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Enacting Equity in the Neoliberal Community College: A Study of the Labor Expectations and Perceptions of Faculty of Color

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Enacting Equity in the Neoliberal Community College: A Study of the Labor Expectations and Perceptions of Faculty of Color

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Daisy Ramirez

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

Daisy Ramirez

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Chair

This study expanded the understanding of the experiences and perspectives of faculty of color within the community college system. Through a qualitative research design, the study drew insights from interviews with 14 self-identified faculty of color and a review of institutional documents from a single community college. A framework that integrated institutional logics, critical race theory, and resistance theory guided data analysis. Findings revealed that while these faculty members are deeply committed to enacting equity and resonate with the open-access mission of community colleges, their efforts are often voluntary, unpaid, and occasionally overlooked by their peers and administration. The themes that emerged include the misalignment of institutional equity directives, undervalued equity-related labor, and a disparity between the college's public image and the actual experiences of faculty of color. Findings also highlighted the profound commitment of these faculty to promoting equity; they not only connected deeply with students, fostering an understanding of their unique characteristics, but also aligned their

roles with community colleges' democratic mission by proactively offering opportunities and services. Moreover, faculty members perceived equity as a tool to address disparities, striving to level the educational playing field by employing strategies such as adopting open educational resources (OER), mentoring, spearheading initiatives, and advocating for their adjunct and nontenured peers. However, many of these equity-driven efforts were not recognized in their official job roles, leading faculty members to assume these responsibilities voluntarily, often without due compensation.

The findings also highlighted a potential misalignment between the college's publicized equity directives and their on-ground implementation. Further, the labor associated with these equity-driven initiatives was often undervalued and dismissed, creating a chasm between the public portrayal of WCC and the lived experiences of its faculty of color. Addressing challenges and promoting equity, faculty members employed strategies such as forming support networks for mutual assistance and actively setting boundaries to preserve their well-being. Participants voiced a distinct desire for better recognition from the college's administrators, emphasizing the importance of resources and compensation for their labor. Through participants' narratives, they sought to communicate their value, possibly in contexts they felt unable to directly convey to the college's leadership. The research highlighted the evolving nature of 'equity' as a concept, emphasizing the importance of ongoing dialogue, acknowledging faculty concerns, and promoting a cohesive and effective equity approach at the college. The study underscored the need for acknowledgment, compensation, and consistent messaging regarding equity practices at community colleges.

The dissertation of Daisy Ramirez is approved.

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2023

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Community colleges are essential in the U.S. higher education system. Since its inception in 1901, community colleges have expanded their presence in the U.S. postsecondary education system, and their open admissions policies have provided opportunities for the most marginalized individuals to attain a higher education degree (Cohen et al., 2014). In 2022, the public community college system enrolled 6.2 million students, including a large population of diverse students. As of Fall 2020, community colleges enrolled 39% of all undergraduate students in the U.S., comprising 53% of Native American, 50% of Hispanic, 40% of Black, and 36% of Asian/Pacific Islander undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2022). Notably, in 2022, first-generation college students made up 29% of enrollments, alongside 15% single parents, 8% non-U.S. citizens, 4% veterans, and 20% students with disabilities. Moreover, community colleges are a fraction of the cost of 4-year public colleges, which makes them accessible to low-income students. Because of their accessibility and historical enrollment of vast numbers of traditionally underserved populations, community colleges have been deemed democratic institutions (Cohen et al., 2014; Dougherty, 1994; Dowd, 2003).

While community colleges aim to deliver education and workforce training to a diverse student body with limited public funds, they face challenges in living up to their democratic ideals (Dougherty et al., 2017; Dowd, 2003). These challenges include grappling with declining enrollments, transitioning to online and hybrid educational modalities, and increasing racial equity in student outcomes. In states like California, initiatives such as guided pathways and the elimination of remedial courses have sparked discourse on innovative curriculum and teaching methods that aim to ease students' paths toward earning a degree or certificate (California

Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], n.d.). Yet, these discussions often mirror a neoliberal mindset, with administrators focusing on enrollment metrics and fiscal concerns that align with the state's workforce objectives. Consequently, although community colleges are fundamentally open-access establishments aiming to offer higher education to a broad audience (Ayers, 2009; Levin, 2007), recent fiscal challenges have caused community colleges to drift toward neoliberal policies, distancing community colleges from their foundational democratic origins (Ayers, 2015; Cox & Sallee, 2018; Kater, 2017; Levin, 2007).

As community college administrators increasingly prioritize student outcomes and completion rates, "faculty roles are becoming more closely linked to the pressures of the market and the broader neoliberal philosophy which is dominating higher education" (Kater, 2017, p. 237). Faculty members, given their pivotal roles in imparting education to diverse student groups, are fundamental in achieving the mission of community colleges (Levin et al., 2014; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). However, community colleges face the challenge of seemingly competing agendas, requiring faculty to adapt to changing priorities (Levin, 2007). In this study, I examined community college faculty perceptions and their role in shaping the mission and future of these democratic institutions.

Problem Statement

Previous research has sought to grasp the tension between the democratic and neoliberal paradigms in community colleges, primarily through the lenses of faculty and administrators (Levin et al., 2006; Perry, 2018). Yet, the exploration of faculty members' social identities, lived experiences, and teaching practices, especially those of faculty of color, remains understudied (Levin et al., 2013, 2014; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). By omitting the perspectives of faculty of color, researchers have limited the understanding of community colleges and interactions in

the institution (Levin et al., 2014). Considering that faculty of color represent an underrepresented segment in these institutions, their experiences and perceptions are pivotal to a comprehensive understanding (Fujii, 2014; Lara, 2019; Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Through this study, I contributed to the existing literature on faculty of color in community colleges by examining the influence of neoliberal and democratic institutional logics on faculty labor and identities.

Purpose and Research Questions

In this study, I explored the challenges faced by community college faculty of color as they navigated the intersecting institutional logics of neoliberalism and democracy. I posited that faculty of color (a) encountered daily challenges in their pursuit of providing equitable education to students, and (b) grappled with the institutions' neoliberal ideologies, juxtaposed against their identities as people of color in these organizations. I considered the unique perspectives faculty of color had as employees who possessed a deep understanding of community colleges and the forces that either supported or obstructed organizational transformation (Levin et al., 2015). Thus, I uncovered how various institutional logics shaped the experiences of faculty of color and how faculty made sense of and responded to such logics. The following research questions guided this research study:

1. How do community college faculty of color describe their labor expectations and perceptions of their roles as faculty of color at Willow Community College?
2. How do faculty of color understand and explain the concept of equity?
    a. How do they describe enacting equity in their roles?
3. What challenges do faculty of color face enacting equity in their roles?
    a. How do faculty of color respond to such challenges?

Scope of the Study

In this study, I explored the complexities faculty of color at Willow Community College (WCC) faced as they navigated the institutional logics of neoliberalism, democracy, and equity. Institutional logics guide organizations, including community colleges, and shape faculty members' academic labor and experiences (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018; Squire, 2016). Community colleges have a mission and purpose framed by the logics of neoliberalism, equity, and democracy, and faculty of color have their own values shaped by their individual identities and experiences.

I employed a qualitative design to examine critically how faculty of color reconciled their values with the values of the community college in a higher education context characterized by neoliberalism. I used multiple data sources, including a demographic survey, narrative interviews, and institutional documents. The narrative interviews followed Seidman's (2013) three-interview series and elicited participants' education journeys, experiences, and reflections on their roles at WCC, which is a pseudonym. I used institutional documents, such as equity plans and meeting agendas, to understand the organizational context comprehensively. I also employed the concept of critical race counterstories as a methodological tool (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). My goal was to gain insight on how faculty of color understood and negotiated their identities and values in the community college's values of equity and democracy, and navigated the constraints of higher education's neoliberal context.

Significance of the Study

This study holds great significance for several reasons. First, it provided a unique examination of how faculty of color, a marginalized group, perceived the community college's mission and values and the manifestation of neoliberalism in their work expectations. Although

prior researchers have explored community college faculty work in a neoliberal context (Kater, 2017; Levin, 2007), few have focused exclusively on the experiences of faculty of color. Second, this study shed light on the often neglected perspectives of faculty working in community colleges. This instrumental examination of the experiences of faculty of color provided valuable insights into their perspectives (Levin et al., 2014; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). These perspectives could bring valuable benefits to community colleges as a whole, including closing racial and socioeconomic equity gaps and promoting transformative change at the classroom, departmental, and institutional levels (Levin et al., 2013, 2015). I adopted a critical approach in this study by using critical race and institutional logics perspectives to resist neoliberalism and offer a critique of its impact on faculty labor. This study's findings could help better support faculty of color in the community college sector and inform future research and practices. This study also highlighted the need for scholars and administrators to examine critically how various policies and practices affect faculty who educate marginalized populations in the U.S. higher education system.

Definitions of Key Terms

Given the varied definitions existing in scholarly literature, in this section, I describe my conceptualization of the key terms employed throughout this study.

Agency

Agency refers to individuals' capacities to act and make choices. Drawing on Giroux's (1983) work, faculty in this study displayed agency through oppositional behaviors by rejecting and refusing dominant logics.

Emotional Labor

Emotional labor refers to labor that "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe space" (Hochschild, 2012, p. 7).

Equity

Drawing on the work of Bensimon (2018), I define equity and equity-mindedness as a race-conscious approach that recognizes the structural and systemic nature of racial inequities in higher education. Unlike a generic notion of equality or fairness, equity specifically aims to identify and address racial disparities within educational institutions. Equity-minded faculty demonstrate a commitment to dismantling these disparities by disrupting the status quo and actively engaging in efforts to support the equitable outcomes of historically minoritized and marginalized student populations (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

Faculty of Color

I use the term *faculty of color* to include underrepresented and/or marginalized populations in the United States, including Latinx, Native American, Black, African American, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Asian, Indian, and multiracial individuals.

Institutional Logics

Institutional logics is a framework born out of neoinstitutional theory, which refers to the "socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences" (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2).

Neoliberalism

The term *neoliberalism* refers to a socioeconomic theory based on capitalist profit-driven policies that shape legal, political, and social norms based on the notions of privatization, increased competition, and individual responsibility (Harvey, 2007; Levin & Aliyeva, 2015; Saunders, 2010). Neoliberal ideology has been "incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey, 2007, p. 3).

Race

As defined by Omi and Winant (2014), *race* "is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of bodies" (p. 110). A historical analysis of race can be traced to the period of colonization in which colonizers exterminated and exploited non-White, Black, and Indigenous people to create profit (Wilder, 2013). Acts are racist if they "create and reproduce structures of domination based on racial significations and identities" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 128).

Resistance

Resistance refers to the oppositional behaviors that individuals take to actively reject dominant ideologies (Giroux, 1983). Baez (2000a) suggested faculty of color in higher education can resist and subvert oppressive structures and knowledge, especially in the classroom.

Conclusion

There has been limited research on faculty of color in community colleges and faculty perceptions of labor expectations in the community college context. A lack of attention given to faculty of color raises concerns because students of color make up a large portion of the community college population and faculty labor directly impacts students' experiences. Moreover, the context of neoliberalism poses challenges to the historical community college

mission of democratic education. In this study, I uncovered how faculty of color negotiated their values and beliefs and enacted equity in the neoliberal community college setting.

This chapter provided an overview of the research study, including its purpose and methodological approach, and included working definitions for concepts used throughout this manuscript. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the context of the community college system and literature on community college faculty labor and the experiences of faculty of color. In addition, Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical frameworks that guided this study: institutional logics, critical race theory (CRT), and a theory of resistance. Chapter 3 details the study's data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of interviews collected with faculty of color and institutional documents. Findings from this study indicate that faculty of color relate to students and are committed to enacting equity in their roles by providing access and leading initiatives to better serve students of color; yet, they encounter challenges in their roles and sometimes have their efforts dismissed and disregarded by colleagues and administrators. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings and connects them with literature on neoliberalism in higher education and the work of community college faculty of color. The discussion includes implications for community college leaders, policymakers, and researchers interested in studying faculty of color and their labor.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

I begin this chapter by delving into the history of the community college system in the United States, exploring its mission and evolution over time. Then, I provide an overview of the California Community College (CCC) system and its current pressing issues. Next, I summarize existing studies on community college faculty, covering their labor expectations, the distinction between instructional and noninstructional faculty, and the status of full-time and adjunct faculty. Despite the limited research on the experiences of faculty of color in community colleges, I highlight key studies that center perspectives of faculty of color and examine how educators strive to promote equity in community colleges. I conclude this section by emphasizing the importance of focusing on the experiences of community college faculty of color and suggesting how this study adds to the existing body of literature.

The Community College System in the United States

Since their inception, community colleges have played an integral part in U.S. higher education. They have consistently served a diverse student population including adult learners, students of color, economically disadvantaged individuals, and students with disabilities (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2022; Malcom-Piqueux, 2018). The mission of community colleges has evolved, reflecting the changing needs of society and students (Levin, 2007). Still, community colleges have continued to give second chances to people who may not have otherwise attained higher education (Rose, 2012) and have provided opportunities for underserved individuals to further their education to serve their intellectual or occupational goals (Baber et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2014). The following sections provide a historical account of the development of U.S. community colleges, the CCC system, and the roles of faculty in them.

The Historical Community College Mission: Providing Postsecondary Access

During the early part of the 20th century, education leaders and states established community colleges in response to social and economic pressures (Levin & Kater, 2018). The first community college established in the United States was Joliet Junior College in Illinois, which was created through the shared efforts of Joliet High School's principal, J. Stanley Brown, and the president at the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper (Baber et al., 2019). Following the German model of higher education, Harper and Brown established junior colleges to extend high school curriculum, provide the first 2 years of college education, and confer associate degrees, all while maintaining the university's exclusivity (Baber et al., 2019; Brint & Karabel, 1989). University leaders were able to differentiate their colleges and provide access to higher education through the advent of junior colleges (Brint & Karabel, 1989); in this way, they could absorb students they deemed manually minded, maintain the university's high status reputation, and enroll academically minded students (Snyder, 1930).

In the 1960s, as baby boomers were graduating high school and World War II veterans received their G.I. bills, more people sought higher education (Cohen et al., 2014). Thus, junior colleges adopted a comprehensive college mission to accommodate the demand for higher education by extending lower division coursework and associates degrees, and providing vocational programs and occupational training (Baber et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2014; Meier, 2018). By the 1960s, junior colleges took on the term *community colleges* and had the primary function of providing "1) collegiate and transfer education; 2) vocational education; 3) developmental or compensatory education; 4) general education; and 5) community education and service" (Meier, 2018, pp. 2–3).

In the latter half of the 20th century, the Truman Commission Report of 1947 significantly influenced the expansion of community colleges, leading policymakers to advocate for their increased geographical accessibility (Meier, 2018; United States President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947). The Truman Commission Report laid out recommendations for the democratization of higher education, including financial and geographical accessibility, access for underrepresented populations, public investment in higher education, and academic freedom (United States President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947). In California, university leaders and policymakers considered "geography to determine the initial placements of junior institutions to maximize accessibility to postsecondary education" (Baber et al., 2019, p. 206). As a result, community colleges became accessible to more people, especially for populations that had been excluded from higher education institutions previously, such as:

> Those who could not afford the tuition; who could not take the time to attend a college full-time; whose racial or ethnic background had constrained them for participating; who had inadequate preparation in the lower schools; whose educational progress had been interrupted by some temporary condition; who had become obsolete in their jobs or had never been trained to work at any job; who needed a connection to obtain a job; who were confined in prisons, physically disabled, or otherwise unable to attend classes on a campus; or who were faced with a need to fill increased leisure time meaningfully. (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 35)

Although community colleges became more geographically accessible, state schools, including public community colleges, began to change student tuition fees starting in the 1960s, which

continued to increase steadily into the 21st century (Cohen et al., 2014). The continued increase in student tuition fees challenged community college accessibility.

Moreover, community college scholars have critiqued the efficacy of community colleges, arguing community colleges manage students' ambitions rather than support their success (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Clark, 1960). Brint and Karabel (1989) noted community colleges divert students from attending baccalaureate-granting colleges and transfer programs, particularly across class lines, with economically disadvantaged students more likely to enroll in community colleges. They argued community colleges create an underclass of lower educated and subordinate students and lead them away from elite institutions through this practice (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Clark (1960) added to the ambition management argument by suggesting community colleges use a process known as cooling out to manage students' ambitions and guide them toward nontransfer vocational programs. Similarly, Malcom-Piqueux (2018) argued community colleges were designed to be the entry point to higher education for students perceived as unworthy of admission to flagship universities, which led to diverse student populations in community colleges. Noting many students enrolled in community colleges yet very few attained a degree or transferred, Dougherty (1994) deemed community colleges "contradictory" colleges because they offer opportunities but do not deliver on their promises. Despite their dedication to accessibility, community colleges' roles and missions are subject to ongoing debate (Ayers, 2005, 2015; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006).

The Community College Mission: Adopting Neoliberal Agendas

The community college mission has undergone shifts over time, and debates regarding its purpose persist (Ayers, 2005, 2015; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). Community colleges have been met with several demands to offer opportunities for less advantaged individuals to attain

social mobility in an increasingly unequal socioeconomic climate (Dougherty et al., 2017). Although community colleges have expanded access to many students, Baber et al. (2019) stated:

> Due to social, economic, and political pressures to substantiate its presence in an intensely competitive academic marketplace, the twenty-first century community college mission has multiplied and swelled with demands for increased performance and accountability while simultaneously being questioned of its role: as an access portal to postsecondary education, or as a vehicle for academic transfer to the baccalaureate, or as a provider of workforce education and occupational training. These multiple, mission-specific complexities can affect the longstanding operation of the American community college. (p. 212)

Since the 1990s, community colleges have evolved, adopting new programs and revising their missions in the face of external pressures and policies (Levin, 1998; Meier, 2018). Dougherty and Townsend (2006) cautioned that community colleges "have limited amounts of money, time, and energy; serving one mission may thus entail cutting into the resources available for others" (p. 99). This challenge, coupled with dwindling public funding sources, has led community colleges to rely more heavily on private revenue streams like tuition and fees. Consequently, community college administrators increasingly view students as consumers and education as a commodity that resembles a product (Baber et al., 2019; Cox & Sallee, 2018; Levin, 2007).

