni were shared with participants of the focus group session, who in turn were asked to provide their insights about the findings. After I finished transcribing and reading the transcription of the focus group session, I followed the same step by step process suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005) to analyze the data from the focus group interview. I also e-mailed concepts and themes of the focus group interviews to faculty informants and asked them to verify if they made sense and were consistent with their recollection of the discussion. In addition, after I compiled and analyzed the data that I obtained from the focus group discussion, I compared their themes and subthemes to those of the individual interviews with the senior and alumni.

Data Analysis - Documents

I read Carmen Pampa Fund documents, CCO trip reports and the CPF website thoroughly and arranged the data collected from them in themes and subthemes, which were reviewed for insights regarding UAC-CP's mission, operations, outreach and impact. I sought evidence about specific themes as follows: the college's focus on service; activities and professional endeavors of students, seniors and alumni; the impact UAC-CP has had in the lives of rural Bolivians; research initiatives; improvement of living conditions of disadvantaged populations. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the data from the CPF documents, CCO trip reports and the CPF website were compared to those that emerged from the analysis of the data collected during the interviews.

Integrity Measures

O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) have defined triangulation as "a method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (p. 78). Yin (1994) suggested that the use of a variety of sources of data helps increase the validity of studies because the potential for inconsistencies and inaccurate assumptions is diminished as the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple interpretations of the same phenomenon. This study obtained information from a variety of informants, documents and a website. The information was analyzed and compared and contrasted within type (interview, document) and between types (interview findings compared to document findings).

As previously mentioned, the focus group session, prolonged engagement and member checks were the measures that I used to increase the trustworthiness of this

study. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the data from the focus group interview were contrasted with the themes and subthemes from individual interviews. My prolonged engagement with UAC-CP in the past seven years and my visits there to conduct interviews and a focus group session enabled me to establish relationships and conduct observations that were useful throughout the process of data collection. Finally, member checks were carried out by providing interviewees via e-mail with themes and subthemes of the interviews in which they participated and asking them to read them, reflect upon findings, clarify their responses if needed, and identify misconceptions and rectifications to be made.

There was a risk that if participants were aware of the fact that I work for an organization that supports UAC-CP, their answers might be affected by social desirability bias, which, according to Nederhof (1985), can be regarded as the result of self-deception and/or other-deception. Such risk was minimal because the interviewees who were selected to participate in this study were not benefiting, at the time of the interview, from the assistance provided by my organization. Also, because such assistance is fairly recent, it is not likely that participants benefited from it in the past either. As I conducted the research, I set aside my role as representative of a funding organization and focused on my role as researcher. I introduced myself as a doctoral student and ensured participants that the risk that the information they provided me would adversely affect themselves or the college was minimal.

Summary

This study used a case study qualitative research design to explore and describe the educational experiences of students who have attended UAC-CP. Through the analysis of documents and data collected during individual interviews and a focus group session, I sought to understand how key stakeholders perceive the higher education of UAC-CP seniors and alumni, and how well they believe their experiences at the college prepared them to serve fellow Bolivians through their professional endeavors.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP) stakeholders' perceptions of the educational experiences of students who have attended the college and to learn about the professional endeavors they have pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP. The study was undertaken to answer one research question: What are the perceptions of key UAC-CP stakeholders of how the college prepares seniors and alumni to serve their communities as professionals? The study also was conducted to answer one research sub-question: What professional endeavors have seniors and alumni pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP?

This chapter contains background information about the 21 participants of this study and the analysis of the data collected to answer the research question and sub-question. Data collection followed the plan that was delineated in Chapter 3. By the fall of 2013 I conducted interviews with a key informant, three founders, and one senior and nine alumni of the college. After transcribing verbatim the interviews with one senior and nine alumni informants and conducting a preliminary analysis of the data gathered in the interviews, I returned to the college in the spring of 2014 and conducted a focus group session with faculty members who provided feedback about the themes that were identified in the interviews with the senior and alumni. In addition, I collected and analyzed a series of CPF's publications, Cross Catholic Outreach trip reports, and information available on Carmen Pampa Fund's website.

Background Information of Participants

I conducted individual interviews with the key informant Dr. Hugh Smeltekop, UAC-CP founder Sister Damon Nolan, one senior and nine alumni. I also interviewed founders Richard and Ann Leahy together, and led a focus group session with seven UAC-CP faculty members.

Key Informant

Dr. Hugh Smeltekop came from the United States to UAC-CP in March 1999 to work as research coordinator. He stayed until 2002, when he returned to the United States to work on his doctorate until 2005; in 2006 he returned to UAC-CP and stayed until 2014. He was the third director of UAC-CP. In 2014 he moved back to the United States and became the executive director of the Carmen Pampa Fund, the 501(c)(3) organization that was founded and incorporated in Minnesota to support the college.

Founders

Founders Sister Mary Damon Nolan (Missionary Franciscan Sister of the Immaculate Conception, F.M.I.C.) and Richard and Ann Leahy shared with me how UAC-CP evolved from vision to reality. Their accounts of their experiences, motivations, beliefs, challenges and accomplishments have provided insight about the foundation of the college. Their awareness of the college's past, its inception and heritage provided important background knowledge for understanding its present and envisioning its future.

Sister Mary Damon Nolan, F.M.I.C. Sister Nolan went to Bolivia in 1980 to work as an educator. She first worked on a distance learning project, and later she began to teach at a rural high school in Carmen Pampa. According to her, since its inception, the high school had been an asset to rural students who usually would stop their studies in the elementary and middle school levels. She realized, however, as time went by, that a higher level of education was needed in the area, and in 1986 she started talking about it with Msgr. Esquivel, the Auxiliary Bishop of La Paz at the time. During his meetings with Sister Damon, Msgr. Esquivel mentioned that he would love to have a college that would replicate the model of the Franciscan Schools of Christ, which were built in rural areas and focused on the needs of rural populations. The local bishop (of the diocese of Coroico) was not convinced at first, but after Msgr. Esquivel successfully opened the first Unidad Académica Campesina (UAC) in Tiwanaku, the bishop of Coroico agreed to open a UAC in Carmen Pampa, in his diocese. The next steps were the creation of a committee of local leaders to get buy-in from people in the area and the gathering of support from the Leahys in 1992 to help raise funds in the United States for the college. Members of local communities helped with the construction of the first buildings. In 1993 the college started offering classes to the 54 students who were initially enrolled. Enrollment grew steadily primarily through word of mouth. Sister Damon remembers the large number of students who came from distant rural communities to enroll: “They would come with a blanket and a wooden box, or a blanket and another rag with all their clothes in the back. It was really moving” (Lines 130-131).

UAC-CP began as a técnico superior institution (similar to a community college in the United States). Even before a single class graduated from the institution, Sister

Damon had a conversation with a student, who, according to her, said that without a Bachelor's degree, students were still going to be pongos (low ranking employees, similar to American slang term gopher) in their own villages, because other people would come in and tell them what to do and they would do it. Sister Damon said that she remembered thinking at the moment that it was not what she wanted for the college. It was then that she started the long and difficult struggle to convince the Catholic University in La Paz to which UAC-CP was affiliated to enable the latter to offer Bachelor degree programs, because as Sister Damon put it, "I wanted them [(the rural students)] to be calling the shots for their own people" (Lines 151-152). The first Bachelor's degree program offered at UAC-CP was agronomy, followed by nursing, and then veterinary science.

Ann and Richard (Dick) Leahy. The Leahys mentioned that their involvement with UAC-CP began on a bright summer day in 1991, when the college was just a dream. On a beach in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, Sister Damon asked Dick Leahy if he would help her build a college for the rural poor in Bolivia. Sister Damon explained that she had been managing a high school in Carmen Pampa, and she had noticed that the high school graduates were going right back to the same difficult environments from which they came, except that they were now literate. She mentioned the need to create a college where high school graduates could gain both the academic and practical skills that were necessary for the development of their communities. The college, she said, should enable them to develop an understanding of how to help the places from which they came. As Mr. Leahy recalled, Sister Damon and her local partners had absolutely no money. Not only did the Leahys make a significant financial contribution to the college, but they also

actively engaged in raising funds for it through solicitations to Catholic foundations and people they knew. The Xaverian brothers, who had built the high school, donated land next to it in Carmen Pampa. Sister Damon gathered the support and buy-in from local leaders.

In the beginning of 1992, six months after the conversation on the beach, the Leahys started to raise funds for the construction of the first buildings of UAC-CP campus. From 1993, when the college opened, to 2000, all the money raised went directly to the college, as the Leahys donated all the overhead expenses they had incurred in raising funds to support UAC-CP. In late 1999, Carmen Pampa Fund (CPF), a 501(c)(3) organization was incorporated in Minnesota to support the college and, in 2000, it began operating. Currently, the funds sent from CPF represent approximately 40% of the operating costs of UAC-CP.

Senior and Alumni

The researcher conducted individual interviews with one senior and nine alumni. The interviews were scheduled according to the availability of the interviewees and the researcher. A summary of the interviewees' background information can be found on Tables 1 and 2 below. Participants are listed in chronological order of their interviews.

Table 1.

