

# 2020 ePortfolio Assessment: Disaggregated Attainment of General Education Learning Outcomes

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## Introduction

Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) is devoted to creating an equitable and inclusive learning experience for all students in pursuit of their academic and career goals. In the spring of 2020, the mission and values of inclusivity were renewed at SLCC's 360 college-wide meeting in which equity gaps in learning and student engagement were addressed and discussed by faculty, staff, and administrators. A major component of this conference was a charge by Cabinet to examine institutional inequity with a focus on disaggregating the data in our courses and learning outcomes. In *From Equity Walk to Equity Talk*, Tia Brown McNair, Estela Mara Bensimon, and Lindsey Malcolm-Piqueux argue that for schools to really see how students are learning they need to disaggregate data in meaningful ways. Doing so "is a critical first step to addressing inequalities, because doing so allows practitioners to 'see' differences in student outcomes."<sup>1</sup>

Last year, as part of an effort to be more equity-minded, we made our first attempt at disaggregating the data from our annual General Education ePortfolio assessment. We focused on only a few of the general education learning outcomes and disaggregated the data after we had randomly sampled 50 female and 50 male students. However, we ran into several challenges and found that we were falling short in our attempt to disaggregate and analyze the data in a meaningful way.

## Methodology

This year we wanted to be even more intentional about the way we sampled our students' work for assessment. We wanted to ensure that we were getting a true, representative sample of SLCC's student population. With the help of the Data Science and Analytics department at the College, we focused on a few specific demographic categories. As a result, the 2020 student sample for the general education ePortfolio assessment looked at more focused sub-sets of students and a broader range of learning outcomes.

To be included in this sample, students must have graduated from SLCC in May 2019 with either an A.A. (Associates of Arts) or A.S. (Associates of Science) degree. In addition, the entirety of their General Education coursework must have been completed at SLCC. This assured us that we would not be looking at artifacts students completed while taking general education courses at other institutions. In the end, we pulled a random sample of 138 students who fit these parameters and had submitted ePortfolio links to our Banner system.

As in the past, we used a holistic rubric to complete this assessment. This rubric is a combination of SLCC-specific internal measures, VALUE rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and AAC&U VALUE rubrics modified for our circumstances at SLCC.

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<sup>1</sup> Tia Brown McNair, Estela Mara Bensimon, and Lindsey Malcolm-Piqueux, *From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass. 2020. Page 55.

Most assessment teams were arranged by the ePortfolio Coordinator, Emily Dibble. They were comprised of teams of two SLCC faculty, staff and/or administrators—and the members of team typically came from different disciplines. The teams worked together using the rubrics to assess different learning outcomes and calibrate their scores. We assessed all 138 ePortfolios using this method. In this report we will explore our findings.

The student sample was broken down into the following categories:

**Race & Ethnicity:** This category was divided between “White,” “Hispanic,” and “Other.” These categories allowed us to aggregate our two largest groups of student population (White and Hispanic) and compare differences in student outcomes. The “Other” category comprises Asian, Black, Pacific Islander, and Native American students who, by themselves, would be too small to meaningfully compare.

**Gender:** In our sample 74 students identified as female and 64 identified as male (we attempted to create a ratio that is reflective of our numbers of male to female students at the college).

**First-Generation Students:** In this group we had 65 students identify as first-generation, 51 who identified as non-first generation and 22 who we do not know if they are first-generation or not.

**Pell Eligibility:** From our sample of 138 students 79 were Pell Eligible and 59 were not.

## Findings

Note that data from this study is graphically represented in the Appendix data charts.

- **Racial disparities in learning outcome attainment are relatively minor.**

Across the twenty-one learning outcomes we found very few gaps that were statistically significant across the sample. Small gaps were found on *Indicator 14: Student Demonstrates Problem Solving Skills*, *Indicator 9: Students Making Connections from School Work*, *Indicator 11: Students Gathers Information* and *Indicator CT: Strongest Reflections*.

- **Pell-eligible students outperform non-Pell eligible students on most learning outcomes**, in some cases by significant margins. This finding was a bit of a surprise and a good one at that. This would seem to indicate that SLCC’s students coming from lower family income levels who reach graduation are attaining our general education learning outcomes at least as readily as are other students.

The largest gaps occurred in indicators: *Three Strongest Reflections*, *Communications*, *Manipulation*, *Interpretation*, *Students making Connections Across Designations*, and *Lifetime Wellness* outcomes with a gap of 1.56—to—2.2.

- **Female students generally outperform male students on most learning outcomes**, but the differences in most cases are not significant. We think it is interesting that the scores on the strongest reflections were nearly the same, which was a little surprising.