Despite their persistent low completion rates, federal and state policies have supported community colleges. For example, Obama's administration bolstered support for community colleges, emphasizing their importance in the U.S. higher education landscape through policies intended to increase graduation rates and workforce training (The White House, 2015).

Specifically, the Obama administration provided financial support to increase the number of students who graduated and held postsecondary degrees. This renewed attention toward community colleges propelled other private companies to invest in community colleges (Baber et al., 2019). Moreover, community colleges joined forces with local businesses and leaders to provide career and technical training (Levin, 2007). Scholars have argued discourse focused on developing human capital generates support for business interests and potential revenue sources (Ayers, 2005; Levin, 2007).

Neoliberalism is a socioeconomic theory based on capitalist, profit-driven policies that shape legal, political, and social norms based on the notions of privatization, increased competition, and individual responsibility (Harvey, 2007; Levin & Aliyeva, 2015; Saunders, 2010). In the neoliberal framework, faculty members transition into roles more akin to service providers, which subsequently reframes higher education from a public benefit to a private commodity (Giroux, 2010; Labaree, 1997). This shift has led community colleges to adopt a service provider model, emphasizing outcomes. In the service provider model, education is a tool for bolstering individual human capital rather than valuing learning for its intrinsic worth (Ayers, 2005). Such practices underscore a neoliberal orientation in the community college system (Levin, 2007).

Scholars have examined how community college missions have evolved to adopt neoliberal language. For example, Ayers's (2005) critical discourse analysis of community college mission statements of 144 community colleges across the United States suggested community colleges have taken up neoliberal ideology focused on workforce needs and human capital development. Through a descriptive examination of these college's mission statements, Ayers (2005) found several colleges linked education with the economy and workforce,

suggesting market-driven language in mission statements "become the building blocks of the curriculum" (p. 542), particularly as community colleges have shifted their focus toward skills and workforce development. Ayers also argued community colleges have been aligned with neoliberal ideologies in their mission statements that do not result in emancipatory and sustaining education.

In another study, Ayers (2015) analyzed 1,009 college mission statements from 2012 to 2013, with 427 of those mission statements referencing their earlier mission statements published in 2004. Using an institutional logics perspective, Ayers sought to identify how mission statements evolved over time and how they represented various organizational logics. Ayers found discourse regarding credentials, pedagogy, practices, and curriculum in mission statements had changed since 2004. For example, language in mission statements shifted to focus on degree completion and accountability. Ayers argued the logic of accountability provides institutional legitimacy for the community college sector. Still, this analysis did not uncover why particular language changed in mission statements. It also did not consider how discourses were "contested, negotiated, or tacitly accommodated in policy and practice" (Ayers, 2015, p. 209).

As a result of this neoliberal turn, community colleges have increased their "use of instructional technology, the reconceptualizing and reshaping of institutional governance, and the formation of a new major permanent workforce—part-time and other temporary faculty" (Levin, 2007, p. 472). The neoliberal pressures faced by community colleges can challenge their democratic missions and accessibility as the focus on human capital perspectives, which prioritize economic outcomes and workforce development, and may divert attention from the broader educational and social goals of community colleges. Baber et al. (2019) argued community colleges are "monolithic entities of capitalist growth" (p. 216), suggesting concerns

about the erosion of their original mission as inclusive, affordable, and community-oriented institutions.

The California Higher Education System

To understand the context of Willow Community College (WCC), I provide a broader look at the landscape of higher education in California. In 1960, the president of the University of California (UC) system, Clark Kerr, led a proposition to restructure California's public higher education system. UC administrators developed the recommendations—known as the Master Plan of 1960—due to increasing enrollments in higher education and competition between the higher education sectors (UC Office of the President, 2017). Thus, the authors of the Master Plan sought to form and differentiate the functions and governance of the CCC, California State University (CSU), and the UC systems. Notably, the Master Plan guaranteed access to everyone who sought higher education via geographic accessibility and free tuition. Next, I provide an overview of the Master Plan of 1960's description of each California public higher education sector's functions and its subsequent revisions, and I discuss the current context of the CCC system.

California has two public university systems: the CSU system and the UC system. The CSU is a system of 23 comprehensive universities that have a primary function to provide education to undergraduate and graduate students in liberal arts, professional, and applied fields. Historically, most CCC transfer students enroll in the CSU system. The UC system is California's most selective public higher education sector, which includes 10 research institutions that are 4-year public campuses, nine of which provide undergraduate education. The UC system's primary goal has been to provide liberal arts and science education and serve as the state's primary academic research institution. In addition to granting baccalaureate and master's

degrees, the UC system has the "sole authority in public higher education to award the doctor's degree in all fields of learning" (UC Office of the President, 2017, p. 3).

According to The Master Plan of 1960, administrators tasked the CCCs, formerly known as junior colleges, to offer (a) the first 2 years of collegiate coursework for transfer to the state universities, (b) vocational education or careers, and (c) general education. Over time, the CCC system expanded to provide "remedial instruction, English as a Second Language courses, adult noncredit instruction, community service courses, and workforce training services" (UC Office of the President, 2017, p. 1). The CCC is the only sector that confers associate degrees. Although community colleges did not traditionally confer baccalaureate degrees, 15 community colleges in California conferred baccalaureate degrees at the time of this study, mostly in technical fields not offered at 4-year universities. The Master Plan of 1960 institutionalized upper-division transfer as the primary transfer route, but it did not provide a framework for students and institutions to carry out the transfer function successfully. Subsequent revisions of the Master Plan established eligibility requirements such as student grade point average and credits, and set institutional priorities for the public university systems in California to develop transfer agreements.

The CCC system is the most extensive public higher education system in California and the United States, which comprised 115 colleges and enrolled 2.1 million students as of 2021 (California Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], n.d.). The CCC serves a racially and ethnically diverse student population; in academic year 2019–2020, the CCC population comprised of 46% Latinx/Hispanic, 23% White, 11% Asian, 6% Black/African American, 3% Filipino, 4% multiethnic, .5% Native American, and .5% Pacific Islander students (CCCCO, n.d.). Additionally, the CCC has tended to serve older than traditional age students (e.g., 43% of students were over age 25 as of 2021), and over half of the student population were first-

generation college students (CCCCO, n.d.). As open access and relatively low-cost institutions, CCCs are positioned to increase social and economic mobility (Dougherty et al., 2017), especially by preparing students to transfer to 4-year universities and earn bachelor's degrees. However, the majority of CCC students, especially students of color, leave before earning a certificate or degree or transferring to a university (CCCCO, n.d.).

Community College Challenges

Community college students are diverse and represent significant proportions of undergraduate students of color, first-generation college students, students with disabilities, and low-income students (AACC, 2022; Cohen et al., 2014). Additionally, most community college students are employed in off-campus work and some are student parents with familial responsibilities (AACC, 2022; Cohen et al., 2014; Huerta et al., 2022). Community college students, particularly students who are low income and have many responsibilities, might face challenges accessing basic needs such as transportation, the Internet, and food (Campbell et al., 2015; Huerta et al., 2022).

Aside from individual challenges, students in community colleges face institutional barriers and bureaucratic challenges while pursuing their education (Schudde, 2019). Accessing financial aid eligibility is a confusing and challenging process that can limit students' abilities to enroll and pay for classes; additionally, challenges with the fragmented nature of student services, accessing limited classes, and remedial or developmental instruction policies could extend students' time to complete a degree (Bailey et al., 2015; Cohen et al., 2014; Huerta et al., 2022). Complicated policies, confusing choices, and bureaucratic practices impact student success and educational attainment.

Although community colleges cannot address all individual students' needs, they have implemented policies and practices to improve student success. For example, several community colleges have implemented the guided pathways model to address the complicated structure of educational pathways and students' myriad choices (Bailey et al., 2015). The guided pathways model calls for restructuring a college's course and program offerings to simplify students' choices so they may follow a clear educational plan that results in a degree or transfer pathway. Although the guided pathways model aims to make clear pathways for students to attain a degree, transfer, or secure employment, colleges have faced challenges implementing it. For example, colleges using guided pathways have begun to adjust their advising policies, practices, and audit systems to track student progress, adding additional tasks to employees' duties, particularly faculty's duties (Dougherty et al., 2017).

The guided pathways model calls for restructuring colleges' course and program offerings. As previously noted, community colleges have begun adjusting their advising policies, practices, and audit systems to track student progress, adding additional tasks to employees' duties (Dougherty et al., 2017). This policy can place increased demands on faculty because they may be asked to adjust their teaching methods and participate in tracking student progress. Brown and Bickerstaff (2021) argued, "For many faculty members, their involvement in guided pathways implementation has not had an explicit emphasis on making changes to classroom practice or improving teaching" (p. 135). It is crucial for administrators to include and acknowledge faculty in any efforts aimed at improving community college outcomes because they play a critical role in shaping students' educational experiences.

Faculty members play a critical role in the success of community colleges and their students, yet administrators often overlook faculty when making efforts to improve the college's

educational outcomes. California Community Colleges (2021) outlined goals for the CCC system to focus on student outcomes by easing students' paths toward transfer and degree completion. The CCC report included an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, along with restructuring of career and technical education programs, implementing guided pathways, and employing the student-centered funding formula, which incentivizes schools to improve outcomes for their most marginalized students. Yet, this report failed to distinctly mention the faculty's role in realizing these aspirations, a glaring oversight given their integral role in the educational ecosystem.

Literature on Community College Faculty

Community colleges are unique organizations that differ from 4-year universities in structure, student population, workforce, and mission (Cohen et al., 2014). Community college faculty represent a stratified and "highly managed workforce within the postsecondary educational context" (Levin, 2007, p. 471). Therefore, to fully understand the responsibilities of faculty and community colleges, it is important to describe the organizational context of faculty's labor and location in community colleges. The largest share of the community college workforce is made up of faculty. Faculty are thought to all be teaching faculty members because community colleges are primarily teaching institutions; however, faculty are divided into instructional and noninstructional categories (Townsend & Twombly, 2007b). The distinction between these categories is not always clear because some noninstructional faculty also teach courses, but their primary responsibility is not teaching. For example, noninstructional faculty such as counselors and librarians may teach courses on counseling and research, respectively, but teaching is their secondary responsibility. The instructional faculty's primary responsibility is to teach (Cohen et al., 2014).

Additionally, over 70% of faculty, both instructional and noninstructional, were part-time employees as of 2011, meaning they taught less than half of a full load of courses (Cohen et al., 2014; Levin et al., 2011). Community colleges are funded less than 4-year public universities, making it difficult to hire full-time faculty (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Therefore, part-time employees are exploited for their relatively cheap labor (Cohen et al., 2014). Additionally, part-time status comes with challenges for faculty because they are not likely to receive benefits and cannot vote on academic senate decisions (Ortiz et al., 2021). In considering the diversity of community college faculty's roles, Townsend and Twombly (2007b) noted:

> Even if all the faculty members in a particular study are classified as full-time instructional, they may not teach but rather may be assigned to other instructional activities such as librarianship or counseling. When they are included in a study, their attitudes may be different from those of faculty members who are full-time teachers. However, studies of faculty attitudes do not always distinguish among different groups of faculty. (p. 6)

Differences in roles and responsibilities demonstrate the diversity of the faculty workforce in the community college sector and the importance of distinguishing their varied roles and experiences.

Faculty Labor Expectations

Community college faculty hold distinct roles in postsecondary education. In the community college context, "faculty are more than teachers; [however, their efforts are] focused on economic efficiency, not necessarily educational quality within the framework of neoliberalism" (Levin, 2007, pp. 470–471). Some studies on community college faculty labor have explored faculty's labor expectations and beliefs about their roles (Aguilar-Smith &

Gonzales, 2021; Gonzales & Ayers, 2018; Kater, 2017; Levin, 2007; Levin et al., 2006; Townsend & Twombly, 2007b, 2008). However, most studies on community college faculty have focused on full-time teaching faculty.

Aguilar-Smith and Gonzales (2021) drew on interviews with faculty and administrators and institutional documents to understand how faculty understood and carried out labor expectations. The authors found faculty conceived their work to be holistic and aligned with the institution's mission to provide education and support to students. Faculty reported they invested their time in supporting students by building relationships with them and providing them with resources and accommodations based on their challenges. Aguilar-Smith and Gonzales (2021) argued, "Community college faculty were expected to serve as generous educators, who resourcefully and compassionately taught and supported students" (p. 191). Faculty's generosity was noted through their responses to student needs when they provided resources such as accommodations and extensions, sometimes beyond office hours. Although the expectation to serve as a generous educator was implicit and not directly set by administrators, faculty were expected to develop their teaching practice and engage in workshops to learn new technologies to become more efficient workers. Aguilar-Smith and Gonzales (2021) suggested "administrators sought to bureaucratize the care expected of faculty in their role as institutional agents" (p. 199). For example, faculty were required to use technologies to input midterm grades to track student performance and attrition. To most faculty in this study, such technologies seemed incongruent with serving students holistically. However, most of the faculty in this study were full time and did not identify as people of color, raising questions about the extent of generous work for faculty with different identities.

Shared Governance

Another aspect of faculty labor in community colleges is their expectation to participate in shared governance. Full-time faculty participate in shared governance "over and above their normal teaching loads" (Levin, 2007, p. 478) through their service on hiring committees, planning committees, and budget committees, among others. Guided by neoliberalism and social capital as a guiding framework, Kater (2017) conducted a qualitative study to uncover community college faculty's perspectives on shared governance. Analyzing interview data from 27 faculty at various community colleges across the United States, Kater (2017) found faculty believed administrators failed to recognize and consider their professional expertise and voices in decision-making practices. Because shared governance included committee work, some participants noted feelings of apathy and disengagement stemming from an abundance of responsibilities and being stretched thin in their work responsibilities. These feelings were especially true in shared governance because it was not a primary responsibility of their teaching roles and adjunct faculty could not participate in it. Faculty in Kater's (2017) study expressed shared governance should be built upon trust and transparency from administration.

Instructional Technology

Scholars have witnessed an increasing trend in the utilization of information, technology, and instructional methods in community college administration. This trend is attributed to governmental policies that incentivize "community colleges to regenerate revenue become more efficient and meet the needs of business and industry for skilled labor" (Levin, 2007, p. 473). However, some faculty members have expressed concerns regarding the expectations placed on them to incorporate technological accountability systems; for example, faculty in Aguilar-Smith and Gonzales's (2021) study argued that these expectations are burdensome and unnecessary

labor requirements. These findings suggest potential misalignment between faculty perspectives and the institutional demands for technological integration, which raises questions about the extent to which faculty members have the necessary resources, support, and training to effectively incorporate technology into their instructional practices.

Invisible and Emotional Labor

Scholars have argued faculty in community colleges often engage in invisible labor, which administrators often fail to recognize or compensate. For example, in a qualitative study of community college faculty, Hamblin et al. (2020) sought to examine how invisible labor manifested across 16 participants' work experiences. Participants regarded work responsibilities, such as committee work, writing letters of recommendation, providing office hours behind the regularly scheduled time, and providing resources and other types of support to students as invisible. One respondent "indicated that faculty members considered themselves part social worker, part counselor, and part interventionist" (Hamblin et al., 2020, p. 811). Adjunct faculty considered tasks such as grading and preparing for class invisible because they did not get paid for that labor like their full-time faculty counterparts did.

Researchers have highlighted the importance of student–faculty interactions and the role of mentoring and validation in improving students' success, their intentions to persist in community college, and transfer rates to 4-year universities (Dowd et al., 2013; Tovar, 2015). Community college faculty play an essential role as institutional agents who provide knowledge and encourage students' educational aspirations. Dowd et al. (2013) noted, "By noticing, nurturing, and believing in students' abilities, key individuals had the power to affirm students and influence them to achieve their full academic potential" (p. 21). Similarly, Tovar (2015), through a study of faculty and counselors' impacts on Latino students' success and persistence,

found positive effects of student–faculty interactions and support services on Latinx students' success and intentions to persist in community college.

Alcantar and Hernandez (2020) conducted a qualitative study of Latinx students' interactions with faculty members at 2-year Hispanic serving institutions. The researchers focused on how faculty expressed validation of their students, which occurred through multiple mechanisms inside and outside of the classroom. For example, students experienced validation in classes when faculty were supportive, respectful, "had high expectations of them, often provided feedback on their work, offered a structured and engaged learning environment that was fun, and consistently reached out to them" (Alcantar & Hernandez, 2020, p. 8). Additionally, students received interpersonal validation in class when faculty supported students considering dropping out or struggling academically. Outside of the classroom, faculty showed concern for students' well-being and interest in students' lives.

Lancaster and Lundberg (2019), in their quantitative study of effective teaching practices in community college classrooms, found students self-reported higher grades when they perceived their faculty as helpful, sympathetic, and available. Similarly, Deil-Amen (2011) found community college faculty were instrumental in integrating their students into the college environment. Students noted the institutional agents validated them and "provided feelings of college belonging, college identity, and college competence" (Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 73). Findings from these studies point to the need to invest in faculty professional development because students benefit from mentoring and supportive environments.

In a longitudinal qualitative study examining the experiences of five female faculty members at a community college, Lester (2008) explored how gender performance influenced faculty labor expectations as perceived by administrators and students. The narratives shared by

the participants revealed that female faculty members were frequently approached to serve on committees or attend social events, and students often expected them to "adhere to the traditional caretaker roles by listening to their problems and helping them succeed" (Lester, 2008, p. 297). These female faculty members continued to be assigned feminine-coded tasks, including mentorship and the display of emotional labor. Although the commendable emotional labor performed by community college faculty is noteworthy, it is crucial to avoid placing mentorship responsibilities solely on community college faculty, particularly faculty of color (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018).