Summary of Senior and Alumni's Backgrounds (First Part)

Pseudonym	Gabriela (I1)	Walter (I2)	Marcos (I3)	Laura (I4)	Gabriel (I5)
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male
Major	Nursing	Nursing	Agronomy	Education	Agronomy
Graduated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Originally from rural or urban area	Rural	Rural	Semi-urban (outskirts of urban center)	Rural	Urban
How participant found out about UAC-CP	Contact in the Catholic Church	Contact in the Catholic Church	Another UAC student	Friend with a contact in the Catholic Church	A religious foundation
When participant started attending UAC-CP	2003	2003	2004	2002	2008
When participant completed coursework	2007	2008	2008	2007	2011
When participant graduated	2008	2011	2010	2011	Not yet (as of 2013)
Graduate studies	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Scholarship	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Still involved with UAC-CP	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

Note. Background information about the UAC-CP senior and four alumni who participated in the first five individual interviews. Codes in parentheses next to pseudonyms indicate the chronological order in which interviews were conducted. For instance, I1 means that it was the first interview.

Table 2.

Summary of Senior and Alumni's Backgrounds (Second Part)

Pseudonym	Sandra (I6)	Mary (I7)	Camilo(I8)	Sarah (I9)	Eduardo (I10)
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male
Major	Veterinary	Veterinary	Veterinary	Agronomy	Education
Graduated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Originally from rural or urban area	Urban	Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural
How participant found out about UAC-CP	Friend	Contact in the Catholic Church	Newspaper advertisement	Classmate	Contact in the Catholic Church
When participant started attending UAC-CP	1998	1996	2000	1998	2006
When participant completed coursework	2004	2004	2004	2002	2010
When participant graduated	2008	2010	2008	2010	2011
Graduate studies	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scholarship	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Still involved with UAC-CP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note. Background information about the five UAC-CP alumni who participated in last five individual interviews. Codes in parentheses next to pseudonyms indicate the chronological order in which interviews were conducted. For instance, I6 means that it was the sixth interview.

Faculty Members

I led a focus group discussion with seven faculty members (the heads of the departments of veterinary science, education, ecotourism, nursing, and pre-U, the academic director, and the newly appointed UAC-CP director) about the findings of the individual interviews that were conducted with the senior and alumni. The following pseudonyms are used for participants: Ms. Vega, Mr. Perez, Mr. Castillo, Mr. Abad, Ms. Narvaez, Mr. Vargas, and Ms. Terrones.

Thematic Analysis

The researcher sent a summary of the study's findings to former UAC-CP director and key informant Dr. Hugh Smeltekop. He suggested a few corrections, which were promptly made. The researcher sent the other 20 participants of the study an e-mail message with the information contained in this paper that originated from comments they made during the individual and focus group interviews. Participants were asked to verify that the data were accurate and to recommend corrections or additions. Two alumni responded: one recommended a change, which was made by the researcher; another mentioned that no changes were needed. Similarly, two faculty members responded: one recommended three small changes, which were made by the researcher; another mentioned that the information he received accurately portrayed his thoughts about the themes that were discussed. Other participants did not respond.

Upon the analysis of the data collected in the interviews and document review, the researcher identified seven themes that are directly linked to the research question and sub-question. They are as follows: perceived strengths and weaknesses of the college,

professional endeavors pursued by seniors and alumni, living in community, community service and ayni, focus on value and spiritual enrichment, a unique opportunity, and financial challenges. In addition, the first two themes and the last theme have two subthemes each. The first and second themes are more closely linked to the research question and sub-question, respectively. The third, fourth, and fifth themes are presented in the order in which they appeared in the interviews with the senior and alumni, and correspond to the order in which questions were asked. The sixth and seventh themes are not linked to specific interview questions, but stood out as prominent themes throughout the analysis of data. Below is a figure that shows the themes and subthemes, followed by their descriptions.

Figure 3 provides a graphic summary of themes and subthemes. Themes appear in boxes; subthemes are displayed in bullets immediately below their corresponding themes.



Figure 3. Answer to research questions: Themes and subthemes.

Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of the College

All themes and subthemes are related to the perceptions of key stakeholders of how the college has been preparing its students to serve Bolivian communities as professionals. This theme points out the strengths and weaknesses of the college as mentioned by stakeholders. Such aspects are reflected in the preparation of students who attend UAC-CP, as described below.

College strengths. Interviewees agreed that UAC-CP students are well prepared to join the work force, provide service, and contribute to the development of rural areas in Bolivia. According to the key informant, Dr. Smeltekop, the college strives to instill good general work and study habits, leadership and critical thinking in its students. UAC-CP trains students to be good speakers and writers, to have empathy for others, become self-learners, and to be good Christians who are able to see the good in other people and explore the good in themselves. In addition, according to Dr. Smeltekop, since the inception of UAC-CP, there has been an effort to understand and appreciate the heritage and history of the agrarian society in which the college is inserted. Emphasis is placed on local values such as solidarity, unity with other people, reciprocity (ayni), and the concept of the Pachamama, that is, the earth as a living, breathing entity, with a specific ethic—the belief that we are not just detached living organisms inhabiting the earth, but the earth itself is an actual living organism that must be respected, recognized, and appreciated. Similarly, Sister Damon mentioned the concern the college has to foster a sense of unity and recognition of students and community members by acknowledging the local rich and diverse cultural heritage and by strengthening students' identity with their roots.

We try to teach everything in relationship to their roots; who they are as Aymara, or Quechua, or Afro-Bolivian. In terms of their music, their poetry, their natural talents that they have, and their ability to use them. They are just fantastically creative, and they're not ashamed of it anymore. It's something they would do in their community, but would never do it anywhere else (Lines 387-392).

Besides knowledge and service, Sister Damon mentioned leadership as an important focus of the college. When she created UAC-CP, she wanted to form leaders who would be able to help shape the future of rural communities in Bolivia. She believes that politics does not have to be dirty and corrupt. Alumni of the college should get involved in politics, and make it work for their people, instead of against them. She was pleased to learn that some alumni have been taking positions of leadership in local government. Although her vision was to help prevent "brain drain", Sister Damon is aware that many students migrate to urban centers after finishing their studies. She does not expect all of them not to go, especially because she believes it would be impossible for the rural area to support all the college's graduates.

The senior and alumni who were interviewed were satisfied overall with the training they received at UAC-CP. Gabriela, Walter, Marcos, Laura, Gabriel, and Sarah mentioned that they had had good professors. Gabriela and Walter mentioned that the college prepared them well to work in the field of public health. Marcos pointed out the high quality of education and training, and he thinks the college trained him to be a capable professional.

The senior and alumni agreed that through outreach projects the college has been providing service to disadvantaged populations while simultaneously training students. Gabriela and Walter praised the health outreach programs in which they participated

during their times as students and later in their careers. Walter said that “UAC-CP trained us to help people in rural areas, where there is most need” (Lines 164-165).

The senior and alumni conveyed that the college has had the goal that the instruction that students receive should be 50% theory and 50% practice. Walter, Laura, Gabriel, Sandra, Mary and Sarah said the instruction they received at UAC-CP was indeed half theory and half practice. Gabriela, Marcos, and Eduardo said they had both theory and practice, but they did not quantify what percentage for each.

During their interviews, the senior and alumni identified some additional strengths of UAC-CP. Camilo praised the diversity in the student body and the interaction between students and professors. Sarah mentioned the useful technical skills that students acquire while they attend the college. Gabriel mentioned the opportunities he had to participate in seminars and competitions. Mary said that her training at UAC-CP helped her with ethics and morals; she mentioned that college brings education to rural areas and teaches students to be agents of development in their communities. Ms. Narvaez mentioned in the focus group session that one of the college’s main strengths is the focus of the training it provides. According to her, students focus on the reality of Bolivia and are trained to provide assistance to different segments of the country’s population. Walter said that UAC-CP’s strength is its goal, which he described as follows:

...to train professionals to deal with the reality of our country, because the country needs people who can go to distant communities to provide education, and that is what the college does. The college receives people from rural areas who can, after finishing their studies, go back to their communities and share their knowledge (Lines 249-253).

In the focus group session, participants also mentioned their perceptions of strengths of the college. Ms. Vega mentioned that the college is accommodating to students who start a family while attending the college, and many of them are able to handle both their studies and their family responsibilities. Such was the case of four students who participated in the individual interviews. They got pregnant while attending the college, and were able to finish their degrees, albeit having to take some time off. Mr. Perez mentioned that UAC-CP had recently undergone an academic audit from the Catholic university and passed with a grade of 80%. He said that not only is the college teaching and transmitting knowledge, but it is also training future professionals who are involved with people in their communities.

College weaknesses. Although all interviewees expressed satisfaction about the training provided by UAC-CP, some of them identified weaknesses. Marcos mentioned that although UAC-CP is strong academically, because of its isolated location, there are few opportunities for exchanges of experiences with other institutions. Camilo mentioned that although he considered some of the labs and practices with animals to be weak, they nonetheless gave him a good perspective about what he liked and wanted to focus on in his career. Camilo also indicated that the instruction he received at UAC-CP should have been half theory and half practice, but it was not; he would have preferred to have more time devoted to practice.