The main performance gaps were most prominent in the following three outcomes: *CT Scientific Method*, *IL Topic/Research Question*, and *Indicator 14 Problem Solving Skills*. Women outscored men in each of these three outcomes. They did so especially significantly in the problem-solving outcome where they scored an average of 1.14 compared to their male counterparts who averaged just 0.66.

- **Disparities between first generation and non-first-generation student attainment of learning outcomes are relatively minor**. Usually, first-generation students perform less well—which is not surprising and something we need to bring to the attention of the college community—but the differences don’t seem very significant.

Non-first-generation students did score slightly higher than their counterparts in several areas, and they scored higher particularly in the areas involving reflection. For example, *Indicator 7 The Student Engages in Reflection*, shows that non-first-generation students scored 1.6 and first-generation students scored 1.5. The pattern holds true for *Indicator 8 Student Makes Connections Across Disciplines, Courses, or Assignments in their Reflections*, where first-generation students scored 1.8 and non-first-generation students on average scored 2.1. In *Indicator 9 Student Makes Connections from Schoolwork to Personal Life in Their Reflections*, first generation students scored 2.2 while their non-first-generation classmates on average scored 2.5.

It is interesting to note that there were three areas where first-generation students scored higher than their counterparts. First, in all areas of quantitative literacy. Second, we see this when looking at *Indicator 14: Student Demonstrates Problem-Solving Skills*. Third, on *Indicator 12 Student Demonstrates Knowledge of Politics, Economics and History of U.S.*, first-generation students had an average score of 1.4 and non-first-generation students scored an average of 1.1.

- **Overall conclusion**. In our 2019 and 2020 attempts to study equity gaps we have learned that there are very few glaring inequities in learning outcome attainment across our sample. This conclusion stands to reason, as *we are sampling students who completed SLCC*. The small gaps we do see could be caused by several aspects including course delivery, a lack of focus on the ePortfolio in the course, a lack of student or faculty engagement on the importance of the signature assignment and reflection prompts in Gen Ed courses. We are confident that future studies like this are not likely to produce actionable data. Instead, *we recommend that SLCC focus on students who are not achieving success*, which entails looking at D, E, and W rates in gateway General Education courses and the distribution of A, B, and C grades in those same courses. Those kinds of studies have already identified significant equity gaps that the College

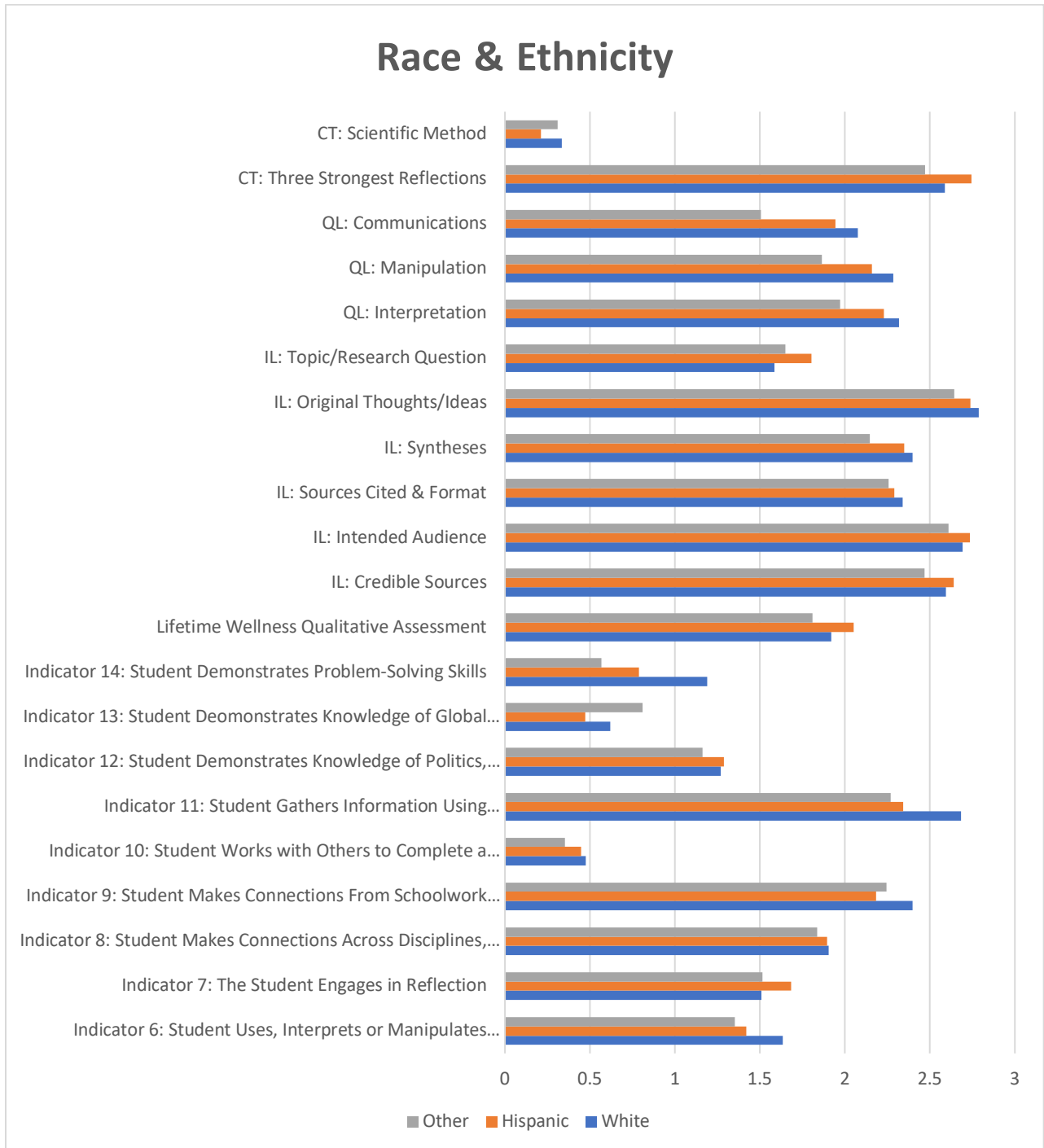
can and should address.<sup>2</sup> Those results can provide institutional context for data on individual faculty dashboards and lead to concrete structural, curricular, and pedagogical changes aimed at reducing equity gaps.