Adjunct Faculty

Part-time (i.e., adjunct) faculty made up 70% of community college faculty nationwide as of 2014 (Cohen et al., 2014). Researchers have shown adjunct faculty face challenges in their work and employment status (Levin et al., 2006). Job insecurity, lack of resources, professional development, physical space, and decision-making power have impacted faculty work conditions (Kezar & Maxey, 2012; Ortiz et al., 2021). Still, the prevalence of adjunct faculty in community colleges has grown due to budgetary constraints. Giroux (2010) stated, "Overworked and politically underrepresented, an increasing number of higher education faculty are reduced to part time positions, constituting the new subaltern class of academic labor" (p. 191).

Studies on adjunct faculty in community colleges have focused on whether adjunct or full-time faculty are more efficient and whether they have similar rates of student success and retention. Hutto (2017) found adjunct faculty had higher retention rates than full-time faculty, and Rogers (2015) found no differences in the success rates of students taught by these two groups. In a study using data from the CCC system, Jaeger and Eagan (2009) examined the proportion of part-time faculty employment on students' associate degree completion rates.

Analyzing 178,985 students in 107 CCCs, Jaeger and Eagan found a 10% increase in a school's part-time employment was associated with a 1% decrease in students' associate degree completion rates. Yu et al. (2015) used National Center for Education Statistics data, specifically the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and The Beginning Postsecondary Students a Longitudinal Study, to study if the percentage of part-time faculty impacted students' likelihoods of completing a community college degree and found no association.

Some qualitative researchers have examined adjunct faculty's lived experiences and challenges. Ortiz et al. (2021) examined how adjunct faculty defined and perceived their work in community colleges. Through an analysis of interviews with eight adjunct faculty at a midwestern community college, the authors found adjunct faculty displayed strong support for students but they lacked institutional support. For example, faculty in the study described taking the time to get to know their students, but they did not have access to a private office space, which made advising difficult. Moreover, adjunct faculty lacked the power to make decisions on curriculum or even participate in shared governance, which directly impacted their work conditions. Ortiz et al. (2021) noted adjunct faculty displayed an "ethic of care for their students, their futures, betterment of the field, and the local community" (p. 27), despite their challenges.

Hamblin et al. (2020) studied adjunct community college faculty and found "adjunct faculty felt their labor outside of the classroom was invisible because they were only paid for the time they spent in the classroom" (p. 812). Adjunct faculty were only paid for time spent in the classroom; thus, tasks like grading, planning, and communicating with students were not compensated (Hamblin et al., 2020). Similar findings were reflected in Washington's (2011) study of 12 part-time faculty members in community colleges. In the study, part-time faculty indicated feeling less important than their full-time peers and lacking adequate pay, resources,

professional development, and acknowledgment. Kezar and Maxey (2012) also showed non-tenure-track faculty were unable to provide input into curriculum design and were often not provided the opportunity to attend meetings where their voices could have been considered. Echoing other studies of part-time faculty, Kezar and Maxey noted part-time faculty were not provided office space on campus to connect with students, plan courses, or connect with other faculty.

Jolley et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study with 20 current or former part-time contingent community college faculty members to understand their engagement and perceptions of evaluation and assessment practices. Participants reported feeling unnoticed, unrecognized, and "embedded within an institutional context [where they lacked] voice in the decision making process on campus" (Jolley et al., 2014, p. 225). Participants in Jolley et al.'s study also described being hired at the last minute due to necessity and haphazardly starting new classes. Kezar and Maxey (2012) warned "last minute scheduling and hiring of instructional faculty impedes preparation for teaching and diminishes the quality of instruction a faculty member is able to provide to students" (p. 2). This practice created instability in faculty's work and income. Additionally, in Jolley et al.'s study, adjunct faculty felt disconnected from the institution due partly to a lack of physical space on campus. Although there were inconsistencies in assessment practices at various community colleges, some adjunct faculty members indicated not being evaluated for their teaching, besides by student evaluations, which did not help them develop their skills and future full-time applications. Findings from the study displayed adjuncts were sidelined; the authors argued working conditions of part-time faculty needed to be integrated and made a main priority of the college.

Thirolf (2013) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study examining the experiences of three adjunct faculty members at a community college in the midwestern United States. At the outset, these faculty members expressed a strong love for their work and a deep passion for teaching community college students. However, as time progressed, their initial enthusiasm gradually diminished. One participant specifically highlighted the overwhelming workload they faced, stating that their work involved "too much work" (Thirolf, 2013, p. 180). The adjunct faculty members also expressed frustration due to being dismissed by their full-time peers and experiencing a sense of relative isolation in the academic community, which contributed to a decline in their overall enthusiasm and satisfaction with their teaching roles.

Other researchers who studied community college adjunct faculty have highlighted conflicting findings about faculty job satisfaction and preference for employment status. For example, using the 1992–1993 National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty and the Center for the Study of Community Colleges' community college faculty survey, Leslie and Gappa (2002) found part-time faculty were more satisfied than full-time faculty. They also concluded many part-time faculty were not actively seeking full-time roles. By contrast, Jacoby (2005) surveyed part-time faculty at a single institution in Washington state and found most participants were unsatisfied with working as part-time faculty and desired full-time positions. Kramer et al. (2014) surveyed part-time faculty in the Colorado Community College System in 2014 and found part-time faculty were generally satisfied but desired better pay; additionally, 49% of part-time faculty preferred full-time positions.

Ott and Dippold (2018) conducted a study of part-time faculty, drawing on a survey sample of 1,245 part-time faculty teaching at 10 public community colleges in the southwestern area of the United States. They sought to understand how part-time faculty's qualifications and

conditions of their current roles predicted their employment status preference. About 47% of respondents indicated they were interested in immediate full-time positions. Additionally, African American and Hispanic adjunct faculty had higher odds of preferring full-time positions than White adjunct faculty. Finally, adjuncts who reported their income from working part time was necessary were more likely to report a desire to become full time. Ott and Dippold's (2018) analyses provided a look at various faculty subgroups, which "may help college and university administrators more intentionally design policies and programs to better meet the needs of their increasingly diverse constituents" (p. 190).

Through a series of observations, interviews, and quantitative analysis of the 1993 and 1999 National Studies of Postsecondary Faculty, Levin et al. (2006) aimed to understand the experiences of part-time faculty. Initial interviews with community college administrators suggested full-time faculty were privileged compared to part-time faculty because full-time faculty had access to more professional development opportunities and better salaries. Levin et al. suggested similar opportunities were not given to part-time employees to conserve resources, though this practice may have decreased the quality of instruction at community colleges.

Although Levin et al. (2006) found differences between part-time and full-time faculty, they also found a bifurcation between part-time laborers at community colleges: the part-time vocational faculty and the part-time academic faculty. To understand the disparities in part-time faculty, Levin et al. disaggregated seven academic fields into three groups with similar characteristics regarding employment and opportunities inside and outside of the academy. The first group was composed of academic and transfer curriculum-based fields: (a) arts and humanities, (b) social and behavioral sciences, and (c) physical and biological sciences. The second group referred to the vocational or training programs: (a) computing and technology, (b)

professional programs, and (c) trades and services. The final group, low-status professional programs, shared similarities with academic and vocational groups, though jobs were low status and low paying.

Levin et al.'s (2006) findings suggested administrators perceived part-time vocational faculty as more valuable than part-tine academic faculty because of their highly specialized skills and their ties to the private sector. Part-time vocational faculty also did not rely on their teaching salary as their primary source of income; 65% had full-time jobs outside of the institution and 80% of the jobs were nonacademic. They also reported less alienation in academe and more satisfaction with their professional life outside of academia compared to academic faculty. Part-time vocational faculty earned more than their part-time academic counterparts; part-time academic faculty earned most of their income from academic jobs and earned significantly less than their part-time vocational counterparts. Part-time academic faculty self-identified primarily as academics and reported low overall satisfaction with their job. Interestingly, part-time academic faculty reported they were willing to pursue academic jobs again at higher rates than their part-time vocational counterparts; thus, academics were willing to face "dissatisfaction in pursuit of their aspirations" (Levin et al., 2006, p. 94). Overall, Levin et al. showed the working conditions of adjunct faculty need to be prioritized to support the goal of educating community college students.

Faculty of Color in Community Colleges

Community college administrators have dedicated more attention to faculty diversity in the 21st century compared to the years prior (Contreras, 2017; Hagedorn et al., 2007; Levin et al., 2013, 2014; Opp & Gosetti, 2002). Although the rate remains low, the proportion of faculty of color in community colleges has steadily increased (Cohen et al., 2014). Nevarez and Wood

(2010) noted the proportional representation of students of color in the community college population significantly increased between 1986 and 2006; in comparison, the proportional representation of faculty of color only slightly increased during the same time period. Despite the slight increase in their population, faculty of color remain underrepresented in community colleges and understudied in scholarship (Levin et al., 2014).

Faculty presence on college campuses is vital to successful student outcomes because they can provide validation and support beyond the classroom (Deil-Amen, 2011). Hagedorn et al. (2007) illustrated how instrumental community college faculty of color were to student success. They found a positive relationship between a critical mass of Latinx faculty and student success through higher grade point averages, enrollment in transfer courses, and college completion. Their study suggested having faculty of color resembling the student population positively impacted students because it provided them with role models and mentors "and [fostered] a sense of belonging and social integration among students" (Hagedorn et al., 2007, p. 89).

However, faculty of color remain underrepresented and relegated to temporary roles in community colleges (Cohen et al., 2014; Contreras, 2017; Fujii, 2014; Fujimoto, 2012; Lara, 2019; Levin et al., 2013; Opp & Gosetti, 2002; Ortiz et al., 2021). Contreras (2017) examined how faculty racial and ethnic representation in the CCC system changed over time, finding the Latinx and Black faculty populations grew in the lecturer and adjunct sectors and declined in tenure-track positions from 2000 to 2015. Most of the growth for faculty of color was in adjunct lines, which was an issue because tenured faculty roles are "critical to creating an infrastructure that [support] academic development, support and ultimately institutional success" (Contreras, 2017, p. 238). Diversifying faculty in community colleges is essential, especially for students of

color who benefit from mentoring and culturally relevant pedagogy (Contreras, 2017; Hagedorn et al., 2007).

The California Community College Collaborative (CCCC, 2013) at UC Riverside led an investigation to examine the proportions of faculty of color in CCCs and their pathways to their community college faculty roles. The researchers interviewed 36 faculty of color at four CCCs, which included both teaching faculty and counselors. Faculty of color reported feeling distanced from other faculty of color on campus, both figuratively and physically. However, faculty of color also noted feeling an "intimate connection with the students, many of whom share similar backgrounds. . .Thus, through students, faculty of color develop positive identities, ones that they negotiate in their college interactions" (CCCC, 2013, p. 13).

In a push toward understanding how faculty of color understand institutional culture, Levin et al. (2014) analyzed the interviews previously collected by the CCCC (2013). Participants indicated their definitions of being student centered differed from their White colleagues. For example, faculty of color reported being student centered as "personal" (Levin et al., 2014, p. 64), and their White peers viewed student centeredness as related to student learning outcomes. Moreover, faculty of color understood students' backgrounds, especially students with similar life histories and characteristics (e.g., grew up poor), which is why many of them continued to work in community colleges. These findings resembled the experiences of Latinx leaders in other studies (Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020) who described a mutual identity-based connection to community college students. Still, Levin et al. (2014) argued faculty of colors' "racial identity place both institutional and personal expectations on them for working with students of color" (p. 67). In addition to thinking they had different expectations placed on them, faculty of color noted having few other faculty of color on campus inhibited their capabilities to

build a community of racially diverse peers. This experience was heightened for faculty who were in primarily White departments and lacked "connection to other faculty across campus who share similar cultural identities and backgrounds" (Levin et al., 2014, p. 66).

In another analysis of the interviews collected by the CCCC (2013), Levin et al. (2013) used critical race theory (CRT) and social identity theory to examine the identities of 36 faculty of color at community colleges in California. The authors found that participants experienced living through a "double consciousness" where they "must negotiate their professional and social identity, [which] are often in conflict" (Levin et al., 2013, p. 320). Faculty of color in their study reported thinking they had to leave their racial and ethnic identities at the door and not discuss social issues for fear of repercussions. For example, a participant, Leticia, noted:

> [This campus] is welcoming and friendly [toward faculty] until you show your color, I think. I think until you show your true color, until you show who you are. For me, as a Latina, until my Latina-ness comes out, then they get uncomfortable with that. (Levin et al., 2013, p. 322)

Levin et al. (2013) argued community colleges are institutions "wherein rules, norms, values, and resultant behaviors are guided by the majority White faculty and administrative population" (p. 319), which contains faculty of color. Moreover, participants noted the need for diverse members on hiring search committees. However, their campuses lacked faculty of color to serve on those committees, which resulted in predominantly White hiring committees replicating the status quo. Faculty of color also noted the lack of diversity in their campuses' administration, which did not reflect the student population. The lack of diversity also created a White institutional space and culture that made it challenging for people of color to participate in

leadership roles such as deanships and chair positions. For leadership roles to change, campuses must hire more faculty of color.

Hiring Faculty of Color in Community Colleges

Scholars have agreed colleges need to hire faculty of color, particularly in tenure-track positions, to diversify community college administration and leadership positions (Contreras, 2017; Fujii, 2014; Hughes, 2015, Levin et al., 2013). However, several issues can arise in hiring faculty of color in community colleges. In Levin et al.'s (2013) study, faculty of color attributed their low representation to the lack of faculty of color serving on hiring committees. Hiring committees remained primarily White because there was a lack of people of color on the committees, which resulted in committees replicating the status quo.

In a separate study, Fujii (2014) conducted interviews with 12 faculty members at three southwestern community colleges to uncover how faculty considered racial and ethnic diversity in faculty search committees. Using CRT as a framework, Fujii found faculty who served in search committees were often unclear about the meaning of diversity. Participants from diverse campuses felt strongly about their institution's commitment and values. Moreover, faculty from diverse schools had a better understanding of the hiring committee's goals, which came from the committee chair. Thus, faculty responded to leadership's clear and consistent messaging regarding diversity initiatives. Still, faculty of color reported they were asked to serve on more searches compared to their White counterparts, which exemplified the need to hire more faculty of color.

In a case study of a community college that increased its proportion of full-time faculty of color from 4.3% to 23.3%, Hughes (2015) found the college purposefully recruited faculty of color in diverse geographical areas. Hiring committees received diversity training, and faculty of

color at the college were asked to sit in committees and network with candidates of color. Still, faculty of color discussed their concerns about having their colleagues view them as being hired for their representation and not their qualifications. Additionally, faculty of color indicated they were "stretched too thin because of multiple roles they [were] being asked to fill" (Hughes, 2015, p. 669), reflecting the experiences of faculty of color in Fujii's (2014) study, who revealed they were asked to serve on more searches than their White counterparts.

In an investigation of the experiences of faculty of color on hiring committees, Lara (2019), using a critical race lens, interviewed 10 full-time community college faculty of color. Participants indicated how colorblind ideology manifested in hiring search committees through the use of coded language to discuss race and "abstract notions of race within the concept of diversity" (Lara, 2019, p. 708). Committee members described a candidate's capacity to make decisions about hiring candidates of color. Lara (2019) noted:

> While all the participants encouraged open and frank discussions, they shared examples of how they enact personal agency (i.e., capacity) in and outside of the search process to advocate for hiring faculty of color, including joining a search committee, contributing to the development of interview questions, using an equity-framework to evaluate candidates, and mentoring people of color. (p. 711)

Taking a critical race lens exemplified how faculty of color who advocated hiring candidates of color faced challenges such as a dominant colorblind ideology. Faculty of color participants shared they would like more open discussions about race beyond textbook examples; however, given equal employment opportunity laws, there has been a level of uncertainty in what and how race could be discussed in hiring procedures.

Fujimoto (2012) argued faculty of color in community colleges are instrumental to community college students, stating:

> Because community colleges disproportionately serve students of color in higher education and because associate's degree attainment and transfer rates remain well below the rates suggested by student aspirations, the existence of faculty members of color as role models and the "critical mass" of faculty members of color in a department or college may be key factors in increasing the quality of education as well as student achievement. (p. 257)

Faculty of color in Fujimoto's study were deeply committed to serving the community college student population because they related to the students. However, faculty of color were often asked to conduct race-based labor beyond their expectations and expectations of White faculty. Moreover, faculty of color have continued to be relegated to adjunct positions, which lack institutional power in decision making.

Summary of Literature Review

In the literature review, I highlighted the challenges community colleges have faced as they strive to fulfill their various missions with limited resources. I also discussed the various roles of faculty in community colleges, emphasizing the need for adequate professional development and institutional support. Faculty of color who were tasked with race-related labor such as leading diversity initiatives and serving on hiring committees as token representatives (Baez, 2000b) face additional pressures in their roles. Researchers have understudied the experiences and perceptions of faculty, which are important to understand in the context of equity in the community college sector. The current study contributed a nuanced approach to studying the perspectives of faculty of color in community colleges.