Time of attendance seems to have an impact on the senior and alumni's perceptions about the college's weaknesses. Contrary to strengths, the period of time in which the students attended the college seemed to influence their answers about weaknesses. Some of the earlier problems of the college were gradually

solved/improved, while some new problems arose in more recent years. In the focus group interview, Mr. Abad reinforced that point as he indicated that it was important to pay attention to what point in the history of the college the senior and alumni's experiences took place. According to him, the alumni who attended UAC-CP during its first years endured hard construction work and helped build the college, while the ones who attended later were able to enjoy the fruits of the hard labor of their predecessors. Alumni who attended UAC-CP in its earlier days identified as main weaknesses deficiencies in the college's infrastructure, such as lack/poor quality of equipment and uncomfortable dorm rooms (Sarah); Gabriela, Laura, Sandra and Marcos mentioned problems with water, garbage, and food. Walter and Gabriela also mentioned disruptive changes of professors in the middle of the semesters. Gabriela mentioned lack of materials for practice. Gabriel mentioned some "cliques" of professors. Mary mentioned problems with administration personnel. Camilo also believed that the college was too strict; for example, dorms are locked down at 11 pm; smoking is not allowed; there is no game/recreation room. Sarah, who has remained involved with the college since 1998, said that in more recent years, she has seen a lack of commitment from students, which she considers to be UAC-CP's main weakness. Eduardo mentioned that some professors commute from La Paz and are not in tune with the reality of rural areas.

There are some professors who don't understand us, because it is different [here compared to] the city, totally different. They want us to do projects like here [in La Paz]; they demand that we conduct research but we don't have a modern library, so there is a lack of understanding, lack of adaptation, contextualization, from their part (Lines 265-268).

The senior and alumni also identified some deficiencies in the college's curricula. Gabriela mentioned that there was not enough practice in the first years of the nursing

program. Marcos mentioned that some UAC-CP administrators lacked awareness of the needs of students. He also believed that students had few decision making opportunities. Laura mentioned that there should be more interaction between students and international volunteers. Gabriel mentioned weaknesses in training and technology, specifically lack of training in geographic information systems (GIS). Mary regretted the closing of the coffee processing unit and the processed meat plant that used to operate on campus; at the peak of their productivity, they provided both learning opportunities for students and income for the college. Camilo mentioned the need for more practice. Sarah mentioned poor training in identifying and writing grant proposals for development projects for rural areas.

In the focus group session, participants also mentioned their perceptions of weaknesses of the college. Although Ms. Vega positively mentioned the fact that many students who become pregnant during their studies manage to finish their degrees, Mr. Perez mentioned as a weakness the fact that such pregnancies are not prevented. Student pregnancies seem to be a challenge since the inception of the college. Mr. Perez also mentioned poor Internet access, fairly outdated (but soon to be replaced) lab equipment, and scarce library resources as weaknesses of the college. He also pointed out that there should be more interaction between students/faculty and members of surrounding communities, and some changes should be made in some of the college's administrative staff. Ms. Narvaez agreed with Mr. Perez that the college as a whole would benefit from better Internet service that would enable access to research and educational content, but she pointed out the dangers of social media. According to her, some of the students who come from isolated rural communities become "mesmerized" by social media and have a

hard time balancing the time they spend on sites such as Twitter and Facebook with the time they should devote to other obligations.

Professional Endeavors Pursued by Seniors and Alumni

This theme is directly linked to the sub-question of this study. According to the data I was able to collect, UAC-CP alumni do not seem to experience difficulties finding employment. The college itself is an employer for some its former students as it often engages some of them to work as staff members or faculty. Out of the group of one senior and nine alumni who were interviewed, one was a UAC-CP staff member and three had also worked there at some point as part of its staff, one was a professor at UAC-CP, and one worked in the college as a volunteer. Three alumni worked at local NGOs and a local consultancy firm; one worked in local government, and another one was a teacher and professor.

According to the key informant, Dr. Smeltekop, the information that the college has gathered about the professional endeavors of seniors and alumni show that most of them who are from rural areas stay in the rural areas; they develop small businesses, or NGOs, or work as local government officials. Many of the seniors and alumni who majored in agronomy work in rural micro loan banks. The senior and four of the nine alumni who were interviewed were originally from urban or semi-urban areas; the other five alumni were from rural areas. Seven have been working in rural areas and three have been working in urban areas. All of them identified aspects of their jobs that provided service to areas and populations in need. For instance, Marcos mentioned that in his current position he has been helping the local population by managing the processing of garbage and distributing seeds and plants; Sandra has managed a program

that distributed goats to families of poor farmers. Gabriela and Walter, the two nursing graduates, were employed by a health foundation to provide services at rural community health centers. Gabriela, who is originally from an isolated rural community, mentioned how she has become a role model for young women in her community, “I was the first woman in my community to become a professional, and that shows that women can study [at the higher education level] ...Afterwards, other ladies got motivated and now there are many nurses in the community” (Lines 310-313).

Participants of the focus group discussion mentioned that many seniors and alumni work in local government and NGOs. Mr. Castillo knew that in the department of Cobija some UAC-CP alumni were working in social affairs. Ms. Terrones mentioned others who were carrying out development projects. Mr. Perez mentioned a few who had leadership positions in local town halls.

Dr. Smeltekop also mentioned the professional endeavors of the college’s graduates as a great source of satisfaction.

I fell in love with the college, the mission, the idea that you can join with other people to train young men and women to respond to the needs of their communities and their country from the ground up. Because they are really the children of the campesinos, the children of poor farmers who haven’t often graduated from high school, and in one generation to see them become people who make a difference in their communities, doing small businesses, working for local government, working for microloan banks, starting NGOs or working in education, working in local tourism is just really exciting to be able to contribute that way to the world (Lines 6-13).

Sister Damon Nolan also shared her satisfaction about the accomplishments of UAC-CP alumni,

I think what makes me happy about it is to see what the graduates are doing. They’re out in their communities; they’re in those isolated and small places. And they are doing good things, and they are helping people, and that’s the most

important thing for me. And it shows that they got the lesson of the university, which was to help others. That's education; it is not for yourself; it's for others. That's the best thing for me (Lines 179-184). ...When I see a kid coming up to register it gives me joy. When I see a kid studying, it gives me joy. When I see a kid graduate, it gives me joy. When I see them working, it gives me joy (Lines 530-532).

Two subthemes were identified throughout the data analysis process. The first, financial need, describes how some of the college's seniors and alumni obtain jobs that, on average, provide lower salaries and do not tap into all the skills they have acquired while attending UAC-CP. The second, service, is desired and encouraged by UAC-CP leadership; this subtheme shows the link to service to rural communities in many of the professional endeavors pursued by the college's seniors and alumni.

Financial need. The faculty and staff members who participated in the focus group interview commented on a trend identified by Marcos, one of the alumni who expressed disappointment about the professional endeavors of some of his peers who are employed in local financial institutions. Some seniors and alumni, especially those who majored in agronomy, got jobs at local micro-credit institutions; some work as loan officers or managers, but others work as cashiers and do not make good use of a great part the knowledge they acquired throughout their higher education experience. Ms. Narvaez mentioned that some students have scarce financial means, so they need to start their work life right away, at times with lower paying jobs, and slowly save some seed capital to start their own projects. Mr. Vargas said that the students who get married and/or have children during their studies have an immediate need of generating income to provide for their families, and they usually seize the first employment opportunity they find.

In order to help prevent seniors and alumni from being employed in underpaid and less challenging jobs, Mr. Abad, also in the focus group session, suggested that the college should focus more on teaching and promoting entrepreneurship. He mentioned that many students want to finish their degrees and get a job, but instead they could attempt to be self-employed by creating small businesses or co-ops, apply for grants, or start development projects.

Service. Provision of service and promotion of development in rural areas of Bolivia are integral parts of the mission of UAC-CP, to which Dr. Smeltekop believes the college has been true, “I feel like we’ve been really faithful to our mission and that is drawing students from rural areas to help them return to those rural areas to be good leaders, both technically and ethically” (Lines 265-267). He explained that students are not asked to make a formal commitment to work in rural areas, but while they are on campus, the mission of the college is emphasized to them. UAC-CP leaders hope that upon completion of coursework or graduation, seniors and alumni remain in rural areas to stimulate the economy, promote the values of rural areas, and become key people to promote rural development. Mary, one of the alumni interviewed in this study, talked about how helping people in rural communities has brought her joy. Her job with a local NGO sent her back to UAC-CP to implement a project that has benefited the college. She said, “I feel happy that I have been able to help people, and even happier for helping here [at UAC-CP] as well” (Lines 196-197).

CPF publications have often featured articles about the endeavors and contributions of UAC-CP alumni. The September 2013 issue of Graduate Feature Partner News included excerpts from the interviews of two UAC-CP alumni who had

majored in agronomy and education. Their respective work in local government and education for vulnerable children was recognized by the Institute for Advanced Development Studies (INESAD) in Bolivia and featured as part of the organization's "Bolivia's Best" series. CPF's publication Graduate Feature Partner News focuses solely on graduates of the college. Some of its former issues featured four alumni who were working in rural areas: one worked in an NGO in an animal husbandry assistance project, one worked for a microfinance financial institution as a credit assessor for local farmers, one worked at a Catholic NGO in an educational project that served 16 rural communities, and one worked in a local hospital.