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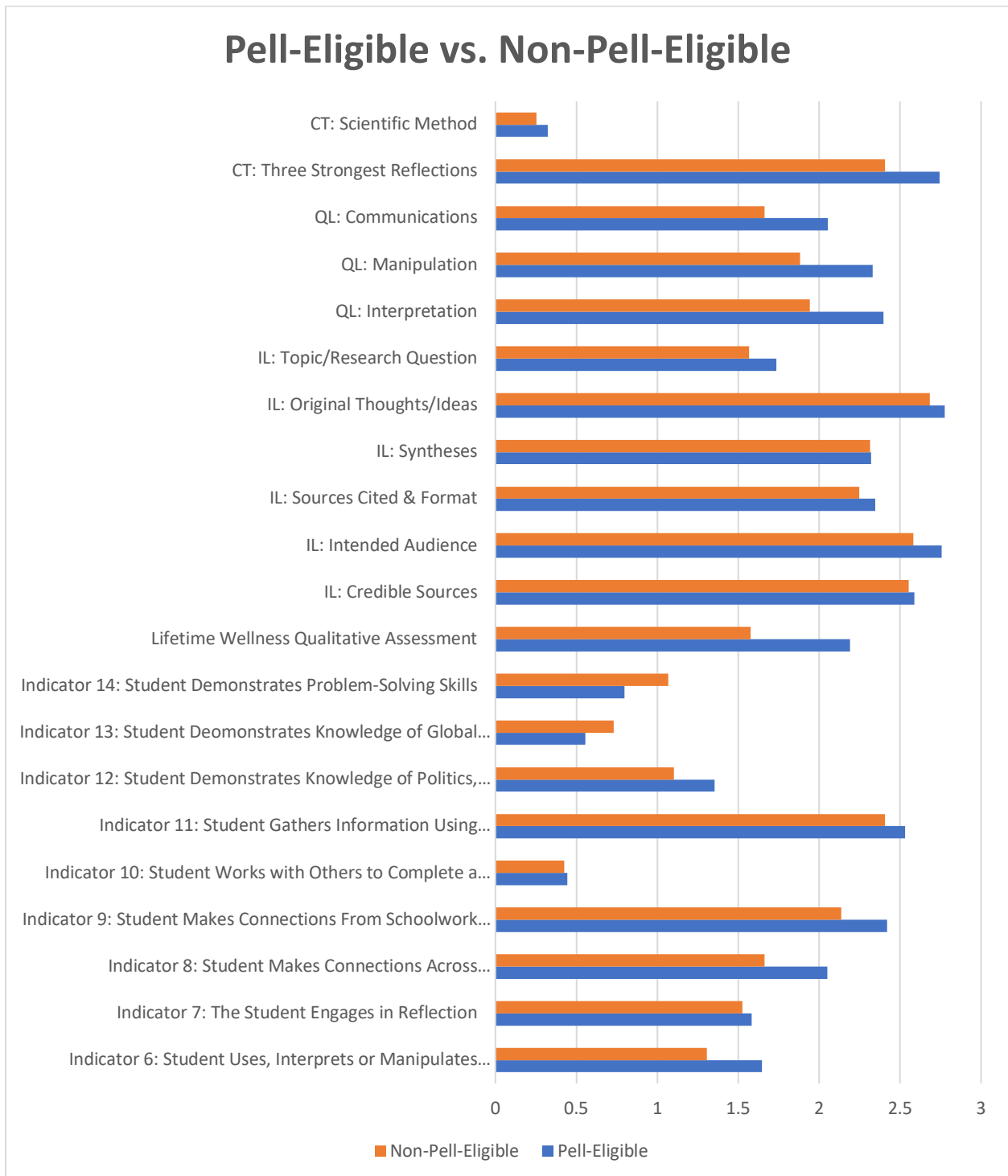
<sup>2</sup> David Hubert, *Equity Gaps Among Students Who Received D, E, and W in High Enrollment General Education Courses*. November 23, 2020. David Hubert, *Equity Gaps Among Students Who Succeed in High Enrollment General Education Courses*. November 23, 2020.