Researchers have highlighted the emotional labor community college faculty are expected to perform, which can be exacerbated by a blind faith in the community college system. For example, Bemiller (2019) found "because participants saw the community college as a benevolent institution . . . it is possible for participants to justify almost all labor they performed" (p. 106). Gonzales and Ayers (2018) similarly argued community colleges are underfunded and faculty are expected to perform emotional labor. Austin (1990) further noted that "heavy teaching loads, an absence of upper-level students, and, often, the need to provide remedial assistance are the norm . . . Many faculty are motivated primarily by seeing students learn and the intrinsic rewards and satisfaction they derive from this work" (p. 67). In addition, "community college faculty workload often precludes long-term engagement with structured professional learning opportunities" (Brown & Bickerstaff, 2021, p. 129), which some colleges still consider an "add on" (Watts & Hammons, 2002, p. 8) rather than a necessary part of teaching. To address these challenges, scholars have emphasized the importance of incorporating mentoring programs and professional development to support faculty of color. Researchers need to investigate the perspectives of faculty of color working in community colleges amid a push in organizational discourses on equity. The current study aimed to shed light on the unique challenges faced by faculty of color and to support the creation of policies and practices that can help to close equity gaps and promote transformative change in community colleges.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed CRT and institutional logics to examine the experiences and perspectives of faculty of color at WCC. The institutional logics perspective provides a framework for analyzing the dominant ideologies and values that shape organizational practices and decision-making processes in the college context. Specifically, I examined the institutional

logics of neoliberalism, democracy, equity and how they manifested in the community college. Using CRT, I examined how race and racism shaped the experiences of faculty of color in higher education. I also explored the role of resistance among faculty of color in the community college context, how faculty of color navigated the institutional logics of neoliberalism and democracy, and how they used resistance as a means of asserting their agency and identities in the college community. By employing these frameworks of race and organizations, I provided a lens through which to examine the experiences and perspectives of faculty of color in the community college context. Despite WCC's success as a top transfer institution and its commitment to equity, I questioned how faculty of color viewed their work, roles, and agency in the college, and shed light on the challenges they faced in navigating the dominant institutional logics.

Institutional Logics

The concept of institutional logics developed in the field of new institutionalism, which is a framework for studying organizations in a sociological context (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). New institutionalism emphasizes the practices and behaviors employed by organizations to establish legitimacy and ensure their survival in an institutional field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), organizations prioritize the establishment of their legitimacy in their field, which often leads them to symbolically adopt institutionalized practices to gain acceptance. One mechanism for adopting such practices is organizational isomorphism, whereby organizations conform their structure and practices to become similar to others in their environment, adapting to prevailing norms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In essence, organizations compete for power and legitimacy, adopting policies that solidify their presence and resulting in the creation of homogeneously structured organizations.

Alford and Friedland (1985) argued that new institutional theorists had not adequately considered the role of the larger societal context in shaping the behavior of individuals and organizations. As such, Alford and Friedland introduced the concept of institutional logics, which refers to how institutions shape the values, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals and organizations. For example, in the United States, various institutions such as the state, democracy, religion, capitalism, and family carry specific meanings and values that influence the behavior of individuals and organization, and these institutional logics provide a framework for understanding and interpreting social interactions and practices (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Essentially, these institutional logics carry with them specific understandings and norms.

Thornton et al. (2012) further defined institutional logics as "socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices," that "provide meaning" (p. 2) to the lives of individuals and organizations. According to Thornton and Ocasio (2008), the "interests, identities, values, and assumptions of individuals and organizations are embedded within prevailing institutional logics" and behaviors are a "result of the interplay between individual agency and institutional structure" (p. 103). Thus, while individuals have some autonomy, their behavior is also influenced by the norms and expectations set by institutional logics. Jackall (1988) stated, "Institutions provide social actors with a highly contingent set of social norms" as such, the institutional logics approach emphasizes how institutions provide social actors with these norms. Squire (2016) noted in the institutional logics perspective, "actors within an organization are aware of cultural norms, values, and beliefs, even if subconsciously" (p. 108). Although individuals have agency, they are often compelled to conform to the logics that dictate the norms of the organization they belong to; thus, individuals may feel pressured to

align their behavior with the prevailing institutional logics, even if they personally disagree or hold different beliefs.

Regarding faculty of color in community colleges, although institutional logics shape labor expectations and norms, individuals may not necessarily agree with or fully adhere to the institutional logics that shape their labor expectations. As such, those who resist or reject these logics may find themselves organizing around alternative logics or against the prevailing ones (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018). For instance, individuals who oppose or challenge dominant institutional logics may form subgroups or movements to contest and change existing norms. Thornton and Ocasio (2008) noted, "While institutions constrain action, they also provide sources of agency and change" (p. 101).

Neoliberal Logic

The institutional logics perspective has been applied in various contexts, including higher education institutions. *Neoliberalism* is an institutional logic that can permeate higher education institutions and shape the labor expectations of faculty. Institutional logics identified in the context of community college faculty work include the institutional logics of family, democracy, religion, and the bureaucratic state (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018). Community colleges have shifted their missions to align with economic and workforce development, particularly through state policies (Ayers, 2015; Levin, 2007). Community colleges' main achievements are professional growth, work effort, teaching accomplishments, and commodity products, all while they compete for students (Levin & Aliyeva, 2015). Cox and Sallee (2018) noted, "A neoliberal agenda has driven the consistent decrease in government funding of operating costs, with a concomitant expectation that colleges will adopt entrepreneurial approaches to generating alternative revenue sources" (p. 58). The adoption of a neoliberal agenda results in "standardizing the curriculum,

supporting top-down management, and reducing all levels of education to job-training sites" (Giroux, 2010, p. 185). Moreover, community colleges have become more reliant on part-time faculty to increase their capacity to enroll students at a lower operating cost (Levin, 2007).

Bylsma (2015) outlined how neoliberalism manifests in higher education through surveillance and accountability measures, undermining the community, and redefining social justice. Surveillance occurs through increased managerialism, or a top-down structure in which workers have limited voice and decision-making power. Moreover, community colleges leaders have pushed for accountability measures, which manifests through the adoption of technological tools to track student outcomes (Aguilar-Smith & Gonzales, 2021). Higher education's mission is undermined by "the market emphasis on creating the best return on the investment of one's education, [which] prioritizes individual skills and competencies" (Bylsma, 2015, p. 10). The goal of higher education has shifted from developing critical thinking and creating an informed and educated society to having a market-based agenda. Finally, neoliberalism in higher education redefines social justice as "widening participation in higher education as an economic solution to the problem of social inequities, [which] has led to a stratification of schools" (Bylsma, 2015, p. 11) and the students they enroll, resulting in inequities along socioeconomic and racial lines.

Neoliberalism can be considered an institutional logic because it shapes how community college administrators organize their market orientations, purpose, and missions and shape the beliefs and conditions of workers (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018). Various scholars have examined how neoliberal logic manifests in community college faculty labor (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018; Levin & Aliyeva, 2015; Perry, 2018; Sonneveldt, 2021). Using neoliberalism as an analytical frame, Levin and Aliyeva (2015) examined faculty behaviors at three higher education institutions in California: a community college, a comprehensive college, and a research

university. The authors sought to uncover "whether faculty views and actions constitute neoliberal principles, and if so, to what extent" (Levin & Aliyeva, 2015, p. 538). Their findings suggested neoliberal initiatives did not overtly influence faculty behavior, but faculty conformed to the institution's orientation to market behaviors. Faculty were acutely aware of community colleges' workforce orientations and their faculty duties to prepare students for the workforce. Workforce preparation included the state's requirements for accreditation, which "require faculty to perform according to norms that are tied to efficiency and productivity (e.g., class sizes, outcomes measures)" (Levin & Aliyeva, 2015, p. 550). Moreover, because the main function of a community college is teaching, faculty "emphasize a 'personal touch' bringing their own backgrounds, experiences, and personal approaches for interactions with and the teaching of students" (Levin & Aliyeva, 2015, p. 550).

In addition to a market orientation that aligns faculty work expectations with skills and workforce development, the institutional logic of neoliberalism also encourages faculty to employ emotional labor. According to Gonzales and Ayers (2018), the institutional logic of neoliberalism "position faculty members not only as instructors, but as laborers expected to be more available, to stretch further, to give more, all in the name of fostering student success" (p. 471). They argued community colleges relied on faculty's emotional labor to "compensate for lacking infrastructure, resources, and historical inequities" (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018, p. 471). Researchers on Latinx leaders in community colleges have highlighted how emotional labor manifests in their labor experiences (Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020). However, researchers have not critically examined the expectation for community college faculty to work from a place of passion. Gonzales and Ayers (2018) argued this expectation "is just one more way that injustice, particularly labor injustice, has come to manifest in contemporary higher education" (p. 474).

Understanding these institutional logics can help provide insight into how faculty of color in community colleges perceive their work and values and how they respond to logics.

Democratic and Equity Logics

The democratic logic in community colleges is defined by community colleges' historical open-access missions and the notion that they are democracy's college (Cohen et al., 2014). Gonzales and Ayers (2018) argued faculty in community colleges abide by democratic logic, claiming "the community college is a central access point for thousands of historically underserved students within the U.S. higher education system, positioning them not only as instructors and advisors, but as mobilizers of access and opportunity" (p. 471).

Relatedly, the concept of equity has permeated higher education institutions and community colleges in particular. Drawing on the work of Bensimon, equity and equity-mindedness is conceptualized as a race-conscious approach that acknowledges the structural and systemic nature of racial inequities in higher education. According to Bensimon (2018), "equity and equity-mindedness accept that it is whiteness—not the achievement gap—that produces and sustains racial inequality in higher education…equity-mindedness requires explicit attention to structural inequality and institutionalized racism and demands system-changing responses" (p. 97).

An equity-minded framework goes beyond a generic notion of equality or fairness to specifically target and address racial disparities that exist within educational institutions and an acknowledgment of the systems that perpetuate it. Therefore, to enact equity in practice, faculty must acknowledge the pervasive inequities that contribute to inequitable outcomes and commit to challenging the status quo. To commit to equity, faculty may adopt a race consciousness and aim their efforts on empowering and attempting to address disparities for students of color,

challenging and reflecting on their practices, and challenging whiteness within their organizations (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

CRT

Considering the experiences of faculty of color in higher education organizations necessitates an understanding of race and its place in the U.S. educational system. This study integrated CRT as the framework to examine the influence of racism, and it employed counterstorytelling as a central method to highlight the lived experiences and perspectives of marginalized faculty.

CRT is based on the premise that race and racism are normal and permanent in U.S. society (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The land referred to as the United States was established by colonizers who displaced Indigenous people and enslaved Africans who were brought to the land as property to produce labor (Blackwell, 2017). The construction of race was based on phenotypic differences between people in power (i.e., White Europeans) and colonized people and became a marker of social distinction that White individuals used to oppress non-White people (Omi & Winant, 2014). Although race has no basis in nature, the categories have become a social fact; they have been given meaning, treated as a fixed identity, and are "real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928). Race and racism have shaped and presented themselves in social institutions including law, economy, and education (Bell, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

CRT emerged from critical legal studies in the mid-1980s when legal scholars of color noted their dissatisfaction with the lack of racial progress after the 1960s civil rights movement (Crenshaw et al., 1995). CRT provides a framework to acknowledge how the law systemically disenfranchises people of color and protects Whiteness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). For

example, Crenshaw et al. (1995) highlighted how laws were written through a colorblind perspective that treated all people as equal in the law without consideration of how oppression manifests for people of color. Although race has historically been the basis for social difference, individuals are often subordinated by multiple systems of oppression, not just one based on differences in racial identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Omi & Winant, 2014).

CRT has since been applied to different fields, such as education. It provides a lens to understand the experiences of students and people of color and how race and racism manifest in education systems (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT in education acknowledges racism is permanent and rejects the notion that schools are colorblind or race neutral. Moreover, CRT rejects the idea of meritocracy because people of color are systemically marginalized in education. Ladson-Billings (1998) stated how the concept of "interest convergence" explains how "Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation" (p. 12) and diversity initiatives in education. People of color hold many identities and must navigate multiple forms of oppression that intersect and manifest in varied ways. Finally, CRT emphasizes the voices of people of color, which sheds light on their experiences with oppression through counterstories (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CRT challenges "traditional claims of the educational system and its institutions to objectivity, meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity" (Solórzano, 1998, p. 122). One tenet that drove the current study was the emphasis on experiential knowledge and counterstorytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Viewing the narratives of faculty of color through a critical race lens allows for an explanation of what forms equity workers' perspectives and an examination of peoples' stories that are often not heard or tapped into regularly. Moreover, CRT provides scholars a lens to examine the intersection of

race and power in maintaining White supremacy and propose radical solutions to these issues (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Resistance Theory

Because this study sought to explore how faculty of color in WCC negotiated values, roles, and identities and responded to institutional logics in the neoliberal context, it was crucial to include an aspect of resistance and agency in the analysis (Baez, 2000a, 2000b; Giroux, 1983; Kezar, 2011). Giroux (1983) critically analyzed sociological theories of education and offered a new perspective. Giroux outlined three theories of reproduction (i.e., the economic–reproductive model, the cultural–reproductive model, and the hegemonic–state model), arguing schools are systems that perpetuate social inequalities and ruling-class domination over lower social classes. The economic–reproductive model suggests schools indoctrinate students with skills valuable to the capitalist economy and reproduce the social division of labor. For example, students are taught math and writing, and they are also taught a "hidden curriculum" (Giroux, 1983, p. 263), which are rules of behavior, such as when to speak, what to say, and where to congregate; these practices train students to be subservient workers for the benefit of the economy.

Cultural–reproductive theories suggest schools reproduce class inequalities by asserting the dominant-class culture as natural and necessary to achieve upward mobility. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argued schools legitimize dominant forms of knowledge such as language, styles, and ways of thinking that are valued by the ruling class, which is referred to as cultural capital. People with cultural capital have an advantage over people without it because society places value on dominant class forms of capital, creating educational inequality. Hegemonic state theorists have argued the state purposefully represses subordinate groups by legitimizing institutions and ideologies to preserve a capitalist economy. For example, the state asserts power

over legitimizing certain forms of knowledge, such as high-status knowledge (e.g., hard sciences) over low-status knowledge (e.g., humanities). Government funding for research heavily favors high-status knowledge. Giroux (1983) argued theories of reproduction fail to acknowledge the power of human agency and resistance even though they provide some applicable concepts when studying systems of education. In this view, theories of reproduction are too deterministic and assume the working class is homogeneous and submissive.

Giroux (1983) also argued resistance theory offers a more nuanced perspective on the role of working-class students in education. Rather than being passive recipients of dominant ideologies, working-class students are capable of recognizing power dynamics and inequalities and employing oppositional practices to actively reject dominant ideologies. However, Giroux noted resistance theories have their own limitations, such as a lack of attention to historical developments of resistance and the failure to acknowledge the intersectionality of race and gender. Giroux's (1983) "new theory of resistance and schooling" (p. 257) emphasizes the analysis of the hidden logic of oppositional behaviors and the various forms of culture nondominant groups employ as forms of resistance. This approach acknowledges actors' agencies and the possibilities for resistance and recognizes the complexities and nuances of resistance as a concept.

Kezar (2011) provided an account of the ways faculty and staff at various higher education institutions resist institutionalized oppression through grassroots leadership initiatives to outline how resistance, agency, and power take place. Kezar found oppression, silencing, controlling, inertia, and microaggressions were the five main power dynamics that hinder grassroots action in higher education institutions. In community colleges, Kezar found groups of faculty perpetuate power dynamics. Although Kezar's analysis added to a scant pool of literature

on institutional oppression, it fell short in accounting for the impact of power structures on marginalized communities, specifically those based on race, ethnicity, and gender. A study professing the importance of analyzing power relationships is ineffective when it ignores how different communities experience power. Despite this limitation, Kezar's (2011) key takeaway was "power dynamics are often an important barometer to show that change is occurring at a deep enough level since the status quo fears alteration to current practices" (p. 473). Researchers can influence effective institutional change by framing future scholarship in terms of power relations, especially when accounting for the experiences of marginalized communities.

The current study also relied on Baez's (2000a, 2000b) work on race, institutionalism, and resistance of faculty of color in higher education. Baez (2000a) argued there is both an individual and institutional nature of power; thus, individuals cannot simply use their agency and reject racial domination. The institutional nature of power functions through "surveillance, normalization, and control;" however, individuals also have "an agency that resists and subverts these structures" (Baez, 2000a, p. 338). Specifically, Baez (2000a) argued people of color, especially educators, can resist and subvert oppressive structures and knowledge. For example, Baez (2000a) stated:

> Social activism might begin locally – in classes, in departments, in institutions, in communities. Such activism will not guarantee the elimination of power because power neither belongs to anyone nor is found in any one place – it is everywhere. But the legitimacy of particular mechanisms can be contested and redirected in less hegemonic way. (p. 343)

Thus, faculty can resist and subvert racist social structures in their local environments by committing to social justice (Baez, 2000a). Regarding faculty of color, Baez (2000b) further

noted educators should not think of service as a negative because faculty of color use it to challenge and redefine their work as scholars and activists. Instead of loosening demands for service, "an inclusive strategy might be to highlight how institutional change occurs 'from the ground up'" (Baez, 2000b, p. 388).

Summary of Theoretical Framework

I used CRT and organizational theories to analyze the experiences of faculty of color at a community college. I aimed to understand how institutional logics shaped the experiences of faculty of color and how they navigated community college institutions in the context of power, oppression, resistance, and social justice. According to Squire (2016), "Analyzing organizations successfully requires attending to multiple power structures placing pressure on organizational actors" (p. 114). Faculty employ various logics that depend on "how power is exerted on them" (Squire, 2016, p. 114) and how they can use their power. I also employed a critical race framework, which focused on the experiences of people of color to understand how they navigated institutions. Finally, I highlighted the role of faculty's agency and resistance in higher education.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented an overview of the origins, objectives, and evolving roles of community colleges. I outlined the historical shifts, both sociopolitical and economic, that led community colleges to embrace neoliberal agendas. Specifically, I provided context to the CCC college system alongside a review of faculty labor. Additionally, this chapter detailed the theoretical framework that guided this study. I explained how institutional logics, CRT, and a theory of resistance provided a lens by which I analyzed the study's findings. The subsequent

chapters focus on the research methodologies employed in this study, the study's findings, and the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this study, I explored the experiences of faculty of color in community colleges, focusing on how they navigated the logics of equity and democracy in the context of neoliberalism. Specifically, I uncovered the perceptions of faculty of color and the institutional logics that shaped their work context, and their strategies for resistance or adherence to these logics. In this chapter, I provide a detailed overview of the methodology, study design, data collection, data analysis, positionality, triangulation, confidentiality, and limitations.