The CPF annual report for 2009 also provided information about professional endeavors of UAC-CP seniors and alumni. The theme of the document was on weaving; it showed typical Bolivian tapestry and a message from Hugh Smeltekop, who was UAC-CP's vice director at the time, "Like monochrome cords of yarn—when combined and woven into cloth they become something far more useful and beautiful—than the yarn itself" (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2009, p.1). It featured education major Ruben Pari who accepted an offer to open an elementary school in an isolated community and a veterinary science student and intern with the municipality of Coroico who together represented weaving education and leadership. Dolly Aliaga, the director of Catholic development organization Caritas, and Reinaldo Mendoza, an alumnus of UAC-CP who is part of her staff, represented weaving partnership and professionalism. Alumnus Porfirio Kapa, the associate manager of NGO CORACA that provides technical assistance to local farmers, represented the weaving of production and service. In addition, the issue also mentioned

agronomy major alumnus Esteban Ojeda who worked for an association of farmers in a rural community.

The CPF 2013 annual report featured Rachel Satterlee's survey of 180 UAC-CP graduates and a summary of its results:

95% of UAC-CP graduates were employed during 2012. 91% work in jobs that support Bolivia's rural area. 89% are employed in the field of their area of study. 72% found jobs they wanted after graduation. ...42% of alumni have advanced degrees and certificates. 300% is the increase in income reported between UAC-CP graduates and their parents' generation. (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2013b, p.3)

CPF website carmenpampafund.org also contains information about the professional endeavors of some of UAC-CP alumni. The sub-section "Success Stories" of the section/page "Impact", features agronomy major alumnus Porfirio Kapa and education major alumnus Ruben Pari (previously mentioned); veterinary science alumna Maribel Villca who is the only certified veterinarian in the remote municipality of Irupana, where she owns and operates a small veterinary clinic; and nursing major alumna Claudia Carrizales who has been managing the immunization program of the sprawling city of El Alto. The 2014 seasonal section "Advent Meditations" which celebrates the season of preparation for Christmas through reflections written by people who are part of the UAC-CP community, featured the testimonial of alumnus Agustin Apaza who grew up as an orphan, overcame a life-threatening heart condition, graduated in the nursing program, obtained a Master's degree in public health, and has worked with NGO Doctors Without Borders in Bolivia, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Having grown up in hospitals, the College's Nursing program was the last thing he wanted to be a part of. "I was treated so poorly by nurses for most of my life," he explained. But through a series of events that he believes are more than mere coincidences, he ended up studying Nursing. "Now look!" he smiled, noting with irony, "The thing I wanted least of all my life, that's what God chose for me! ...I

think each of us in life has a mission, ...And this is my mission—to reduce the pain and suffering for people.” (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2014, p.1)

Living in Community

Living in college dorms is less common in Latin America than it is in the United States. The majority of college campuses in Bolivia are in urban areas, and most students commute from their homes or rent lodging facilities near their colleges. Because of its atypical location and setting, UAC-CP is part of a minority of schools that provides housing on campus to most of its students. The senior and all nine alumni who were interviewed lived in the college’s dorms for at least one year. They all indicated that living as part of a community was an invaluable experience and said that the other students with whom they shared a dorm (sometimes there were over 20 students in a room) became their second family. Marcos mentioned that the experience even helped him get to know himself better. Gabriel and Sandra mentioned that the experience helped them mature. When asked about their fondest memories of their years at UAC-CP, Gabriel, Sandra, Mary, Sarah, and Eduardo mentioned the aspects of living in a community/like a family, such as fellowship, camaraderie, birthday celebrations, talks at night with roommates, and the need to give and receive assistance to/from peers. Walter added, “We lived in harmony and unity like brothers” (Line 215). Gabriela mentioned that by living in a dorm, she learned to be independent.

I learned to value my family, food, everything; it is all different when you live in a dorm. I have had a beautiful experience and I will always say that my life was better there [at UAC-CP] than it is here [where she was living at the time of the interview] because I got to know how to manage my things. I was able to control myself and become independent from my mother. No one controlled me and I was able to do many things; I also learned to work (Lines 249-253).

Interviewees mentioned that mutual support of UAC-CP community members helped all cope with loneliness, homesickness, disease and other difficulties. Laura mentioned that “when you are sick, those who are around you come with a [wet] cloth when you have a fever” (Lines 195-196). She added that “at 2 am [when] you are crying, there are people there who can help you, so it is a beautiful coexistence of friends from different places that come to live together in Carmen Pampa” (Lines 198-200). Eduardo added that “in a dorm, if one knows that a classmate or a friend needs something, we are all available to help him or ask what he needs” (Lines 102-103). Sarah recalled that she used to skip classes and go to Coroico, and Sister Damon took notice and decided to intervene, “Sister [Damon] grabbed me and took me to her house to live with her, so that I could understand what I really wanted to do with my life” (Lines 61-62). She added that she spent a month living with Sister Damon and when asked about that time she answered, “[There was] a great deal of reflection, [which] has been very useful in my life” (Line 235).

Although the majority of students who attend UAC-CP are originally from rural communities, some students who attend the college come from urban and suburban areas; for them, as mentioned in the interviews, living in community in a rural society where people know and care for each other was an enriching experience. Marcos talked about how he appreciated the solidarity he experienced at UAC-CP.

The way people live in the city is very individualistic. If you are hungry, you grab something and eat it. If you want to do something for yourself, you go ahead and do it, and you don’t care about the others. There [at UAC-CP] it is not like that. If sometimes you receive a care package or you have something, there is always someone to share with, or also there is someone who shares with you, so all is reciprocal (Lines 388-392).

Gabriel mentioned how the set-up of UAC-CP differs from higher education in urban areas, such in the administrative capital of Bolivia, La Paz.

Living together with roommates, it is a beautiful thing; one sits down to eat or have some tea, with one's piece of bread, and then one starts to share personal things, so brotherly friendships are born among all; those experiences do not exist in La Paz, [where] one studies one hour and a half [the usual time of a class] and goes away (Lines 55-59).

The key informant also mentioned the positive impact of students, professors, clergy, and administrators living together on campus. "It just becomes a big kind of family or community, and that support network helps students be able to stay in school and stay motivated and on task" (Lines 163-164). According to Camilo, the interaction between students and faculty is very beneficial and sets the college apart from public universities.

Another strength [of UAC-CP] is that here students and professors live together; it is not like the public universities, [where] professors come to teach their classes and leave. If they take attendance, it is just a paper with names; they don't know the students. Here professors create bonds of friendship and provide [the students with] a different [kind of] training; they really take interest in their students (Lines 249-253).

Community Service/Ayni

Ever since UAC-CP started to develop from vision into reality, community service has been a pillar of the college. Interviewees who were part of the first phases of the college recalled how it was built by community members and students. Ann and Richard Leahy, co-founders of UAC-CP, mentioned that from the start, Sister Damon built the college based on a philosophy of cooperation so that students, faculty, staff, and even community members had to volunteer a number of hours toward building the college. Such a philosophy was not foreign to the local people, as Ann Leahy mentioned,

“That was actually built on the Aymaran culture of ayni, the culture of giving back. That is inbred, the very success of that school, which is that philosophy that really permeates the campus” (Lines 121-123).

The key informant, Dr. Smeltekop, also mentioned ayni, the cultural aspect of Aymara communities such as the ones surrounding UAC-CP that the college purposefully adopted early on.

You work for someone in their field, and they do a similar work for you another day because the jobs that they do in the countryside, like picking coca or picking citrus, weeding a coffee field require a large group of people at one time, so they work in those kinds of groups. So ayni is really strong (Lines 204-207).

Sister Damon also acknowledged the importance of ayni, and she made a point to make community service part of the culture of the college, as it was stipulated that all students had to work for the common good. Majors offered in the college incorporate community outreach into their curricula; for instance, student nurses provide health care to local communities; agronomy students help farmers, and people bring their animals to be treated by veterinary science students at the college.

The senior and alumni confirmed that community service has remained part of the culture of the college and the experience of students. The senior and alumni who were interviewed participated in community service activities. None of them conveyed that the community service requirements were considered to be a burden; many had fond memories of that part of their experience at UAC-CP. Eduardo praised the community work experience. Walter said it was a beautiful experience to participate in work that benefitted the college. Marcos agreed that it was a beautiful experience and he said that he had learned a great deal from it. Sandra mentioned that she had good memories of the

experience. According to her, it taught her how to handle a machete and prepared her to work anywhere. Some of the tasks mentioned were working in the library and cafeteria, recycling, doing maintenance work, doing farm work, and taking care of animals.

Besides mandatory community service, students engage in additional activities that are specific to their careers. For instance, nursing students are required to be ready at 5:30 am to start walking miles to provide public health services in rural communities, and veterinary students' work with animals requires commitment, compassion, teamwork, and long hours.

Throughout the process of data collection, I gathered evidence that key members of UAC-CP faculty and staff were leading by example as they constantly provided service to students, peers, and community members. During the focus group interview, Mr. Perez said that staff and faculty who work at UAC-CP are indeed called to serve, because many of them could be employed at other institutions at higher salaries, but he believed it was their willingness to serve that brought them to the college and kept them there. Mr. Abad mentioned that in the beginning of every semester, UAC-CP leaders carry out a meeting with faculty and staff to reinforce that service is a main component of the mission of the college. According to him, not only should faculty and staff remind students of the importance of service, but they should also be role models who show constant willingness to serve.