## Appendix: Data Charts

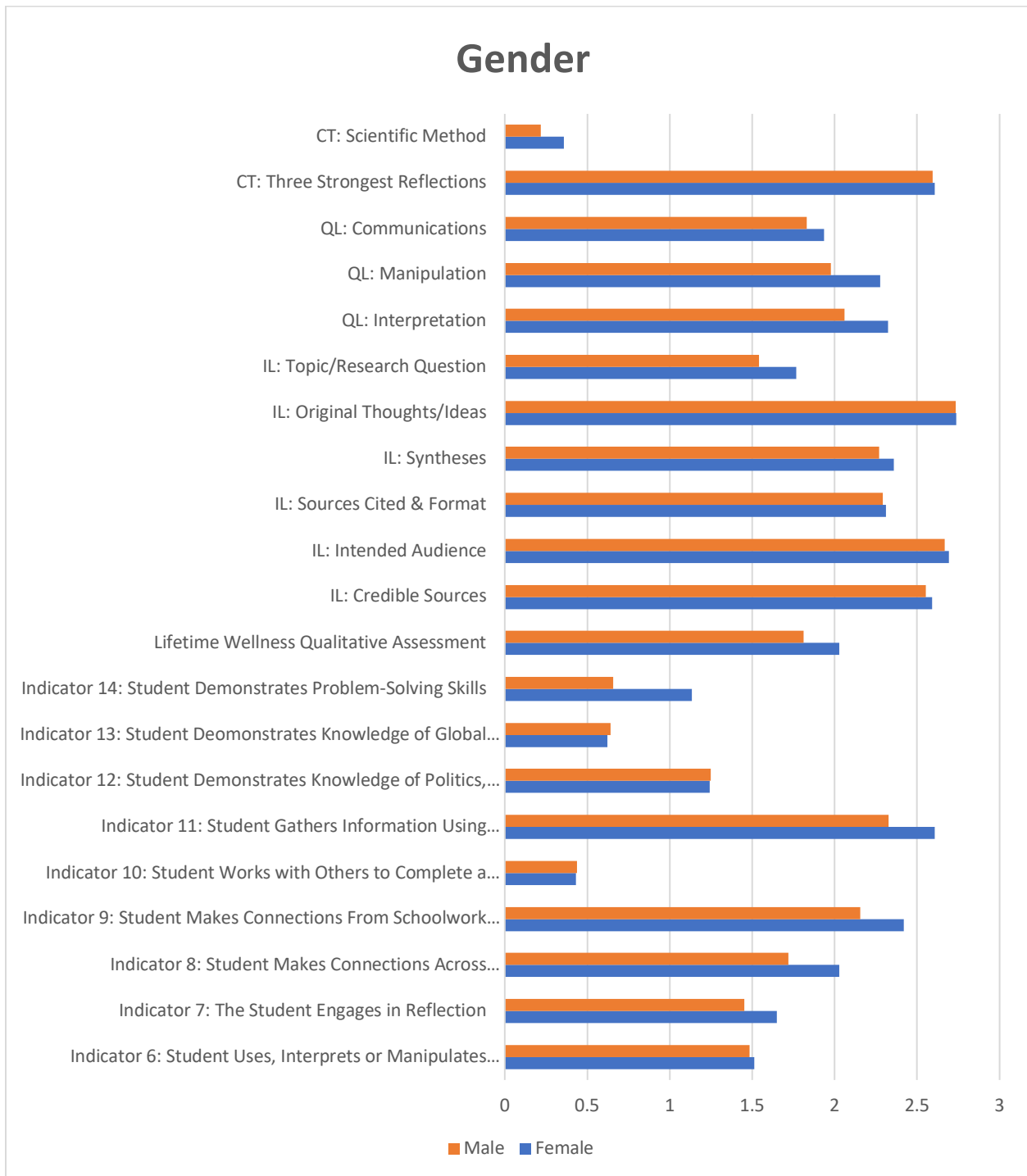
Figure 1



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**





**Figure 4**