Narrative Inquiry and Counterstorytelling

I employed a qualitative research design to examine how community college faculty of color made sense of and responded to institutional logics. Specifically, I used narrative interviews to analyze participant stories and how they came to "understand their own story through retelling and interpreting their experiences" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 93). Additionally, I analyzed institutional documents, which provided insight into the institutional context. Narrative inquiry and content analyses were particularly useful in identifying institutional logics and aided in triangulating the data (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Narratives in this study represented critical counterstories that highlighted instances of oppression and marginalization in the community college context. Such counterstories challenged dominant logics and narratives displayed through public institutional documents. In line with a critical race methodological approach, these critical counterstories provided another lens by which I examined faculty of color's labor in a neoliberal context.

Study Design

This study drew from an analysis of (a) semistructured interviews with 14 self-identified faculty of color and (b) institutional documents from Willow Community College (WCC).

Guided by a narrative inquiry, I uncovered how faculty of color described their labor expectations, the institutional logics that guided their work, and their response to such logics. Public institutional documents provided the context of faculty's labor at WCC. Institutional logics, critical race theory (CRT), and resistance theory provided the lens by which I analyzed and understood how neoliberal and democratic logics manifested and how faculty of color used their agency to enact equity in the community college. I describe the research questions, study site, and sampling measures in the following sections.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do community college faculty of color describe their labor expectations and perceptions of their roles as faculty of color at Willow Community College?
2. How do faculty of color understand and explain the concept of equity?
    a. How do they describe enacting equity in their roles?
3. What challenges do faculty of color face enacting equity in their roles?
    a. How do faculty of color respond to such challenges?

Study Site and Description

I selected WCC as the study site for an in-depth analysis of the experiences of faculty of color. WCC is located in Southern California and has served racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse populations for decades. Like most California Community Colleges (CCCs), WCC offers a wide array of programs and degrees, including associate's degrees in the arts and sciences, associate's degrees for transfer, career and technical education degrees, certificates of achievement in specialized areas, and occupational skills certificates intended to help people gain the skills necessary for a specific occupation. WCC provides a look into a relatively successful

community college because it boasts a higher than average transfer rate to the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems, and maintains a high transfer rate to local private colleges.

From Fall 2019 to Fall 2022, the WCC student population decreased from 30,000 to 24,000, which could be explained by system-wide declines in student enrollment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the study in Fall 2022, WCC enrolled about 24,000 students, 48% of which were Hispanic/Latino, 24% were Asian, 15% were White, 4% were Black/African American, 4% were multiracial, 3% were Filipino, 1% were Pacific Islander, and 1% were American Indian/Alaskan Native. WCC was designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution due to the high Hispanic/Latino student enrollment. Degree completion and transfer rates remained relatively high overall at WCC. However, disaggregated institutional data showed most marginalized WCC student populations (e.g., Black/African American, Latinx) fared worse in college-level course completion and transfer. Because the student equity gaps have stayed consistent, WCC administrators developed institutional plans and reforms aimed at reducing the gaps.

According to data published by the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO, n.d.), in Fall 2022, tenured/tenure-track faculty made up 26% of the college's workforce, while temporary faculty comprised 44% of the total workforce. Women constituted the majority of all faculty, comprising 59% of tenure-track and 57% of temporary faculty. In Fall 2022, the tenured/tenure-track faculty consisted of 7% African American/Black, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 8% Asian, 21% Hispanic, 4% multiple ethnicity, 4% Pacific Islander, and 51% White non-Hispanic faculty. The temporary faculty population consisted of 5% African American/Black, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 12% Asian, 25% Hispanic, 2% multiple

ethnicity, 2% Pacific Islander, and 50% White non-Hispanic faculty. Because WCC's faculty demographics have not reflected the diversity of the student body, the college has communicated its commitment to improving representation in its workforce. This institutional commitment to hiring more people of color was another reason I selected this institution for the study site.

WCC's mission and values state the institution is devoted to improving student equity by committing to antiracism, social justice, and culturally responsive teaching. The organization committed to addressing equity gaps, particularly for their Latinx and Black student populations. In addition, WCC established programs and policies to restructure their informed enrollment and counseling practices in line with statewide recommendations. Yet, little was known about how faculty of color viewed these policy changes and how they shaped faculty labor (Levin et al., 2015). Through this study, I sought to understand what equity meant for the workers involved in achieving and upholding institutional goals and values.

Sampling and Participant Recruitment

I recruited participants for this study through a purposeful sampling technique "to discover, understand, and gain insight [from] a sample from which most can be learned" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). I conducted the study at WCC, and recruited participants through a liaison who shared the study recruitment flier with employee affinity group presidents and individuals who might have been willing to participate. The criteria for participation included identifying as a person of color, being actively employed as a faculty member at WCC, and being committed to equity. I conducted two rounds of recruitment: one in the Fall 2021 semester and one in the Spring 2022 semester.

Interested participants were required to send me an email. I responded and provided a study information sheet detailing the data collection process, confidentiality, payment, and

institutional review board approval. I asked participants to provide consent by completing a background questionnaire that collected information about their demographic information, education history, and labor history in community colleges and WCC. The questionnaire also asked questions about their work and the most challenging aspect of their job to provide some background information. Then, I scheduled participants for the first interview using a scheduling website. It is important to note the sample of participants represented a unique and essential faction of the overall workforce at the college, considering faculty of color were underrepresented. As an incentive for participation, part-time employee participants received a $250 gift card and full-time employees received a $100 gift card.

In this study, 14 faculty members who self-identified as people of color participated, including 10 women and four men. The sample included two individuals who identified as Asian Indian, one as Black, two as Korean/Korean American, one as multiracial, and eight as Latinx—including those who identified as Ecuadorian/Latinx, Chicano, Hispanic, and Mexican American. Of these faculty members, 11 considered themselves to be first-generation college students, and five attended community college at some point during their higher education careers.

At the time of the first interviews, nine participants were adjunct faculty. Half of the participants were instructional faculty, and the other half worked in various noninstructional roles at the college. One faculty member held a bachelor's degree, nine held master's degrees, and four held PhDs. The participants had worked at WCC for varying lengths of time, with four having held their positions for 1–3 years, another four having worked at the college for 4–8 years, and six having worked at WCC for over 15 years. To protect the confidentiality of the study participants, specific details regarding their demographic characteristics and individual responses are not provided. However, the sample of faculty members who participated in the

study were diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, educational background, and length of employment at the college.

Data Collection

I used narrative interviews to capture the experiences, labor expectations, and perspectives of faculty of color at WCC. This study also relied on written organizational documents to understand the organizational context in which faculty of color worked. The different types of data provided a comprehensive and rich understanding of the dominant logics that were present in the organization and how faculty of color responded to such logics. In this section, I describe the data collection process and the utility of the methods.

Background Survey

I asked participants to complete an online questionnaire where they provided consent to participate and background information, which I used to assess their eligibility prior to participating in the interviews (see Appendix A). The survey consisted of general demographic questions (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, occupation) and information about their education (e.g., higher education history, reasons for working at the CCC and at WCC). It also asked participants to share their perspectives on the challenges and concerns facing WCC. The background survey provided a better understanding of participants' demographics, education histories, work history, and thoughts about their work at WCC. The survey was useful in providing context for the study because "context is crucial" (Seidman, 2013, p. 19) in qualitative research. The survey allowed me to build a deeper understanding of the participants and the context in which they worked.

In-Depth Interviews

I employed a qualitative approach using narrative interviews to understand the experiences, labor expectations, and perspectives of 14 faculty of color at WCC. Because

interviews are subjective, I attempted to get as close to an understanding of the phenomena from the participant's point of view through the interview process (Seidman, 2013). The interviews followed a semistructured protocol with open-ended questions lasting approximately 1 hour each. I followed Seidman's (2013) three-interview series. The first interview (see Appendix B) included a focused life history, which asked participants to share their educational and career trajectories and describe their first experiences with race and racism. In this interview, participants shared why they chose to work at WCC and the nature of their work based on distinctions such as instructional, noninstructional, adjunct, or full-time status. Moreover, I asked participants to discuss how they related to students. This interview served to primarily build rapport, introduce them to the study, and gain trust. I discussed confidentiality and why I undertook this study, often sharing my identity. I also asked participants to provide additional details about responses to the background survey; for example, I followed up on questions like their most significant concern for the college and themselves. Some adjunct faculty responded about their concern to gain full-time employment and others discussed their challenges in advocating for equity.

In the second interview (see Appendix C), I followed up on the first interview and focused on participants' labor expectations at WCC. This interview allowed me to delve deeper into participants' perspectives on equity, leadership, hiring, and professional development for faculty of color. The main objective of this second interview was to understand the organizational dynamics from the participant's point of view. Moreover, this interview encouraged participants to reflect on the meaning they ascribed to their experiences. For example, I asked, "What does equity mean to you in your work?" and how they employ equity in their work. Such questions tended to elicit examples of practices they witnessed or integrated in

their work and further encouraged participants to ascribe meaning to their experiences (Seidman, 2013).

In the third and final interview (see Appendix D), which I conducted toward the end of the academic year, I asked participants to reflect on their experiences and provide updates because many were interviewed several months after the second interview. Because I conducted the interviews with faculty members who had different work responsibilities and histories, the interviews followed a semistructured and general protocol with open-ended questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Olson, 2016). Such a structure provided flexibility and allowed me to explore participants' responses without being tied to a strict protocol. I conducted all interviews online via Zoom and audio recorded them for transcription using Rev, a transcription service.

Institutional Documents

I used organizational documents such as meeting minutes from board meetings, organizational charts, student equity plans, equal employment opportunity plans, and written statements on the school's website to understand the context of WCC as an organization and workplace for faculty of color. These written sources of data provided insight into behind-the-scenes workings of the college. Organizational documents can "serve as substitutes of records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly" (Stake, 1995, p. 68). Triangulating these documents with participants' narratives helped create a complete and nuanced understanding of the organizational context and experiences of people working in it. By including documents as data, the study gained valuable richness and depth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Analysis

For this study, I conducted a thematic analysis of narrative interview data and institutional documents. Thematic analysis is a tool for analyzing and interpreting qualitative

data; specifically, thematic analysis provides a guide to organize and interpret qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Although the process of analyzing qualitative data is iterative and nonlinear (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), thematic analysis involves several phases, which include familiarization with the data; coding; theme generation, development, and refinement; and writing the results (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Because a researcher is the primary instrument of gathering and analyzing data in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I next outline the multistep process I used to manage and analyze the data systemically.

Analytic Memos

I began the data analysis process, which included several phases, after I conducted the initial interview. First, I reviewed the participants' background surveys and prepared follow-up questions based on their responses to prepare for the initial interview. After completing the initial interview, I created an analytic memo that noted participants' histories, unique findings, and questions to follow up on. These analytic memos served two purposes. First, they allowed me to detail the most critical aspects participants discussed and begin identifying relevant concepts and possible codes. Second, the analytic memos guided my reflection on the developing storylines, which I continuously built upon throughout the data transcription and analysis process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To keep track of the evolving analysis, I maintained a research journal to reflect on my developing insights and "subjectivities, emotions, hunches, questions that arise" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 150). The research journal provided a method of reflexivity and accountability to the study and served as a place where I tracked my evolving thinking and decision making. The journaling process allowed me to reflect on the insights I gained through the data analysis process and connect insights to literature and theory.

Coding and Categorizing

In addition to analytic memos and journals, the process of analyzing interviews involved coding data and categorizing themes. Thus, once I reviewed transcripts, I gave participants time to review them. I accepted the edits, chose pseudonyms for the remaining participants, and uploaded files to Dedoose qualitative data analysis software (https://www.dedoose.com/). Next, I added descriptor data linked to participants' transcripts to analyze by descriptor to identify the salient findings by specific faculty groups.

After all audio files were transcribed, cleaned, deidentified, and reviewed by participants, I began an inductive analysis of the data. Inductive analysis requires reading, rereading, and breaking down large text chunks into smaller units; this process is called coding (Bhattacharya, 2017). Coding transcripts involves identifying information in line with theoretical frameworks and research questions, then labeling it with a code. A code is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and or evocative attributes for a portion of language based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4), which are further interpreted to uncover patterns or contradictions across the dataset.

Coding is a cyclical act involving multiple coding rounds (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, I began by inductively coding a few transcripts to get an idea of what was salient by using in vivo codes that captured the meaning in participants' verbatim language. I created a codebook from this initial coding round and added code definitions and examples of code applications. I also conducted deductive rounds of coding, based on existing theory and literature that denoted essential words, phrases, or other data that helped answer the research questions. I continuously refined existing codes and added new ones throughout the data analysis process. Future cycles of "coding further manages, filters, highlights, and focuses the salient features of the qualitative

data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9). In subsequent rounds of coding, I used emotion codes, which helped me understand how faculty felt about their experiences. I also coded for values to uncover how faculty expressed their values and the university's values. Finally, I used versus codes to "identify in dichotomous or binary terms the individuals, groups, social systems, organizations, phenomena, processes, concepts, etc. in direct conflict with each other" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 137). By using versus codes, I sought to recognize the competing ideologies faculty faced (e.g., in conflict with administrators, full-time versus part-time faculty) in dichotomous concepts. The use of many codes in the data analysis allowed me to make sense of and understand how faculty of color made sense of institutional logics.

Thematic Analysis

After the initial and subsequent rounds of coding, I organized codes across participants' transcripts into categories of analytical units based on emerging findings (Bhattacharya, 2017). I used these categories to identify patterns or contradictions in the data across participants' narratives and institutional documents. Through the organization of categories, I identified themes to help explain and answer the research questions. I organized themes by shared meaning instead of by topic (Braun & Clarke, 2022). For instance, one of the themes main themes I encountered was equity for whom at whose expense. In this larger theme, I identified a subtheme on the dismissed attempts to engage in equity. In this subtheme, I gathered stories in which faculty described myriad ways their labor and attempts to do equity were dismissed by administrators or fellow colleagues.

Positionality

Bhattacharya (2017) wrote, "How well a qualitative researcher can achieve a depth of understanding is contingent on the relationship the researcher makes with the participants, the quality of data collection, and the researcher's analytical skills, informed by his or her positionality" (p. 36). As a researcher and the primary data analysis tool, it was important to acknowledge my subjectivities, assumptions, beliefs, and values that impacted my interpretation of the data. I approached this research as Mexican American, Latina, daughter of immigrants, and a first-generation college student from a working-class household. My experience with community college has shaped my belief in its ability to provide opportunities for marginalized students to pursue higher education. Without community college, I would not have earned a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and I would not be on my way to earning a doctorate.

I arrived at this research topic as a PhD student when I reflected on my future after graduation and where I saw myself making a change in higher education. I was raised in a low-income household, where my family and I labored in the service industry. Witnessing and living through challenging and exploitative labor conditions led me to question how my education could help me secure a position where I would be listened to as an expert, compensated fairly, and have a work–life balance that I had never experienced. I wondered about other people of color who were educated and passionate about social justice. I wondered: What do they know, what do they need, and what are their experiences? Where do I see myself fitting in? Through this research, I sought to explore these questions and gain a better understanding of how workers of color navigate their careers and find success in their work in community colleges.

I was careful to approach this study with openness and awareness that faculty of color may hold a range of perspectives and motivations for working in a community college. I sought

to explore these varied perspectives without making assumptions based on participants' identities. Through the research process, I continuously noted my assumptions and how participants' stories related to or diverged from existing research. I also noted instances in which certain narratives made me feel a sense of injustice, anger, and sometimes sadness. Although I admit to sometimes feeling pessimistic about social justice, participants' narratives also encouraged me not to be overly deterministic and pessimistic about resistance and radical change, which was a challenge and a goal of this study.

Toward the end stages of this dissertation, I became employed as a research analyst at a community college. The experience of working in an institution, particularly in a department primarily focused on analyzing and tracking student outcomes with intentions to design programs and initiatives addressing inequities, was unsettling. As I wrote about the pervasive emphasis on student outcomes, I pondered if and to what extent my role further exacerbated the issue. It became evident that I, too, was dealing with contradictions in my role. Nevertheless, I understood the context of community colleges better than I did when I began this study. My experience in this professional role allowed me to further contextualize the realities of faculty and staff working in community colleges.

Triangulation and Transferability

Interpretation is a crucial, yet complex aspect of qualitative research. Stake (1995) acknowledged dealing with "complex phenomena and issues for which no consensus can be found as to what really exists—yet we have ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding" (pp. 108–109). I took various measures to embed myself in the data collection and analysis processes to ensure the trustworthiness of my analysis and conclusions and to minimize misrepresentation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013). I engaged in

various modes of accountability with the research participants, the data, and peers to challenge my assumptions and interpretations. Analyzing multiple data sources from interviews and documents provided a degree of triangulation in which I could cross reference narratives with those in written documents.

Additionally, after I transcribed, cleaned, and deidentified transcripts, I shared the interview transcripts with participants and sought revisions. Participants were allowed to edit and delete any information and choose their pseudonyms. I provided brief notes on my interpretations of participants' data and provided opportunities for participants to clarify their responses. Such member checks confirmed participants interpreted my assertions well (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I actively engaged in reflexive practices with colleagues and committee members, in which I discussed and debriefed my findings through the research process. I sought the expertise of higher education and community college scholars to provide feedback on the emergent results. I provided an audit trail of my methods for data collection, analysis, and representation and thick descriptions for the reader to "determine the extent to which their situations match the researcher context, and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 259).

Confidentiality and Consent

When conducting research with a new community, it is important to establish trust and transparency with the participants. Part of establishing trust in this study included answering the reason for my study, how I would use information, what kind of information I would collect, and how I would disseminate the information (Bhattacharya, 2017). Because I was not a member of the WCC community, I offered my positionality to participants and explained how I came to the work. I answered participants' questions regarding confidentiality thoroughly. Although there is

always a risk of readers being able to identify the institution or participants, I minimized this risk to the best of my ability.