Participants of the focus group and of the individual interviews pointed out the importance of community service as part of the educational experience of UAC-CP students. In the focus group interview Mr. Castillo mentioned community work as one of the main strengths at UAC-CP because it teaches skills, fosters teamwork and interaction

with local communities, and provides practical training. It was clear in the interview with Eduardo, one of the alumni, that the philosophy of service of the college has had a great impact on him. He mentioned that he had told the key informant, “I want to follow your steps and be a servant like you” (Lines 317-318). He added that key leaders of the college “serve unconditionally, and are following the mission that was mandated by Jesus; they practice it; they are missionaries” (Lines 319-320).

Focus on Value and Spiritual Enrichment

Interviewees and documents linked several aspects of UAC-CP students’ training to the college’s emphasis on value and spiritual enrichment of members of the UAC-CP community. The focus on spiritual enrichment is tied to UAC-CP’s Catholic identity which has been constant since its inception. Such identity is reflected through many aspects such as the leadership of the local bishop and Catholic nuns and priests, the college’s affiliation with Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo or Bolivian Catholic University-San Pablo, and the requirement that all students take four spiritual formation classes. In addition, Catholic parishes have been instrumental in recruiting students to attend UAC-CP. The senior and five of the nine alumni who were interviewed found out about UAC-CP through a contact they had in the Catholic Church, such as the Catholic priest of a local parish, an ordained Catholic brother, or a member of a Catholic foundation.

The senior and alumni mentioned many values that were instilled and/or reinforced by the college’s leaders and faculty during the time they attended UAC-CP. They are listed below in order of the frequency they were mentioned (from most to least mentioned). In parentheses are the interviewees who mentioned them: (a) respect

(Gabriela, line 370; Walter, line 214; Marcos, line 367, Laura, line 285; Mary, line 237; Camilo, line 213; Sarah, line 200), (b) honesty (Laura, line 285; Sandra, line 140; Sarah, line 198; Eduardo line 201), (c) solidarity (Gabriela, line 380; Laura, line 285; Sarah, line 198; Eduardo, line 204), (d) responsibility (Laura, line 286; Eduardo, line 201), (e) friendship (Laura, line 299; Gabriel, line 209), (f) commitment (Gabriel, line 211; Sarah, line 201), (g) self-esteem (Gabriela, line 370), (h) simplicity (Gabriela, line 370), (i) work (Gabriela, line 371), (j) trust (Walter, line 214), (k) equality (Marcos, line 368), (l) diversity (Marcos, line 370), (m) unity (Marcos, line 362), (n) perseverance (Laura, line 286), (o) love (Gabriel, line 210), (p) humility (Mary, line 237), (q) caring for others (Mary, line 237), (r) loyalty (Camilo, line 213), (s) reciprocity (Eduardo, line 200), (t) sincerity (Eduardo, line 202), (u) brotherhood (Eduardo, line 203).

The senior and alumni also mentioned aspects of their experience at UAC-CP as spiritually enriching. Gabriel identified UAC-CP's theological foundation as one of the strengths of the college. Marcos mentioned the serenity of the settings with "that statue of Saint Francis, the impressively beautiful Uchumachi mountain that surrounds the college" (Lines 60-61). Sandra said that at UAC-CP there is less materialism; she added that [UAC-CP] was the best she had ever seen, because she felt great calm and peace there. She added, "When you come to Carmen Pampa you can be the way you are" (Line 209).

During the focus group interview Ms. Vega pointed out that the experience of living on campus in a Catholic college has a very positive impact on students. She argued that it teaches them respect and responsibility, and fosters bonds of friendship, as students learn and practice some important values during the time they spend at the

college. Ms. Vega also mentioned that UAC-CP's peaceful surroundings and its simple but functional facilities deemphasize materialism and are very conducive to studying.

Documents produced by UAC-CP throughout its history confirm the holistic approach of the college as it strives to develop minds and souls. The 2005 annual report contained a message from Sister Damon Nolan about the theme word "nourishment" upon which she had been reflecting. At that time, Sister Damon announced the donation that UAC-CP had received to build a place of worship on campus. Sister Damon mentioned the nourishment of the spirit, in addition to the intellectual nourishment of students. She also added to her message the concern for the environment and the need for its preservation.

We also continue to nourish the spirit through our environmental efforts with local leaders and communities. We have been working with the community to preserve the environment, as pressures of poverty can often lead people to take harmful actions against this valuable and fragile resource. Because so many of us here find solace within nature, it is imperative that we take steps to protect this source of peace, food, and joy. (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2005, p. 4)

The 2008 annual report of CPF had the theme "If you listen closely... you can hear it." The 2008 document featured different people committed to the mission of UAC-CP and their respective callings: nursing student Jimena Cadena represented the call to study; Director of Religion Sister Jean Morrissey represented the call to serve; Nursing Department Director Lidia Cuevas represented the call to educate; agronomy student Jeronimo Payhuanca represented the call to lead; veterinary science alumnus Pastor Acho represented the call to exemplify; donor Father Tom Garvey represented the call to give. It concluded with a message from Sister Damon Nolan about social justice and the college:

Our obligation as Christians is to work for a more just world. As Christians, we cannot be indifferent to poverty and injustice. The word of God is what gives us life to continue on with the work—to work so that everyone will have a more dignified life and that there will be less injustice and poverty. My hope is that the College gives people on many different levels many different ways of being part of the College... that sense of satisfaction, that sense of having done what they should have done, of having been who they should have been. (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2008b, p. 3)

In the winter 2001 edition of CPF's publication *Wipala*, Father Victor Zabala, who served as interim Director General in 2002 on the occasion of Sister Damon's sabbatical, mentioned how he viewed the holistic education that is offered at UAC-CP as an important force in the fight against poverty and in the transformation of rural societies in Bolivia.

Currently in Bolivia, everyone from top government official to the poorest and most anonymous among us, is talking about the war against poverty. It is a truth that can be seen in the eyes of those who share our reality. We believe that [this is] the best way for us all to be holding hands together, uniting our intellectual and human resources to create a common strength and push forward to accomplish what we feel and know needs to be done. ...I am very enthusiastic about continuing the holistic education offered here. The University has come to farmers in the country, not taking the farmers to the city for education. I sense that the first graduates truly experience the unfolding of their personal potential and are fully committed to transforming the world from which they came. (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2001b, p. 3)

A Unique Opportunity

The senior and alumni who were interviewed recognized that studying at UAC-CP was a great opportunity in their lives. Laura expressed her gratitude for such opportunity. Sandra and Eduardo acknowledged that the support the college receives from donors in the United States makes it possible for UAC-CP to provide affordable education and scholarships to disadvantaged students. Gabriela, Sarah and Eduardo mentioned the leadership of Sr. Damon, who created the college to provide opportunities

to students who would be unable to afford studying elsewhere. Eduardo also mentioned that the college provided him with a scholarship, helped him with his thesis, and presented him with the opportunity to do an internship in the United States.

Laura praised Sister Damon for making it possible for disadvantaged students to have the opportunity to attend an institution of higher education; she said “Carmen Pampa is the best and I thank Sister Damon who founded this college... If it were not for her, no one else would have conceived a college for poor people who want to study” (Lines 452-454). Sandra also mentioned that “many young people need help and the college is there for them” (Lines 267-277).

In the focus group session Ms. Vega mentioned that affordability is a key strength of UAC-CP, as the college makes it possible for rural students to attend an institution of higher education at very reasonable rates. Mr. Perez added that UAC-CP strives to make students feel at ease by providing them with tuition, lodging and board at affordable rates. In his individual interview, the key informant summarized UAC-CP with the following words, “Education in rural areas, for rural students at a price they can afford” (Lines 313-314).

Co-founder Ann Leahy also mentioned how UAC-CP students maximize the opportunity to pursue higher education that is provided to them by the college. When asked what motivated her to keep supporting the college for many years, in spite of many challenges, she answered,

The kids, the students. For me it’s a simple thing. We live in the land of the plenty here [in the United States], and to see those kids use every opportunity they can, with limited resources, and be so happy and enjoy (Lines 496-498). ...So, that’s what keeps me going, that these kids that had no opportunity, now have an opportunity (Lines 502-503).

In the summer 2000 edition of CPF's publication *Wipala*, Mr. Leahy explained that one of the main benefits of the opportunity to attend UAC-CP is that it provides the rural poor in Bolivia with options for their future.

My attitude toward what I do for the College goes something like this... I was persuaded by Sister Damon that a College would give dispossessed people the options only education can provide. To her, poverty is measured not by how little money you have but, rather, by the limited number of options available to you. Wealth for the survival-poor means having options. I joined a group of others who agreed to build and sustain a college for the rural poor in Bolivia. (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2000, p.4)

In the fall 2001 edition of *Wipala*, the key informant mentioned why he believes that students deserve the opportunity to study at UAC-CP and how such opportunity represents a step towards achieving social justice.