I took several measures to maintain participants' confidentiality during the research process. I conducted interviews online via Zoom in a private room to prevent others from hearing the conversation. I also instructed participants to ensure they were in private settings during the interviews. When reporting on the findings, I referred to participants according to their general job titles, such as instructional faculty, noninstructional faculty, full-time faculty, or adjunct professor, rather than their specific work titles. Additionally, I assigned participants a pseudonym, with half of them choosing the pseudonym themselves. I redacted all other personal identifiers from interview transcripts and maintained a secure link from the participants' identity to their pseudonym.

As previously discussed, I sent participants their transcripts. Although not all participants provided edits in which they redacted details about their work titles, a few asked me not to associate stories with their pseudonyms. As such, details about participants' identities may be mixed and matched, and several narratives do not contain certain details to maintain participants' confidentiality.

Limitations

Qualitative data explain subjective and temporal phenomena with meanings that change over time (Bhattacharya, 2009; Seidman, 2013). In this study, I explored the experiences of faculty of color in the community college context, specifically during the COVID-19 global pandemic as schools returned to in-person teaching. The data cannot be separated from the context. Although I did not seek this study to be generalizable to all faculty of color at all

community college institutions, it did provide a starting point to unpack how some faculty of color make sense of their roles and values in the community college context.

I recognize faculty of color differ in numerous ways, including their racial and ethnic identities, phenotypical appearance, language abilities and accents, abilities, gender, socioeconomic status, and immigration histories. I do not suggest all faculty of color share the same experiences. Through this study, I examined how identities and values intersected with power and how experiences manifested in participants' lives. This study included full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty and part-time untenured faculty, and I aimed to represent them all in nuanced ways.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the qualitative data collection and analysis processes I employed for the study. I presented an overview of the study site, sample, and the methods I used to gain access to the participants. I also described how I recruited 14 faculty of color working at WCC and collected interview data at various points throughout the 2021–2022 academic year. Although I briefly touched upon the study sample, I kept specific descriptors ambiguous to ensure participant confidentiality. I provided insight into the steps I took to collect data and the process of thematically analyzing narrative interviews and institutional documents. Additionally, this section detailed my positionality as a scholar of community colleges and my current role as a staff member at a community college. I concluded this chapter with an acknowledgment of the study's limitations. The subsequent chapter delves into the study's primary findings and emergent themes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I provide an analysis of the data collected for this research study and answer the following research questions:

1. How do community college faculty of color describe their labor expectations and perceptions of their roles as faculty of color at Willow Community College?
2. How do faculty of color understand and explain the concept of equity?
    a. How do they describe enacting equity in their roles?
3. What challenges do faculty of color face enacting equity in their roles?
    a. How do faculty of color respond to such challenges?

I examined the narratives of faculty of color using the frameworks of institutional logics, critical race theory (CRT), and resistance to gain insights into their experiences of labor expectations and the impact of the neoliberal context and equity efforts on those expectations. This chapter presents the key themes identified in participants' narratives. The first section of this chapter addresses the first research question, which explores the participants' identities, labor expectations, and perceptions as faculty of color. The second research question delves into the participants' understanding and application of equity in their roles, and their views on institutional equity initiatives. Lastly, the third research question focuses on the challenges participants experienced enacting equity in their roles as faculty of color and examines their responses to such challenges.

"Serving This Population is a Life Mission" - Labor Expectations and Roles as Faculty of Color

The faculty members in this study shared the individual paths that led them to work at Willow Community College (WCC) and their perspectives as faculty of color. The interviews

revealed diverse educational and career trajectories that brought them to the community college setting. Some faculty members had personal experiences attending community college during their undergraduate years and others identified as first-generation college students or immigrants and children of immigrants. These experiences contributed to their deep understanding of the communities served by WCC and fostered connections with the student population they served.

Participants expressed their motivation to pursue careers in the community college as a means of giving back to their communities. Moreover, they described how their identities as people of color were shaped and strengthened through interactions with students and their roles as faculty of color. They recognized the importance of their racial and ethnic identities in shaping their perceptions of their roles in the college community. These findings highlight the unique experiences and perspectives of faculty of color. This section addresses two themes that helped answer the first research question: (a) being faculty of color meant that faculty related to students on various levels, which encouraged faculty to pursue careers in the system, and provide them a deep understanding of the unique characteristics of the student population; and (b) faculty perceived their roles as being in line with the open-access and democratic mission of community colleges, by providing opportunities and services to students.

Being Faculty of Color: Relating to Students

Faculty of color related their educational experiences and racial and ethnic identities to the identities of their students. Valeria, an adjunct noninstructional faculty member, was employed at WCC in addition to two other colleges in California. She joined WCC as an intern during her master's program five years prior. When I asked about her background and path to this profession, Valeria revealed her decision to become a community college counselor was influenced by a transformative experience with a college counselor during her undergraduate

years. Valeria expressed her motivation to make a positive impact on students' lives was similar to the impact she received from her college counselor. She shared:

> I was what's called a reverse transfer student. So I started at a CSU [a California State University campus] then transitioned to community college where I spent about 7 years jumping back and forth between majors, classes. To be honest, I was just picking up my financial aid package and just bouncing. And then eventually, I got myself together. And I was at [community] college where I met with a pretty cool counselor who didn't judge me by my academic records. And so, oftentimes, when you see students who have like Fs, Ws . . . not just one or two, but multiple years of it, sometimes counselors . . . often tell me like, "Oh, you're a joke," or like, "Do you even want to be here?" So, that's part of the reason why I selected to be a community college counselor, was because of my interaction with a counselor who motivated me to do this work.

Valeria's educational journey in the California higher education system was nonlinear, and her encounter with a counselor who motivated her academic pursuits inspired her to follow a similar career path. In a similar vein, Luz, an adjunct noninstructional faculty member with over three years of service at WCC, described her experience of migrating to California from another country just a decade prior. She enrolled in classes at a local community college, where she had a positive interaction with student services staff. This encounter sparked Luz's interest in pursuing a counseling career because she recognized the impact that supportive professionals in the college setting could have on students. Luz recalled:

> I started to talk to this counselor [where] I [was] working as a student worker, and I still remember the day that I walked into her office, I was like, "I want to do what you do." And they told me how they became a counselor, the different paths that I can take to do that, and since that day, here I am holding my master's degree in counseling . . . giving back to the community college and helping the students the way I was helped as a community college student.

Luz and Valeria's educational experiences and career interests were also reflected in Diego's experience. Diego, who had been working at WCC for over 20 years, mentioned he was involved with Extended Opportunities Programs and Services as an undergraduate student. Being a former community college student himself, he could relate to the students that Extended Opportunities Programs and Services served. This experience inspired him to pursue a career in counseling in

the community college system, where he could make a positive impact on the lives of students who may have faced similar challenges. He explained, “The reason why I chose community college was to specifically work with Latino students. Latino, Latina, Chicano, Chicana students . . . It was totally my dream career.”

Participants who attended community college as students revealed its impact on their education and a desire to serve the student population that traditionally enrolls in community college, particularly communities of color, low socioeconomic status students, and students underserved in public education. Tomas, an instructional faculty member with over 15 years of experience at WCC, had a deep-rooted connection with the institution that extended beyond his role as a faculty member. He first became acquainted with WCC as a student, attending the college before transferring and eventually earning a doctoral degree. Tomas reflected on his time as a student at WCC, noting:

> My K–12 experiences were so bad that I did not believe that I was capable of going on to be any kind of a scholar. And then I decided, well, let me give it another shot. And WCC helped me turn that all around to get grounded.

Tomas described a desire to return to the community college system as a professor because of his love for teaching. Throughout his PhD program, Tomas contemplated pursuing research at a university level, but decided against it, sharing, “The reason that I went into community colleges is because I had my own experience of coming out of community college and so I was like, ‘I want to help kids that were trying to get going like me.’”

Through their educational experiences and professional roles as faculty, participants in this study displayed a deep knowledge of the students served at WCC and related to them on various levels. Reflecting on her experience as a first-generation student of color, Valeria acknowledged her immigrant parents lacked the knowledge and resources to guide her through a

college education. As a counselor, Valeria possessed a profound understanding of the challenges students of color face, particularly students with immigrant parents like herself. She stated:

> I do relate to a lot of students that have my same background, so we're talking student of color, whether they're Black, Asian, or Hispanic. Immigrant parents, I really understand that. I understand what it's like to be a pioneer in your own family and not really have, sort of, the advice that maybe people born in this country with parents that are already been through this system, who are probably working professionals or have gone through higher education. I look out for students like that.

Faculty connected to students not only because of their shared experiences attending community college but also being the first in their families to attend college in general, and sharing experiences as international or immigrant students.

Yumin, a part-time counselor at WCC, divided her time between WCC and a community college in a neighboring district. Although Yumin did not upwardly transfer from a community college to a four-year university, she did take courses at a community college while simultaneously attending a university. Yumin shared her educational journey, emphasizing she immigrated to the United States without her parents, which presented her with cultural and language-related challenges. When asked about the groups of students she related to the most, Yumin responded:

> Regardless of their visa status, people who have not lived their entire life in this country, if they have moved from a different country, then I connect with them . . . I feel like if students are coming from a different country . . . even if they speak the language and have similar culture, just because they're new to this country, to this educational system, I feel like I have more to offer to them, so I feel really connected to international students in general.

Yumin expressed she had more to offer immigrant students, regardless of their country of origin; she acknowledged the systems of education differed in various countries.

Similarly, Ana, an adjunct faculty member with over 20 years of experience, explained her motivation to work at WCC stemmed from a deep belief in students' capabilities. Ana made herself available to students and openly shared her identity with them, mentioning, "[They] talk

about everything because they know that I'm an immigrant myself. They know that I'm a first-generation college goer. They know that making mistakes is part of how I am who I am." Ana believed that by sharing her experiences and identity, students would be able to relate to her more effectively, ultimately enhancing their learning experience. Ana further elaborated that her classes provided her with opportunities to connect with students on a deeper level.

Dolores, a full-time noninstructional faculty member, described herself as a first-generation college student who successfully navigated community college. Reflecting on her educational experience, Dolores initially felt frustrated by the time it took to complete her community college journey. However, she later appreciated the experience, revealing:

> It took me a really long time to get through community college, which at that point I was really frustrated with, but now I'm really thankful to have had that experience because I think, now I have a lot more understanding of the students I work with now and the perseverance that they have because I know what it takes to get through community college.

Going through community college as a first-generation college student gave Dolores a deeper understanding of the students she worked with, and the perseverance required to succeed. It was clear that Dolores identified with the students at WCC and saw herself in them.

Although not all faculty members attended community college, they shared commonalities and identities with the students they served. This understanding developed as they taught in the community college system, deepening their empathy and connection with students.

James Logan, a full-time noninstructional faculty member, joined WCC a few years prior after working as an adjunct instructional faculty member in another district. He referred to himself as a "freeway flyer" due to his part-time teaching positions at three community colleges, which posed significant challenges. When reflecting on his educational journey, James Logan revealed becoming a father at the age of 19 motivated him to complete his bachelor's degree. Although he did not attend community college himself, he gained valuable experience as a tutor

at a local high school during his undergraduate years. This experience sparked his interest in teaching and laid the foundation for his pursuit of college teaching positions. Upon starting his career as a community college instructor, James Logan recalled the significant impact he had on students' lives, stating:

> I saw a lot of students like that, parents just getting by, going back to school . . . it felt like, oh, all right, I can not only teach [what] I learned, I can actually talk to these people and just see where they are and help them in a different way and be relatable.

James Logan expressed his early experience as a Latino instructor made him come to terms with his identity and its impact on his students. He realized the significance of representation and how seeing someone like him succeed could inspire students. He noted the importance of being a role model for students and the message it sends: "Hey, he made it. If he can do it, I can do it too."

Isabel, a full-time faculty member with nearly two decades of experience at WCC, revealed she did not attend community college as a student and grew up with relative privilege compared to many of her students. Isabel shared she attended predominantly White schools. Reflecting on her early teaching career, Isabel admitted she initially embraced a traditional teaching approach, replicating the teaching methods to which she was exposed. She explained, "When I first started teaching, I was a very traditional teacher, very assimilated, very unconsciously upholding Whiteness, teaching the way I was taught . . . I was very traditional in things like late policy and what my readings were." Isabel shared her journey to teaching in the community college system and how her teaching evolved, saying:

> I just realized I had so much I needed to learn . . . What was really clear to me was that this is a really segregated area . . . There's still tremendous police abuse in this area. So, all of that was really compelling to me, partly because it was the context I was moving into, but also because it's the context of my students. So, to understand where they live, what's happening, their experiences. I don't think we had the language culturally responsive in the early 2000s. But in order to try to be culturally responsive, I had to really learn a lot and listen to my students . . . I've always loved getting to know my students.

Similarly, Meena, a full-time instructional faculty member with over 15 years of experience at WCC, embarked on her teaching journey in the community college system while attending her graduate school program. Prior to her position at WCC, Meena worked as an adjunct faculty member at various community colleges, referring to herself as a "freeway flyer." A few years, prior, Meena had engaged in deep reflection on her own identities, educational experiences, and experiences of her students. As an immigrant to the United States who pursued higher education at a private university, Meena candidly shared she "bought the whole idea of meritocracy." However, she admitted feeling ashamed about those beliefs due to how "misled" she was. Over the years, Meena had become increasingly aware of her relative privilege and the need to change and shift her thinking and perceptions, stating, "[I] need to change and move my thinking and perception. So, that's taking a while to undo and then redo something else in its place."

Paola, a full-time tenured professor at WCC with nearly 10 years of teaching experience, shared her background and educational journey that led her to the community college system. Growing up in a predominantly White area, Paola described the cultural influences in her home while also noting her father's belief in the power of hard work without explicitly discussing racial hardships. Throughout her education, Paola's ethnicity was deemphasized in educational environments, and she found herself being the only Hispanic/Latinx person in her graduate program. After completing her PhD, Paola's desire to continue teaching led her to seek faculty positions at various colleges, eventually landing a position at a neighboring community college that traditionally served a significant number of students of color, particularly Latino students. Paola found comfort in her workspace and embraced her Latinx identity in the cultural environment of the community college. Paola noted, "[I] kind of became more comfortable with being in my workspace and being Latin, being Hispanic at [the community college] because it's

just part of their cultural being." She described her experience as "eye-opening" because it allowed her to fully embrace and understand her cultural identity and make a meaningful difference as a role model for her students. She noted:

> [Teaching in community college] was really inspiring for my cultural identity, more so because I think it finally made me comfortable with it in the sense of, I became such a role model for people, for students in particular. And that was really meaningful. So, I saw the difference that I was making with students, and being Hispanic, I should say, being Latinx . . . I understood the issues better than I did before.

Paola's experience helped her understand racial inequality and the importance of understanding students and her own identity.

Henry, another full-time, tenured, instructional faculty at WCC, also shared his journey. Born to East Asian immigrant parents and raised in a predominantly Latinx neighborhood, Henry expressed his desire to work in the community college system stemmed from the diverse environment in which he was raised and a strong awareness of the limited opportunities available to low socioeconomic status communities. Although Henry did not attend community college as an undergraduate, he attended a research university where he held a job in the transfer center. After obtaining his PhD and holding faculty positions at universities, Henry found a sense of home at WCC and in his role as a faculty member. He added:

> There are some faculty where being at a community college and serving this population is a life mission. And I probably align more with those faculty members. And then there's others, who are there, like it's a job . . . but there's no particular passion for the particular community or anything like that.

These personal stories highlight the deeply rooted commitment of some faculty members who viewed their work at community colleges as a mission driven by passion and a genuine desire to make a difference in the lives of their students and the community they served. In this study, faculty members displayed a deep understanding of the diverse student populations WCC served. This understanding encompassed immigrant students, students from low socioeconomic

backgrounds, student parents, first-generation college students, working students, and even students affiliated with gangs. Faculty members drew upon their experiences as college students to establish connections with the students they served. Faculty members in this study recognized the evolving nature of their roles, which adapted to the changing times and the needs of their students. They acknowledged their relative privilege while acknowledging the importance of continuously learning about the communities, circumstances, and unique needs of their students. Despite their position of relative privilege, they remained capable of connecting with students on multiple levels. These faculty members embraced the challenge of questioning notions of meritocracy and actively engaged in learning about injustices and social justice. They understood that they, too, were learners on their journey at WCC, constantly reflecting on their own experiences and identities.

Labor Expectations: Being of Service and Providing Opportunities

I asked participants about their perception of the purpose of the community college system and their roles in it. The findings revealed a multifaceted understanding among faculty of color. They viewed community colleges as serving multiple purposes, such as facilitating transfer to universities, exploring career opportunities, and providing education. The responses from faculty members further supported these findings. Faculty described the community college system and community college education as not only a pathway to transfer to a university but also a platform offering diverse career opportunities. They emphasized the importance of education and critical thinking in community colleges, and the role of community service. Additionally, faculty recognized community colleges play a crucial role in providing resources and opportunities to individuals who are often marginalized or less likely to access education, including students of color, low-income students, and first-generation college students. As such,

faculty expressed their roles as serving the purpose and mission of the college and providing opportunities, resources, and education.

In this study, many participants emphasized that community colleges serve as second-chance institutions, particularly for underserved students. As Valeria expressed, community colleges provide "access, that second chance for many people." Drawing from her own experience, she added, "Something that the community college system offered me and many of my students that I work with is that second chance. No matter what age, no matter what color of your skin, you're always welcome . . . there's always opportunity." Similarly, Tomas connected the purpose of community colleges to his personal educational journey, stating, "[They are] a good place for people like me who didn't get such a good education at the high school level, at the K–12 level, it's a second chance." These testimonies highlight the crucial role community colleges play in providing individuals with opportunities for redemption and growth, regardless of their previous educational experiences or background.

Dolores similarly highlighted the opportunities extended to individuals who may have otherwise been denied such chances, adding:

> For me, the ultimate mission of the community colleges to provide economic upward mobility opportunities to our students, whether that be in the form of degree, whether that be in the form of transfer opportunities, whether that be in the form of scholarship opportunities, the career center . . . providing them these opportunities, this information, providing them insights into career paths that maybe you are not traditional to them or that they didn't know about beforehand, I think that's a lot of the confusion that students have when they come to college. . . . Another role of the college is to demonstrate and share potential career paths for their students who are coming to us from many different backgrounds and many different places of K–12 environments that may or may not have taken that opportunity.

Henry's perspective aligns with Dolores' viewpoint regarding the role of community colleges in providing opportunities for higher education, training, and improved life prospects to individuals who may not have access otherwise. Henry recognized community colleges as inclusive

environments that provide support and resources to students who may not find it elsewhere, making them a place of opportunity. He stated:

> The idea of a community college is it's supposed to serve as a way for people to get opportunity for higher education, for training, for better life opportunities that would not be able to get it otherwise. . . . I always viewed community college as this is not maybe the ideal route. It is definitely not an easy route, but it at least gives you a shot, right? The fact that it's open for anybody to take classes. Anybody can learn and better themselves if they wanted to. It's a place where people get support where they might not elsewhere. . . . So yeah, community colleges just gives opportunity.

Faculty members in the study acknowledged their vital roles as the first and often most significant point of contact for students in their higher education journey. The faculty members went beyond teaching and bringing awareness of resources to broaden students' opportunities and knowledge. The purpose of community colleges, as described by faculty, centers around serving students, providing resources, and helping them navigate college. Ana reflected this notion, declaring:

> We are here to serve the student population that finds us, to motivate them, to give them the curiosity and wonder for the power of education, and to give them connections while they are with us. . . . It may be UCs [University of California campuses]. It could be internships. It's to educate, it's to instill a sense of curiosity and power for education, to connect . . . That is our purpose and our journey.

Faculty also acknowledged the multiple purposes of the community college system. Meena explained:

> The primary purpose is to help students to go from high school into college, especially those students who have been disadvantaged in multiple ways. I think that's the primary purpose. I think there are multiple purposes really. There are so many at this point, right?

Meena recognized the primary purpose of community colleges as assisting students, especially students who have faced various disadvantages, in transitioning from high school to college. She acknowledged community colleges serve multiple purposes, including addressing socioeconomic disadvantages and supporting students with disabilities. She also highlighted the role of community colleges in providing a supportive environment for young people who may struggle

with mental health issues during the transition to a larger world. Meena believed community colleges offer a nurturing atmosphere for a longer duration, bridging the gap between high school and the broader world. Still, Meena stated, “I think in a community college, we can keep the nurturing atmosphere a little bit longer, I hope.”

These faculty perspectives collectively illustrate the multifaceted purposes of community colleges in providing opportunities, resources, support, and a nurturing environment for students from diverse backgrounds, ultimately empowering them to pursue their educational goals and succeed in their journeys. Community colleges are also conceived as opportunities to pursue multiple pathways to education or careers. Valeria conveyed this idea, stating:

> You don’t [only] go to community college just to transfer. A lot of people don’t want to do that. It’s like, “I want to get a certificate. I want to do real estate.” . . . Most recently, I’ve seen students in our career tech. A lot of students are welding, plumbing. These careers, I’m telling you, these people make money. You sort of think like, “That’s only 36-unit career that you need to do.” Whereas I want to get a master’s degree, and a lot of these students are making probably double the amount I’m making. That’s what I’m talking about, like demystifying those myths that you don’t necessarily need a bachelor’s degree for some careers.

Henry expressed his belief that student success in community college is centered around learning and personal growth, stating, “Success is that a student is taking a class and learning and growing.” However, he mentioned community colleges are often evaluated based on metrics like transfer rates, which may not align with the diverse goals and needs of students. Henry described the experiences he had with students, sharing:

> I have a lot of students that I know are taking [courses] because they’re international students. They don’t speak the language. They’re trying to just improve their speaking skills. That’s it. They have no interest in a degree. They have a job. They don’t need. But I thought that’s what community college was for . . . Community college is just a little different than UCs, right? Where community college is, it’s, I think an investment by the community so that we have a better community. You have people who are better educated, better thinkers, better skills, just better people all around. This is what community colleges offer, and it is not tied to a degree. It’s not tied to grades in any way.

Henry further argued, “The funding formula goes against the heart of what community colleges are actually doing, I think, in the community.” Henry expressed concern that the funding formula used to evaluate community colleges undermines the true essence of their role in the community. He believed community colleges offer more than degree-oriented education and play a crucial role in shaping individuals into better thinkers and contributing members of society. Henry asserted the current evaluation metrics and funding formulas fail to capture the multifaceted nature of community colleges and their mission to benefit the community beyond traditional academic outcomes.

Similarly, James Logan grappled with the questions regarding the purpose of community college education. James Logan had recently noted a shift in focus in community colleges toward programs and vocabulary centered around career preparation and finding work. He observed a reduction in programs that were not directly geared toward specific careers, possibly due to data indicating lower job prospects for those programs compared to others. He mentioned a specific example, saying, “In the performance arts section, one of the programs just got cut, even though there were students going to it. It just got cut because it didn’t seem like it had like a future for some of the students.” This example made him question the purpose of community college, and he pondered:

> Is the purpose to educate students, for them to learn and explore and find out things about themselves and the world and how just things work? Or is it so that we can help them get a job as fast as possible?

To James Logan, it seemed as though community colleges were increasingly leaning toward the latter, although he acknowledged the need for providing both. With the increased focus on careers, James Logan added:

> It almost feels like maybe the university system is more for that culture of exploring your learning or exploring yourself or exploring your mind and how things work and how the world works. And maybe the community system is more . . . It’s almost like a glorified

> trade school, where, okay, maybe you didn't decide for whatever reason to go right into the university, or maybe you couldn't go right into the university system. So, let's just help you get somewhere. And that kind of seems like the culture in the community college system.

To the faculty in this study, the purpose of community colleges was multifaceted. Still, some faculty highlighted the importance of education. For example, Isabel did not tie the purpose of community college education to some outcome related to careers; instead, she expressed:

> I think the purpose of the community college, for me, it's the closest that you can get to this idea of liberatory education. And that means that in its best form, that it's a collective practice. That kind of like, bell hooks describes teaching. Right? It's something that the students and the teacher are working on together. And that everybody's learning from each other.

Faculty in this study characterized the community college system as distinct from research institutions. Ana acknowledged the unique characteristics of the community college environment, where accessibility and personal interaction are highly valued. They appreciated the fact that unlike research universities, community colleges provide opportunities for direct contact with staff and faculty. She also encouraged students "to be strong advocates, to never be afraid of asking questions." She shared, "Everybody's available because we're not an R1 [research] school. We're a community college . . . I love the fact that you can go to a human any time." Ana expressed a fondness for this aspect of community colleges, emphasizing the availability of human support and the freedom to approach anyone for assistance at any time. Ana highlighted her proactive approach to helping students navigate the college's resources and fostering a culture of self-advocacy, while appreciating the supportive and accessible nature of the community college environment. Moreover, the expectation for faculty to be "available" may be linked to the under-resourced nature of community colleges, where financial constraints limit the hiring of additional staff or faculty, thereby requiring existing faculty to shoulder a heavier workload.

Participants distinguished the community college system from the CSU and UC systems in California, emphasizing the diverse student population that characterizes community colleges. They highlighted the students' varied backgrounds, including racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity, and differences in their K–12 educational experiences. Faculty noted community college students have traditionally been underserved by their previous education systems.

Faculty perceived their roles as aligned with the purpose of community colleges, which is to provide access to education. They viewed themselves as facilitators of opportunities, offering resources and support to help students succeed. They were knowledgeable about various pathways, career choices, and educational avenues that students could explore. In addition to their role as educators, faculty recognized the transformative power of community college education in improving students' lives and circumstances.

Participants also discussed the evolving missions of community colleges and questioned their ultimate purpose in terms of outcomes. For example, Henry raised concerns about the student-centered funding formula and its potential impact on students who enroll in community college for individual courses without intending to earn a degree. James Logan similarly reflected on the balance between education and career preparation in the community college system. Ana and Dolores highlighted the unique aspect of community colleges compared to universities, emphasizing the human contact, genuine belief in students, and support that community colleges provide. They contrasted this idea with research institutions that often expect students to already know their career paths, whereas community colleges focus on serving and guiding students toward their goals.

In summary, faculty in the study perceived community colleges as distinct from other higher education systems, emphasizing their commitment to access, support, and transformative

education. They acknowledged the multifaceted nature of community college missions and raised questions about the purpose and outcomes, while recognizing the significant role they played in serving and guiding students toward success.

"I Tell My Students That I Am Their Cheerleader" – Faculty of Color Understanding and Enacting Equity

In this section, I explore the second research question regarding how faculty of color at WCC described the extent of their labor expectations. Despite the college's emphasis on student equity and its commitment to antiracism and social justice, faculty of color noted the absence of explicit mention of faculty and staff on the college's website, which raised questions about how they perceived the institution's missions and the impact on their labor. Thus, I sought to understand how faculty of color understood and gave meaning to equity and how they implemented it in their roles. The main themes that helped answer the second research question were: (a) participants viewed equity as addressing inequities and striving to level the playing field by providing resources and opportunities for student success, yet at times lacked a critical discussion of race; and (b) to achieve a level playing field, faculty employed various strategies such as focusing on open educational resources (OER), adopting competency-based assessments practices, offering mentorship, leading initiatives, advocating for the hiring of faculty of color, and supporting accessible education and student services. Still, (c) many of these equity-related efforts were not explicitly outlined in faculty's official labor expectations, and faculty often took on these additional responsibilities voluntarily and without compensation.

Defining Equity: Resources and Opportunities

Part of the study's purpose was to explore how faculty members understood and explained the concept of equity in the context of their work. One specific question I asked is how

they defined equity. Their responses highlighted that equity involves providing necessary resources and tools to *all* students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, to address their unique needs, and level the playing field. While faculty acknowledged that students enter higher education spaces with distinct socioeconomic backgrounds, college preparation, and access to opportunities, some faculty seemed to define equity as equivalent to equality.

Paola emphasized the diverse range of students in community college and the importance of tailoring their approach to meet individual needs. Some students may require remedial instruction, while others may already possess certain knowledge and require advanced instruction. She recognized the varying levels of proficiency in subjects like math and the need to address these differences. Regarding her role, Paola explained:

> It's my job that when they leave my course, that they're able to all do the same thing. It's not going to be that they all need the same thing. Some people are going to need me to re-teach them high school [material]. Some people already know that, they just need me to teach them new stuff. Some people are behind at math, some people aren't. So, it's trying to figure out how to give each student the tools that they need to succeed. Some people, it's like resources, so just having a textbook is an impediment for them; for other people, they have the money to do everything.

Participants conveyed their understanding of equity as providing resources and eliminating barriers for students, as evidenced by Yumin's work. Yumin shared:

> To me, equity means as much as possible removing barriers for students to be successful, whether it's academically or any services that are offered on campus or even those services that are not being offered on campus for a student's well-being overall, but especially in the academics. In my work, language can be a big barrier for the student population that I work with, the cultural differences. I feel obligated to give them good education like in my classes, right? Make sure that they understand the difference, make sure that they know what to expect in their classrooms and their interactions with faculty and other students. Trying my best to remove those barriers, those misunderstandings that the students may have that could really hinder them in achieving and doing their best in their classes . . . Just trying our best to accommodate students with different languages that we could offer as service so they feel comfortable to talk in their own native language. Educating them, bringing awareness, helping them with languages, and just giving them a lot of support and love. To me, that's the equity work that I'm doing with my students.

Yumin emphasized the need to remove barriers and misunderstandings that could impede student performance and engagement in their classes. She sought to accommodate students with different languages by offering language services and creating a comfortable environment for students to express themselves in their native language. Yumin saw their equity work as educating students, raising awareness, and providing extensive support and care. Dolores similarly echoed:

> That's really where equity is, that we're treating all the students with the same opportunities and providing a lot of things to make sure that they are on a more level playing field with the rest of the students. Being realistic about that, I recognize that I could do everything within my own power and there's still going to be inequities. But I'm always going to strive to make sure that there is a more level, balanced playing field.

Dolores acknowledged the limitations of their individual efforts and recognized that achieving complete equity may require systemic changes beyond her control. Nonetheless, she remained committed to striving for a more balanced and fairer educational environment, even if reaching perfect balance may require broader changes at higher levels.

Tomas believed equity goes beyond merely offering the same classes to all students. He emphasized the importance of providing additional resources to support students who may not have had the same level of preparation or access to resources as their peers. The goal was to enable these students to bridge the gap and reach the same academic level as others. Tomas saw equity as a means of uplifting individuals, offering extra assistance to students who needed it to ensure all students could achieve success. He particularly highlighted the significance of providing additional support to marginalized groups, including minority students who have faced educational challenges throughout their K–12 education. Tomas recognized these students required additional resources to address the disparities they experienced and to level the playing field for their academic advancement. Tomas shared:

> It would be like bringing the people up, giving extra help to the people that need it so that everybody can rise to the same level and providing the students, especially the groups,

> that don't get that great education. And I'm talking your minority groups [and those who] struggled through K through 12.

Another faculty member, Meena, described a common visual image to illustrate the difference between equality and equity. She described a picture where three people are standing behind a fence. Equality is portrayed as giving everyone the same boost, while equity is depicted as providing individuals with what they specifically need to overcome their unique barriers and have an equal opportunity to see over the fence. Meena shared, "To get everybody to start off on the same foot, we need to see where they're starting from and why it is, what the generations of disadvantage they might have faced before, so that's the key." Meena emphasized the importance of understanding where individuals are starting from and the historical disadvantages they may have faced. She highlighted how achieving equity requires recognizing generational challenges and disadvantages some people may have experienced. By acknowledging and addressing these disparities, Meena believed educators can work toward creating a more level playing field.

Similarly, for Henry, equity is rooted in the understanding "not everyone is dealt the same hand. It's not that everyone isn't capable, but they're not dealt the same hand." He further explained, "Equity is just an acknowledgement that people don't always have that opportunity to become the best versions of themselves, and we can do things to make it more likely that people will get there." He recognized individuals have different circumstances and resources, which can greatly impact their outcomes and opportunities. Therefore, equity involves acknowledging these disparities and striving to provide equal opportunities for everyone to participate and succeed.

As an immigrant to the United States, equity was a fairly new concept to Luz, but she recognized that education has "the ability to work as game changers, providing equitable resources towards kids." Luz further explained how she enacted equity in her role, stating:

> For me to be able to offer equitable service to my students, I need to be and allow myself not only the time, not only the time, but allow myself the opportunity to give my students the freedom to be truly themselves. Because I wouldn't be able to offer you, as my student, an equitable treatment if I don't know you. If I only know your name. I need to allow myself as an educator to get to know you and make you feel comfortable to give you the opportunity to truly get to know who you are and your needs. It's really easy to assume . . . assume that you need this and this and this because of your race, because of your ethnicity, because where you were born. It is not always the case . . . So, equity for me is allowing myself as an educator, getting to know the students I serve at a personal level. And I know it's not always the easiest thing and it's not always possible because of time, but it is what is needed. I can't offer you something if I don't know what it is that you need.

To offer equitable services as an educator, Luz emphasized the importance of taking the time and allowing herself the opportunity to know her students. She believed in creating an environment where students feel comfortable and can freely express their true selves. Luz acknowledged that assumptions based on race, ethnicity, or background can hinder equitable treatment and it is necessary to genuinely know each student and their unique needs. Although she recognized the challenges of time constraints, she emphasized the significance of investing in personal connections with students and being open to making mistakes along the way. For Luz, equity meant immersing herself in understanding students personally and being responsive to their individual needs to provide meaningful support and opportunities.

Similarly, Carolina explained, "[I] didn't even know what that word meant before I worked at [WCC]. As I have come to understand it, equity is providing resources where they're needed so that everyone truly has equal opportunity." As Carolina gained understanding, she defined equity as providing necessary resources to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals. Drawing from her personal background, Carolina highlighted the significance of resource systems in achieving success. She expressed a strong commitment to equity and saw it as her "top priority" as an educator, explaining:

> Often, students, they're not performing. As an educator, I can be like, "Well, that's not my problem. I'm delivering the content, I go home, I get paid." But me personally, I'm

> deciding to kind of take a step further and actually find out what is going on with my students. [WCC] helps me in that way because they're letting us know we have these services available to students if they need it, and it's not necessarily in an academic sense. So to me, equity is that.

For Carolina, equity encompassed ensuring equal access to resources and support, ultimately allowing individuals to reach their full potential. Faculty in this study overwhelmingly defined equity as a mechanism to provide students opportunities, level the playing field, and ensure access to resources. Through their definitions, faculty seemed to understand equity as synonymous with equality or fairness. However, their actions to "enact" equity often did align with the race-conscious, social justice orientation of equity.

Faculty Enacting Equity Beyond Expectations

Faculty described enacting equity or displayed an equity-minded approach through various means such as employing equitable assessments, offering tangible resources, being accessible to students, engaging in ongoing learning about social justice, participating and leading racial equity initiatives in their departments, providing mental health support, challenging deficit views of students of color, and showing deep care to their students. Two subthemes in this section describe how participants regularly shared stories of uncompensated and unacknowledged labor they did for the college. These counterstories exemplified the work faculty of color did and their sacrifices to support students, and engage with equity, yet this invisible labor often went unrecognized and uncompensated by the college.