Above all, the students are incredible people. Many have fought extreme poverty, discrimination and abuse to get this far, and they deserve this opportunity. I love being here because I can contribute to something so much bigger than myself. If I have ever seen God, it is in this place. The spirit of the people here at UAC, working peacefully together for justice for the poor, is as close as I have seen God's will being done 'on earth as it is in Heaven.' (Carmen Pampa Fund, 2001a, p. 3)

In addition, co-founders Ann and Richard Leahy made the point that UAC-CP provides opportunities not only to students but also to faculty and staff and even for themselves, as they reflected upon their involvement with the college and saw it as a unique and rewarding experience. Richard Leahy mentioned,

The joy on that campus is really uplifting to me. Ann goes down there and comes back a different person. It is very lively (Lines 191-192) ... You know, you don't get much of a chance to do things [that are] significant in your life. Obviously this was a significant thing. And I didn't sit down and said, now, there are 35 significant things, let me see which one—this one was thrust on me and I picked it up, but these sorts of things pay back. You feel as if you are really contributing something worthwhile to the world you live in. Just very enlivening—for me it was, anyway (Lines 522-526).

Ann Leahy added, “In a sense it was just by luck that we got into it (Line 531). ...I feel like it is almost a gift, kind of a gift to feel like it just comes to you and you take it in” (Lines 532-533).

Financial Challenges

Financial challenges were mentioned throughout the data collection process. UAC-CP’s delicate financial situation is arguably the largest threat faced by the college. In the interviews with the senior and alumni, Mary and Camilo mentioned the financial problems that the college has been facing; Camilo added that college cannot afford to compensate professors well. In the focus group discussion, Mr. Perez mentioned that in the recent audit that was conducted by the Catholic university, some of the suggestions for improvement of UAC-CP, such as improving Internet access, may not be possible to carry out due to the college’s financial limitations.

When reflecting about the difficulties she faced when UAC-CP started, Sister Damon mentioned, “My challenge, first of all, was to get money. And that continues (Line 440). ...Just money to stay alive, to pay salaries, nobody wants to give you that. So that’s a struggle, that’s a continual struggle. It was in the beginning, and it is now” (Lines 442-443).

The CCO trip report of my first visit to UAC-CP in 2007 mentioned an interview with UAC-CP director at the time, Fr. Freddy del Villar. When asked about the college’s most urgent needs, he mentioned repairs to bathrooms and dorms, mattresses, improvement of labs, feeding of disadvantaged students, educational supplies, and assistance to students working on their theses. When asked to choose one to be supported

by CCO, he mentioned the feeding of the students in most dire need, as some of the students with scarce financial means were not able to afford to buy food. A few months after my visit, CCO started helping with funds to buy food for the co-op feeding programs, and later with the provision of breakfast to all students. The report of my visit to UAC-CP in 2012 showed that approximately 500 students benefitted from the free breakfast program and approximately 260 students benefitted from the subsidy of co-op feeding costs.

The analysis of the reports about my visits to UAC-CP in 2007, 2010, and 2012 confirmed the rising operational costs, the need to raise tuition, and difficulties to balance the college's budget. In 2007 there were 760 enrolled students and, according Fr. Freddy del Villar, the director of UAC-CP at that time, the yearly budget of the college then was \$850,000, which amounted to approximately \$1,300 per student; at that time, tuition was approximately \$200/year. In 2010, UAC-CP had 725 students enrolled and approximately 70 students who had finished coursework but still needed to complete their culmination experience requirement in order to graduate. The college was experiencing financial difficulties at the time of my visit, as USAID assistance had been drastically reduced and fundraising efforts in the United States had been less successful than previous years. At that time, students contributed approximately \$300/year for tuition, which was a fraction of the actual cost estimated to be between \$1,500 and \$2,000. Enrollment numbers and costs in 2012 were similar to 2010. The 15 annual reports produced by CPF, the American non-profit organization that helps fund UAC-CP, from years 2000 to 2014 show impressive progress and accomplishments, but also reveal an often fragile financial situation. The first report (2000) showed higher expenses than

revenues. Decreases in net assets followed in 2001 (\$24,366), 2005 (\$68,738), 2006 (\$121,645), 2008 (\$108,856), 2009 (\$127,424), 2010 (\$87,447), 2012 (\$81,365), and 2014 (\$64,400). Increases in net assets, on the other hand, were observed in the amounts of \$43,099 in 2002, \$7,268 in 2003, \$176,224 in 2004, \$31,720 in 2007, \$139,156 in 2011, \$16,510 in 2013.

The selection process. UAC-CP's admissions criteria make it a unique institution that is grounded on service and solidarity, but at the same time create invariable challenges to the college's existence and operations. The deliberate selection of rural students of scarce financial means remediates a lack of opportunity for higher education for disadvantaged youth in rural areas. Because most students who attend the college would not be able to afford the actual cost of their studies, the college offers them discounted tuition and food/lodging rates complemented with funds raised by American non-profit organization Carmen Pampa Fund, which donates to UAC-CP funds that cover approximately 40% of the college's expenses. Data collected throughout this study indicate that obtaining enough funds to support operational expenses remains one of the college's main challenges, especially when donations and grant income go down and/or expenses rise.

Because some alumni mentioned concern about the selection process in the individual interviews, I asked participants of the focus group how the college chose its students. Mr. Abad mentioned that priority is given to rural students. There is an initial application process that is open first to students from the five provinces of the Catholic diocese of Coroico (those provinces are in the northern part of the Department of La Paz).

After the first phase of enrollment is completed, students from the rest of the country are welcome to apply for the remaining spots. Applicants then take a placement test to determine if they will need to enroll in the one-year Pre-U program or if they can start their programs right away. Because of the lower quality of schooling in rural areas, a larger proportion of rural students are required to attend the Pre-U program compared to their urban peers. Applicants are not directly asked about financial means, and all the students admitted to UAC-CP benefit from reduced tuition rates. Some applicants, however, are not able to afford even the college's discounted tuition rates and lodging and food costs, so they apply for additional financial assistance. In such cases, a committee analyzes those applications to determine need.

Rising costs and oscillating revenues. Concern about the college's finances was expressed both in interviews with alumni, founders and administrators, and in the analysis of documents. Founders Richard and Ann Leahy mentioned that USAID decreased its support the college in the 2010s and contributions from long time donors have been declining. Both Sister Damon and Dr. Smeltekop identified financial difficulties as the college's main challenge. Dr. Smeltekop mentioned that the costs to operate the college keep on increasing.

Summary

This chapter presented background information about the 21 participants of this study and the findings that were analyzed from the data collected in interviews and document review to answer the research question and sub-question. Seven themes were identified: perceived strengths and weaknesses of the college, professional endeavors

pursued by seniors and alumni, living in community, community service and ayni, focus on value and spiritual enrichment, a unique opportunity, and financial challenges. The first theme, perceived strengths and weaknesses of the college, had two subthemes: college strengths and college weaknesses; the second theme, professional endeavors pursued by seniors and alumni, had two subthemes: financial need and service; the last theme, financial challenges, also had two subthemes: the selection process, and rising costs and oscillating revenues.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter starts with a summary of the study and the answers to the research question and sub-question. Subsequently it presents a comparison of this study with another recent study concerning UAC-CP graduates, and explores linkages to the theoretical framework. Finally it presents discussions about limitations, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

Summary of the Study

Except for two interviews and document analyses that were conducted in the United States, the data for this study were collected at UAC-CP, which started in 1993 as part of a consortium of rural campuses of the Catholic University of Bolivia San Pablo, and became a satellite campus of that university in 2010. UAC-CP is the fulfillment of a vision of Sister Damon Nolan, who partnered with donors/fundraisers Ann and Richard Leahy and Bolivian ecclesiastic, community, and academic leaders to create an institution of higher education to educate the rural poor in a Bolivian rural community. The college strives to make higher education available to students who would not otherwise have that opportunity; it also promotes service to rural communities through research and outreach programs. Because of its location and programs of study that focus on the acquisition of skills to promote development of rural areas, UAC-CP enables its seniors and alumni to become agents of change in rural Bolivian communities. Through its curriculum, the legacy of its founders, constant interaction with international volunteers and donors, and

contributions from faculty members who have had interdepartmental and international experiences, UAC-CP has laid a foundation for its students to become world citizens. As argued by Nussbaum (1997), “World citizens will legitimately devote more attention and time to their own region and its history, since it is above all in that sphere that they must operate. This need for local knowledge has important educational consequences” (p. 68).

The purpose of this study was to examine UAC-CP stakeholders’ perceptions of the educational experiences of students who have attended the college and learn about the students’ professional endeavors. The researcher conducted individual interviews with a key informant, founders of the college, one senior and nine alumni. In addition, a focus group session was conducted with seven UAC-CP faculty members who reflected upon the findings of the interviews with the senior and alumni. The human capability approach (HCA) theoretical framework’s focus on dialogue, community development, individual empowerment and personal agency (Walker & Unterhalter, 2010) helped the researcher develop interview questions for the senior and alumni. Through the interviews the researcher gathered and later analyzed data to gauge if UAC-CP fostered in its students a key concept of the HCA, that is, the drive to become agents of their own learning and shape their own lives, which, as advocated by Sen, is crucial to positive social change (Sen, 1999). The researcher also analyzed a series of documents about UAC-CP and CPF. The analysis of data yielded seven themes that are directly linked to the research question and sub-question; three of the seven themes had two subthemes each within them. They were: perceived strengths and weaknesses of the college and its subthemes--college strengths and college weaknesses), professional endeavors pursued

by seniors and alumni (and its subthemes--financial need and service), living in community, community service and ayni, focus on value and spiritual enrichment, a unique opportunity, and financial challenges (and its subthemes--the selection process, and rising costs and oscillating revenues).

Answers to the Research Question and Sub-question

This study was undertaken to answer a main question: What are the perceptions of key UAC-CP stakeholders of how the college prepares seniors and alumni to serve their communities as professionals?, and a sub-question: What professional endeavors have seniors and alumni pursued upon completion of their coursework or graduation from UAC-CP?

Research Question: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Preparation of Seniors and Alumni

The participating senior and alumni, faculty members, and founders spoke highly of UAC-CP and showed a sense of satisfaction with their involvement with the college. The fact that the majority of students, professors, clergy and administrators live together on two adjacent campuses located in a small rural community fosters bonds of solidarity and mutual support that motivate students to cope with homesickness and focus on the higher education provided by the college. In addition, findings from this study suggest that other benefits of on campus living that have been identified in higher education settings in the United States, such as increased involvement of students with their academic institutions, establishment of support systems, and creation of opportunities for

research (Astin, 1984; Pascarella, Terezini, & Blimming, 1994; Turley & Wodtke, 2010) are also experienced by UAC-CP students in rural Bolivia.

Interviewees also praised the focus UAC-CP places on values formation and spiritual enrichment, and mentioned the benefits of mandatory students' community service projects, such as (a) providing administrative support to the college (and thus saving on labor costs), (b) teaching skills and providing practical training to inexperienced students, (c) providing outreach services to communities, and (d) fostering collaboration and teamwork. Findings from this study coincide with those of Campbell's (2014) research with small groups of adult students who spent the summer in a service learning program in a rural center in North Carolina. Both studies show evidence of spiritual gains that can come about as a result of service work.

Participants of the study seemed to agree that UAC-CP's main accomplishment is that it provides access to higher education to a large number of students who otherwise would not be able to overcome the financial and logistical obstacles associated with attending college. The HCA framework helped the researcher ascertain the meaning of the data that were collected and analyzed in this study. As argued by Walker and Unterhalter (2010), our choices are deeply shaped by the structure of opportunities available to us. Education can be especially empowering if it broadens the opportunities available to members of disadvantaged groups. In its two decades of existence, UAC-CP has specifically targeted underserved populations and provided them with opportunities to increase their capabilities by having access to higher education. In fact, UAC-CP embodies some of the aspects of changes in policy in higher education in Latin America

that were identified by Schwartzman the year that UAC-CP was founded. He argued that Latin American universities have been transitioning from privileged places for the children of the elites to institutions that cater to the educational needs of lower middle class, and, in the case of UAC-CP, even impoverished students, and their curricula have become open to new alternatives and experimentation (Schwartzman, 1993).

It is the perception of the stakeholders who participated in this study that UAC-CP seniors and alumni have had the academic knowledge and technical skillset that prepared them well to join the work force and contribute to the development of rural areas of their country. The data collected in this study indicate that students who attended UAC-CP have been able to find work that enables them provide for themselves and their families. As argued by Deprez and Butler (2007), higher education is crucial for families that are poor as it provides them a lifeline and often removes them from situations of underemployment and unemployment.

Stakeholders agree that the college's emphasis on service and assistance to disadvantaged populations deepens its students' awareness of social inequalities, provides outreach opportunities to remediate some of the college's surrounding communities' needs, and trains students to be agents of change and development. In addition, they believe that UAC-CP's focus on the reality of rural communities of Bolivia provides students with the opportunity to become professionally involved with people in rural communities, troubleshoot problems, and motivate people to search together for solutions. Key informant Dr. Smeltekop's mention of aspects of the training that students receive at UAC-CP that lead them to see the good in other people and explore the good in

themselves coincide with the goals of equipping students to be agents of their own human well-being, and in turn also the well-being of others, as advocated by educational initiatives that are grounded on the HCA.

In sum, the themes identified by the researcher provided parts of the answer to the research question. According to data collected and analyzed about the perceptions of stakeholders, UAC-CP prepares its students by providing them with the following: (a) a combination of practical and theoretical learning, (b) skills to allow them to pursue professional endeavors, (c) focus on value and spiritual enrichment, (d) experiences of community living, (e) participation in community service and embodiment the spirit of ayni, and (f) the opportunity to attend college at affordable rates.

Research Sub-question: Professional Endeavors of Seniors and Alumni

Interviewees mentioned that most UAC-CP seniors and alumni are able to find employment without great difficulty. One of the alumni who was interviewed was a housewife and worked as a volunteer at UAC-CP; the only senior who was interviewed had already had a few engagements as a consultant while he was working on his thesis; the other eight alumni were all employed at the time of their interviews. Common sources of employment are UAC-CP itself, local NGOs, local government agencies, schools, and local financial institutions. Many UAC-CP alumni have also started their own businesses, NGOs, or development projects.

Financial Challenges: A Constant Concern

Throughout the study, the researcher learned about accomplishments of UAC-CP and its students, seniors and alumni, founders, faculty and staff. In spite of the deficiencies and weaknesses of the college, the data collected and analyzed by the researcher show that the college plays an important role in the development of rural Bolivia by providing disadvantaged students with the opportunity to pursue quality higher education. However, the mission to serve the rural poor by providing higher education at affordable rates invariably creates financial difficulties for the college as it receives no assistance from the Bolivian government. In addition, the tuition and fee payments it receives from students are not sufficient to meet the college's operational expenses. Unfortunately, it is possible that the current financial model of the college may become unsustainable in the near future.

Comparison with Satterlee's Study about UAC-CP

Many findings of this study coincide with the findings of the research undertaken by Satterlee in 2012-2013. Satterlee's study looked at the role of higher education in rural areas in Bolivia in encouraging sustainable development in communities with higher rates of poverty and higher numbers of people who identify with an indigenous group. Satterlee conducted a mixed methods study that included a literature review, a survey of UAC-CP graduates, and informal interviews with UAC-CP graduates, administrators, and professors. In both studies, overall conclusions indicated that in spite of some difficulties, UAC-CP has been successful in achieving its mission. The themes "Living in Community" and "Community Service/Ayni" that emerged in this study were

not as prominent in Satterlee's study. Similar to this study, Satterlee (2013) pointed out the college's finances as one of such difficulties.

Funding struggles within the UAC-CP are a constant burden to be able to subsidize student tuition and keep program quality constant. In order to remain a model for sustainable development, however, the UAC-CP has to keep tuition levels affordable to poorer populations (p. 46).

Satterlee (2013) concluded that

Since graduates have high employment rates, high job satisfaction rates, high degree-to-employment correspondence, and since their movement is highly towards or within the rural area, it seems safe to conclude that the current UAC-CP programs are creating graduates who are able to be highly productive in service to the rural area (p. 35).

Results of the survey Satterlee conducted with UAC-CP alumni indicated that higher education has enabled participants to achieve over three-fold increases in income on average when compared to the income of their parents. In addition, Satterlee argued that UAC-CP graduates were also helping reduce poverty in rural areas by providing developmental services to rural Bolivians. In conclusion, Satterlee's (2013) final remarks quoted below also coincide with the findings of this study.

The UAC-CP is blazing a new trail of contextualized rural education in Bolivia, and it has indeed changed many lives through the 20 years that has been [in] operation. It has allowed its graduates to contribute in new ways to the development of their own communities. It has enhanced the capabilities of so many rural youth who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to grow and create significant change (p. 47).

The qualitative methodology of this study yielded rich descriptions of the stakeholders' perceptions of educational experiences of UAC-CP students. UAC-CP founders' accounts of their vision for the college and the steps they took to convert it into reality help readers understand how the college began and how it became what it is today.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the concept of human capabilities and has a great deal in common with aspects of multidimensional measures used by the current government of Bolivia named *vivir bien* (live well), as mentioned by Satterlee (2013). These measures focus on areas that were identified by Alkired and quoted by Satterlee (2013) as “employment quality, empowerment, physical safety, dignity, self-respect, [and] meaning and value” (p. 19). The analysis of the data gathered by this researcher and from all sources paints a picture of how the college has helped its students develop their human capabilities so they can strive to achieve individual and collective goals of living well.

Linkages to the Theoretical Framework

Flores-Crespo (2007) has proposed a list of four personal achievements (“beings”) and three professional achievements (“doings”) as part of a framework of university graduates’ capabilities. The former are the following: (a) being able to feel confident and self-reliant, (b) being able to visualize life plans, (c) being able to further develop further abilities, and (d) being able to transform commodities into valuable functionings. The latter are: (e) being able to acquire knowledge required in a job position, (f) being able to look for and ask for better job opportunities, and (g) being able to choose desired jobs. Throughout the data collection process, I gathered evidence that UAC-CP seniors and alumni were able to achieve capabilities “a” to “e” with varying degrees of success. There was evidence, however, that seniors and alumni were struggling with capabilities “f” and “g”, as was the case with seniors and alumni who were working in underpaying and less challenging jobs. In addition, seniors and alumni who worked for UAC-CP

mentioned that their jobs were rewarding because they were able to serve new generations of UAC-CP students and contribute to the mission of the college, but their pay was low.

Data collected and analyzed in this study exemplify the two folds of the concept of the capability of being educated as Terzi defines it. According to Terzi (2007), first, lack of access to education harms and disadvantages individuals. Second, the capability of being educated plays a crucial role in the development of other capabilities. As shown by Satterlee (2013), comparisons of educational and economic achievements of UAC-CP seniors and alumni to those of their parents show that lack of education can be harmful. In this study, the senior and some of the alumni who were interviewed mentioned hardships that perhaps could have been avoided or mitigated, if their parents had had access to additional educational opportunities and/or better financial means. Cases of domestic violence, financial hardship due to the unexpected loss of a spouse, and lack of resources to pay for health care were some of the examples provided by interviewees. Conversely, pursuit of higher education has enabled seniors and alumni to develop opportunities, create additional choices, and obtain benefits that were not possible for their parents. One of the alumni who was interviewed in this study mentioned that she has been paying for a younger sibling to attend UAC-CP. Two alumni were able to travel to the United States and participate in a cultural exchange program. Another alumna, Mary, mentioned that her drive to pursue a higher education degree came in part from her desire to do better than her parents. To quote her, "I come from a very humble family, where there is a big need to better oneself, because my parents have never set foot in a

school” (Lines 28-29). Higher education has provided UAC-CP seniors and alumni with experiences such as living in community, participating in community service, and gaining theoretical and practical knowledge, which extended their freedom by making them marketable professionals with values and spiritual formation, as well as awareness of the challenges of rural Bolivia.

Limitations

As mentioned by Patton (2002), there are no perfect research designs. Qualitative research depends greatly on individual researchers and is limited by their flaws.

Although I employed the concept of epoché or bracketing throughout the data collection process, because I have admired the work of UAC-CP and been there many times, I may have failed on some occasions to maintain neutrality and impartiality as I listened to interviewees and guided them through the interview questions. While I made an effort to play exclusively the role of researcher, a few interviewees did identify me as a representative of a donor organization as they thanked me for the support CCO provides to UAC-CP. The fact that only one interviewee seemed to have deliberately refrained from making any negative comments about UAC-CP indicates that rarely might interviewees’ answers have been affected by social desirability bias.

As it commonly happens in qualitative research, the sample of seniors and alumni selected for this study was not randomly selected, and consequently, as argued by Marshall and Rossman (2006), it fits the rule that “no qualitative studies are generalizable in the probabilistic sense” (p. 42). The nine alumni who were interviewed in this study represent approximately only 2% of the total population; the study, however, used

purposeful sampling and the senior and alumni were selected to equally represent genders and four-year degrees offered by UAC-CP at the time the researcher started the data collection process. In addition, the three founders of the college, a key informant, administrators and department heads of all majors except agronomy were also interviewed. With the notable exception of Satterlee's dissertation, the lack of prior research about UAC-CP and the other four UACs that are affiliated with the Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo, also imposes limitations to this study. A great deal of the documents analyzed in this study was produced by CPF for fundraising purposes and exhibit the tendency of focusing on topics that publishers may perceive as motivating to CPF's donor base.

Implications for Practice

The drive and dedication of UAC-CP founders and their partnerships with local leaders, donors, faculty, staff and students made it possible for the creation from scratch of a unique institution of higher education that is committed to the training of young disadvantaged rural Bolivians, alleviating poverty, and developing the country's rural area. The recent 20th anniversary of the college is a milestone and an opportunity to reflect upon its past, present, and future. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis or matrix is an analytical framework commonly used in businesses and project management to reflect upon strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Goodrich, 2015). Strengths and weaknesses of UAC-CP were mentioned previously in this study. Below are some of the threats and opportunities identified

throughout the data collection and analysis, and implications they present for UAC-CP practices and policies.

Threats and Opportunities

As previously mentioned, UAC-CP's financial situation arguably remains the main threat to its existence. UAC-CP's commitment to keeping tuition and fees affordable to low income rural students requires the raising of funds to supplement the gap between the actual cost of educating students and the tuition revenues collected by the college. Personal observations and data provided by interviewees indicate that UAC-CP already operates "on a shoestring", and some of the salaries of its personnel and investments in learning materials and technology are significantly lower than those of its counterparts, therefore, cutting expenses may not be a viable option. Consequently, generating more income seems to be the direction to be taken. During individual interviews, some of the alumni, such as Laura and Sandra, said that selection should be improved as some students from wealthier families manage to attend the college and benefit from tuition rates that are a fraction of the actual cost and much less than what their families could afford to pay for. Instituting differentiated levels of tuition and fees is not an easy feat, but a system similar to the one adopted by state universities in the United States with two basic categories (in-state and out of state tuition rates) could perhaps enable UAC-CP to raise its revenues by charging higher rates to students who are not rural and poor. Other initiatives to raise funds could be explored such as partnering with foreign universities to host their students for internships and semester abroad programs, searching for and applying for additional grants, and attempting to gather

support from the local and national government agencies. Because higher education is also inaccessible to many people in developed countries, it is at times challenging to raise funds abroad to help pay for the education of UAC-CP students. Nonetheless, CPF could try to increase the number of fundraising events and perhaps try athletic endeavors such as walkathons to help support the college. In addition, social media, crowd funding and matching opportunities could be sought and applied for.

Similar to Satterlee's (2013) findings, some interviewees who participated in this study expressed concern about a perceived decline in the management and academic quality of UAC-CP. In the interviews with the senior and alumni, Marcos and Mary mentioned issues with staff, and Marcos and Camilo expressed concern about some of the faculty. All interviewees who attended UAC-CP at the time Sister Damon was director spoke of her fondly. Since Sister Damon's departure in 2006, UAC-CP has had three directors. Although the departure of directors may not be avoidable, uncertainty and leadership turnover may also represent threats to the college. UAC-CP is a unique partnership of community, ecclesiastic, academic leaders, and international donors. Although much has been achieved in common agreement, conflicting interests and opinions of different partners could also become a threat to the college. Although the college does not seem to have the means to pay higher wages to its faculty and staff, it has many committed professionals and should perhaps try to motivate those who excel and encourage them to mentor their less engaged peers. Performance reviews could also be instituted for staff and faculty in an attempt to increase the quality of operations,

teaching, research and administration. UAC-CP could also work on leadership training and develop blueprints for decision making processes.

Finally, interviewees mentioned two other issues that the college should address: Internet access and student pregnancies. If funds permit, the college should invest in improving Internet access on campus as it could decrease isolation issues, foster research, and increase opportunities for partnerships with other institutions. Satterlee (2013) pointed out that respondents of the survey she conducted mentioned the need for improved psychological support to those who live on campus. During my last visit to the college, I spoke to an international volunteer who was leading a women's group that seemed to have greatly benefitted its members. The issue of student pregnancies is a complex one that would be hard for the college to address. While advocating contraception practices, which are against Catholic teachings, may not be possible at UAC-CP, perhaps additional spiritual and psychological support could be useful to young students at risk of becoming pregnant or of impregnating a fellow student. It is remarkable that four of the five female alumni that I interviewed became pregnant while attending the college. None of the male interviewees impregnated fellow students while they were attending UAC-CP.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a scarcity of available research about UAC-CP and the other UACs that are affiliated to the Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo. Additional case studies or other types of qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research about these unique institutions would be assets to the literature about higher education in Bolivia. Such

studies could focus on their similarities, differences, evolution, accomplishments and struggles. Many studies could be conducted about past and present initiatives carried out by UAC-CP, such as community outreach endeavors, boot camp sessions to help seniors finish their theses, the international volunteer program, the college's community service program, the coffee processing unit, and the processed meat plant. A great deal could be learned from the strengths and weaknesses of such initiatives; some of these are still active, while others have been discontinued. Studies about the active ones, such as the community service and the international volunteer programs, could help them be improved or perhaps redefined. Studies about more sporadic initiatives, such as the boot camp sessions, could gather information about the demand for them, and their accomplishments. Studies about initiatives that have been discontinued, such as the processed meat production plant, could explain the reasons for their discontinuation, analyze their costs and benefits, and investigate possibilities of their reestablishment.

A study could also be carried out to gauge the financial impact that the college has had in a community as small as Carmen Pampa; for instance, an impact survey could be done of all the employment and income generation opportunities in public transportation, food and provisions, cell phone communications that have been created since the opening of the college. Also, additional studies could be conducted about UAC-CP to complement this study and Satterlee's, and provide data about areas which remain understudied, such as the ecotourism major. Ecotourism became a four-year program at UAC-CP only in 2014; it is a less traditional degree that intends to supply professionals to work in the expanding tourism industry in Bolivia. A longitudinal study

based on human capital or social network theoretical frameworks could follow seniors and alumni of this degree to learn about their professional endeavors and the demand for their services.

Conclusion

In the two decades of its existence, UAC-CP has contributed both to the advancement of human capabilities of its students and to the development of potentialities of the communities that are served by the college's faculty, staff, present and former students. In spite of the existence of aspects where improvements could be made and a few areas of concern, such as the college's finances, Internet access, and quality of some of its staff, the data collected and analyzed throughout this single case study indicate that UAC-CP has positively affected the lives of those who have been part of the college's creation, operations, and academic formation processes. According to Nussbaum (1997), "all universities can and should contribute to the development of citizens who are capable of love of the neighbor, ...love at its best is intelligent" (p. 292). Many characteristics of UAC-CP make it unique, such as its founders, its student body, its funding, its inception, its international volunteer program, and its focus on education for rural development. Perhaps the most important lesson learned through this study is that what arguably makes UAC-CP most unique is that it was born out of love of one's neighbor, has taught love and has remained devoted to service to and development of rural communities.

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