Employing Equitable Assessments

One mechanism by which faculty enacted equity mindedness was through their assessment practices. When speaking to Henry, he argued that assessments should not only focus on predetermined benchmarks but also consider individual circumstances and challenges students may face. He explained that some students have unstable housing, while others may be

parenting students, and educators should consider those factors, and by understanding the student population and adapting assessment methods accordingly, educators can provide a fair and accurate evaluation of their abilities. This approach acknowledges that students may have different opportunities and adjusts assessments or implements policies that allow for a more comprehensive and equitable evaluation process. He shared:

> There's just so many things that are embedded into the way that teachers assess, that if you don't have a proper understanding of the student's life circumstances, and you don't allow for some flexibility in the right ways then, and you're not, you're just being terrible at assessing. It's just, you're not a good educator . . . [doing] a good job assessing means that I don't fault them, or penalize them for things that it has nothing to do with the assessment outcome, like the desired outcome for the students. So, yeah, I don't see it as very different, I think to be a good educator, you do have to have a good understanding of the student population you're working with. I do think I might be a little less lenient on some of these policies with students, who, they have all day to, they don't have another job, they don't have families. You want to assess people with the assumption that they have similar opportunities. If they just don't have, you have to adjust for it, to get the proper assessment of the student's ability.

Similarly, James Logan explained his attempts at competency-based assessments, where educators "teach the material or present of material and students are assessed until they understand it." In this way, students are "not being docked off for not knowing, because why punish somebody for not knowing something?" James Logan added that he decided to revamp a 6-week summer course he was teaching because it required a lot of learning in a short amount of time. He explained his rationale, stating:

> All right, [students are] already struggling. It's a lot of material, it's shoved into this week, and then now, they were going to have a test at the end of the week. Is that enough time for them to like, really digest and learn? So instead, I had recommended deadlines for portfolio entries. So, I asked the students to collect these problems, explain what led to that problem, any definitions or formulas that could be used for that. So some background things, collecting resources, so how that problem could be solved, and then an explanation of how to solve that problem and then a reflection of how it connects to the larger course or to what they're learning elsewhere.

James Logan received positive feedback from students who found these reflections valuable to prepare for quizzes and other assignments. Ana also explained, "[Faculty] are taught to grade

without looking at the names, which I think is superb. We don't look at the names. We only grade by the content." Faculty understood that employing equitable assessments is crucial to the success of community college students. For them, it was just as important to learn how to assess in a way that accounts for learning in nontraditional manners, but to be able to assess well, they must be willing and able to understand students' life circumstances.

Developing and Advocating for Open Educational Resources

Another way faculty contributed to equity efforts is by actively engaging in the development of OER. In this study, faculty described their efforts in creating OER textbooks and materials for students. For instance, Meena highlighted her collaboration with fellow faculty members in the community college system to create a textbook. She shared her experience teaching an online course several years prior to this study, where she encountered the challenges of finding suitable resources for her students. As a result, she joined forces with colleagues to develop accessible and cost-effective materials that would benefit a broader range of students. Meena noted, "We want to make sure that if it saves students thousands of dollars, clearly, that's something we want to do." She also explained:

> It's always been about price for students . . . the publishers suck . . . they do things like changing chapter numbers around just so that you think they make a new edition of the book every 2 years. And it's 200 to 250 bucks each new book. So, all of us have been trying to do better by our students.

Meena actively engaged in the use and development of OERs as part of her commitment to equity in education. She had been using OER for her introductory textbook for a long time, recognizing the importance of freely available materials for students. Meena was also involved in a statewide project that focused on implementing antiracist principles through OER and open pedagogy. She shared, "We planned how we would implement antiracism through open educational resources and/or open pedagogy."

In one particular project, Meena and her colleagues designed a course that involved students interviewing non-White parents or grandparents to explore the assets and literature available in their communities. She explained, “I was trying much harder to find more work by and about Brown and Black folks and the data that exists about all the racist history and not just history, circumstances that people are facing even now.” By integrating these perspectives, Meena aimed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of racism and create a learning environment that fosters inclusivity and awareness. She took pride in her achievements and contributions toward promoting equity through the intentional incorporation of diversity.

Similarly, Valeria actively sought collaboration and support from her colleagues in developing OER for her courses. She engaged in conversations with peers, exchanging syllabi and discussing different teaching approaches. Valeria took the initiative to explore various OER options, recognizing their potential to enhance student learning experiences. At WCC, Valeria collaborated with full-time faculty members to create an OER specifically for a particular course. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 global pandemic, she led a small group in the development of the OER, with the ultimate goal of producing a comprehensive textbook. Valeria applied for OER funding in California, although their proposal did not receive financial support. However, Valeria expressed:

> I was not compensated for that. I would’ve done it again, but then I started working as a counselor and now I don’t have time for it. But again, if they would’ve compensated for me, then I would’ve made it a job. Like, “Okay, well I don’t have to counsel at this campus because I’m working at this OER.”

Valeria also shared her experience of taking on a leadership role in an OER grant proposal, despite being an adjunct faculty member who typically was not expected to lead such initiatives. She mentioned:

> As an adjunct faculty, you’re not supposed to lead the proposal, the grant funding. And so, I had to put that full-time name onto the lead. And I was taking on her work because

> she didn't have a lot of time. So, I was willing to put myself in that situation. It's for students.

In support of her commitment to students, she willingly took on the responsibilities and workload of a full-time faculty member, understanding the significance of the project and its potential impact on student learning. For these faculty, it was essential that student accessibility to materials, including textbooks, was at the forefront of their decision-making processes. Although faculty did not have to advocate for the use and development of OERs, they understood the importance and impact it could make on the lives of students and viewed it as an equity issue.

Understanding Student Needs and Breaking Barriers

Faculty in this study described enacting equity through getting to know and understand their students, particularly their students or color, to create welcoming learning environments. James Logan emphasized the importance of implementing culturally responsive teaching and grading for equity in his math workshops and classrooms. He actively worked on incorporating these strategies and also supported other faculty members in using them effectively. James acknowledged it can be challenging to envision how cultural responsiveness can be integrated in math classes. However, he believed it went beyond "numbers and letters" and involved creating an inclusive environment. He explained:

> It's allowing your students to turn in work late every once in a while or just not having a late work policy in general. That's a big discussion happening these days, or maybe you don't do tests. . . . Another thing is in the actual processes of things. So like, excusing late assignments, that can be a huge help for some students. And especially the students that aren't represented, that don't have some of the resources as other students might have, that have other responsibilities happening, going on.

When it came to enacting equity, James said, "Teaching faculty and educators to be more understanding of students' backgrounds is literally the first step. . . . If you can have the compassion or empathy for your students, other issues can be fixed, or at least be clearer."

Valeria's approach to communication and supporting students was characterized by her thoughtful consideration of their diverse backgrounds and circumstances. I asked Valeria to describe how she enacted equity in her role. She answered:

> I think in everything. I think in the way I speak. Even as simple as saying like, "Hola. Hey, do you speak both languages?" Like, "Oh my God." They feel more comfortable or I'm already breaking that barrier where they have to try to speak to me in English. So, even resources, services, like, "Hey, do you have hotspot? My internet is really crappy right now. Do you know that we offer hotspots for students?" So, I try to not assume that everyone has the same resources at home because many of us don't. Even today, I'm sharing a place with my parents today and the dogs were running around. I'm like, "Hey, hold on. I need to figure it out." Sharing a bit of yourself too with students. I feel like that breaks a lot of barriers.

She consciously incorporated her multiculturalism into her interactions, using phrases like "Hola" or inquiring about bilingualism, which immediately established a sense of comfort for the students and broke down language barriers. Recognizing that not everyone had the same resources at home, she went beyond assumptions and actively offered information about available services and resources. For instance, when a student mentioned having poor internet connectivity, she suggested the option of using hotspots provided by the institution.

Valeria's understanding of diverse experiences extended to her own situation as well. Despite sharing a place with her parents and dealing with the distractions of dogs running around, she took a moment to address the situation and find a resolution. This level of authenticity and vulnerability in sharing her own experiences created a sense of relatability and helped bridge the gaps between herself and the students. By considering different perspectives, providing relevant information, and sharing her own story, Valeria effectively broke down barriers and created an inclusive environment that promoted open communication and understanding.

Henry similarly recognized the need for understanding students, stating, "The more that I reflect on it, the more I realize how closely good teaching is tied to understanding students

circumstances and background." Henry used the example of the COVID-19 global pandemic time period, where certain students faced challenges such as unreliable internet connections or unpredictable work schedules. Henry acknowledged that if he were to have strict policies on late work or attendance without considering these circumstances, it would unfairly impact students who were already doing their best. He contrasted this idea with faculty members who lacked understanding and dismiss students' challenges, suggesting such an approach would limit students' opportunities. Furthermore, Henry emphasized the need for a shift in evaluating and assessing students. He recognized a more nuanced and empathetic approach was necessary, one that took into account the diverse circumstances and barriers students face. By embracing this perspective, Henry aimed to create a fair and inclusive learning environment that supported students' success.

Working with a specific group of mostly students of color from low-income backgrounds who also grappled with social and emotional difficulties, Luz created a safe and supportive classroom environment for her students. In her role, she aimed to be more than just a counselor who focused on paperwork and academic requirements. She noted:

> I don't want to be that counselor that sits with a student and just tells them, "This is the classes that you need to take, make sure you gather grades, pass the class." . . . I don't want to be there filling forms with kids. That's not my goal. So, having the opportunity to truly listen to my students, to rebuild that relationship and that connection, to hear, "How can I connect you? How can I connect you to do what it is that you want to do?"

Luz emphasized the importance of listening to her students and building meaningful connections with them. She sought to understand their aspirations and found ways to support them in achieving their goals. By offering guidance and encouragement, Luz helped her students realize their dreams are indeed attainable, even if they may perceive them as impossible at times. She acknowledged the challenges students may face but assured them that with dedication and hard work, they could overcome obstacles and succeed.

Yumin highlighted the unique challenges international students face and the importance of providing tailored support to address their specific needs. Understanding that concepts like grade point average and general education might be unfamiliar to them, Yumin recognized the need to approach their learning journey as if they were starting from scratch, "just like learning the ABCs again." Yumin added:

> International students themselves, they have the same challenges that our domestic students have as well. Financial, personal, family, emotional, what have you. It just amplifies for them because they're here by themselves, without their families, not knowing the resources. Without the language, it's just harder.

Recognizing the amplified obstacles faced by international students, Yumin remained dedicated to overcoming language barriers and providing comprehensive support. By addressing their unique needs, explaining concepts clearly, and ensuring understanding, Yumin aspired to bridge the gap and empower international students to navigate their academic journey successfully.

Dolores shared an insightful experience where she went above and beyond to assist a student in need. When the student encountered difficulties with his personal laptop and another colleague declined to help, Dolores stepped in without hesitation; she took the time to assist the student, ensuring his laptop was properly set up and addressing any issues he was facing. Throughout the process, Dolores provided a welcoming and supportive environment, making the student feel comfortable and valued. The positive impact of her assistance was evident when the student expressed his gratitude and even asked for her name, hoping to seek her help in the future. Dolores's commitment to providing exceptional service extended beyond resolving technical problems. She recognized the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive space for students. By offering her assistance willingly and ensuring people feel welcome and comfortable approaching her with their questions, Dolores believed she was promoting equity in the environment she worked in, sharing, "That's the service I want to provide to make sure

people feel welcome in our space, that they don't have anxiety about asking us questions. To me, that's equity." The theme of understanding students and removing barriers was made evident by Dolores's actions in this story; she understood that by offering her assistance willingly and creating an inclusive space and helping the student, she could encourage him to continue to ask questions.

Connecting Students to Resources

Another way faculty in this study reported enacting equity was by acting as a resource for students and connecting them to other resources. Faculty described staying up to date with various programs, requirements, and opportunities on and off campus. Even when faculty were unable to provide the support students needed, they sought information to support students.

Ana took it upon herself to guide and support her students in their educational journey, explaining the process she took connecting students to campus resources. Ana shared:

> [I] showed them the transfer center, showed them how important it is for them to move on and be organized. I connected them to a counselor. Everybody filled in their [free application for federal student aid] together by the March deadline, and then I introduced them to people, saying you can work for on federal work grants. . . . Then, we went to our pantry, which is our mini grocery store, and then we're doing a hygiene run to collect hygiene products and to tell people how we can learn a little bit each day. We did that. It's just showing them what else is there and to take the time.

Through these activities, Ana aimed to instill a sense of continuous learning and personal growth, encouraging her students to seize every opportunity available to them. Henry similarly recognized the importance of understanding students' individual circumstances and connecting them to appropriate resources. He acknowledged it could be challenging to identify students' needs solely based on appearance, so he relied on students to share relevant information with him. To fulfill his responsibility as a point of contact for students, Henry actively sought to stay updated on available options and resources on campus. Henry shared an example of a student who faced domestic violence at home and had to leave. In such situations, Henry took the

initiative to inform the student about potential support systems, such as organizations that could provide financial assistance for rent. He mentioned:

> I've heard from countless students that they don't reveal these things to faculty, because oftentimes, they've had experience with teachers, high school, before, where revealing these things, there was no care or compassion or . . . right? I think, probably the biggest response was silence, or nonresponse, which motivates them to not feel like it's worth sharing.

Henry understood students often needed to disclose their personal challenges before assistance could be provided. Building a rapport with students was crucial and he tried to create an environment where students felt comfortable sharing their experiences and concerns.

Luz saw herself as a cheerleader for her students, naturally embodying this role as an educator. She believed all students, not just her own, come into their educational journey with dreams and aspirations. However, they often encounter challenges that make those dreams feel unattainable. Luz's role was to encourage and support students, showing them that despite the obstacles they may face, their dreams are not impossible to achieve. She shared, "I see myself and I tell my students that I am their cheerleader . . . I serve as the cheerleader, connecting students to all the resources that is available for them." Luz understood that simply providing information was not enough. Drawing from her experience with the coaching program at WCC, Luz recognized students needed more than directions and suggestions. It was not as simple as saying, "Go there." Instead, she emphasized the importance of creating a personal connection and alleviating the fear and uncertainty students felt. Luz actively walked alongside her students, guiding them and introducing them to people and places they needed to access support, stating:

> It's scary to walk over somewhere, so being able to walk students over or going there and knowing people who were there. So, creating that connection, being the cheerleader, making things not seem so foreign for the students. So, I think that's a, I think so. No, I know, that's my role.

By guiding students, Luz made the unfamiliar seem more approachable and helped students feel more at ease. She was committed to providing the necessary support and guidance to help students overcome challenges and realize their dreams.

Similarly, Ana added, “Even if I were to meet a student while I’m walking somewhere and they need a sense of direction, I’m able to provide it for them.” Ana’s commitment to student success went beyond the classroom. As an instructor, she embraced her responsibility to provide guidance and support to students whenever they needed it. Whether she encountered a student while walking or in any other setting, Ana willingly offered her assistance and provided a sense of direction. Her willingness to go the extra mile showcased her dedication to ensuring students received the help they needed to thrive academically and personally. Faculty in this study described the myriad ways they connected students to campus resources, both verbally and physically. They believed it was their responsibility to not assume students’ needs; rather, they should inquire and provide resources to all, knowing that someone may need it. Faculty exemplified a deep sense of service and care for their students.

Serving Students Beyond Hours and Expectations

Faculty also described enacting equity beyond their prescribed working hours and expectations, such as meeting with students on evenings and weekends, and even supporting their education after they leave WCC. Henry supported his students by offering assistance with the transfer process, specifically helping them with writing personal statements and obtaining letters of recommendation. He explained:

> So, one of the things I do for students, I tell them, “Hey, if you’re going to transfer and you need letters of recs, you need to write personal statements; I will help you with that process.” This is something that I know that I can do well in serving them. And when you’re talking about personal statements, a lot of stuff starts to come out, and I would probe and ask questions, partly for the actual quality of the statement itself, but the other part of it is just genuine curiosity about kind of getting to know what their life goals are.

> And sometimes, that kind of prompts them opening up and sharing things. Yeah. Those avenues kind of help, things that are kind of outside the classroom.

Through this process, Henry not only ensured the quality of the statements but also showed a genuine curiosity about his students' life goals. By asking probing questions and showing interest in their aspirations, Henry created an environment where students felt comfortable opening up and sharing their experiences. These interactions often extended beyond the academic realm, allowing him to connect with the students on a personal level and gain a deeper understanding of their backgrounds and aspirations. Henry recognized the value of engaging with his students outside the classroom and providing support in areas beyond academic instruction. By helping them navigate the transfer process and encouraging self-reflection, Henry empowered his students to articulate their life goals effectively while fostering a sense of trust and rapport.

Diego encountered a wide range of challenging situations while working with his students, including experiences of domestic violence and various forms of trauma. He recognized the importance of addressing these issues with sensitivity and care, drawing on his training to engage in deep and meaningful discussions with his students, sharing:

> I felt that I was equipped because of my training to discuss with these students where it would get really serious and deep. . . . I had enough training where I could do some level of work with them but the students that really needed to deal with those issues, work with those issues, made sure that I got them to psychological services.

Like Diego, Dolores had an experience that went above and beyond her expectations when a colleague referred a student to her because of their shared career interests. Throughout the semester, Dolores and the student exchanged numerous emails, with the student opening up about personal struggles such as grief and socioeconomic challenges. Although the emotional weight of the student's story was unexpected and sometimes challenging for Dolores, she appreciated being there for the student in those difficult moments. Despite the emotional labor

involved, Dolores found the connection with the student rewarding. They had meaningful conversations about their chosen field, discussing the student's aspirations to pursue a master's degree in that area. They even scheduled a Zoom meeting that was intended to last 1 hour but extended to 2 hours due to their engaging discussion. Dolores shared:

> I scheduled her for an hour. We stayed on for two. It was giving more than I expected, and absolutely not in my job description to be a mentor to a student in that capacity. But I did it, and would continue to do it, because I really believe that that's so important to give back because I've had mentors that were there for me in times where I was really struggling and to give me that encouragement. So, the level of thankfulness and gratefulness and the things that she has said in response to me have been extremely fulfilling.

Dolores acknowledged that serving as a mentor in this capacity was not part of her job description, but she willingly took on the role because she believed in the importance of giving back. She recognized the significance of having mentors who supported her during challenging times, and she wanted to provide the same encouragement to her student. The student expressed deep gratitude for Dolores's support and mentorship, which brought immense fulfillment to Dolores. Despite the unexpected nature of their relationship, Dolores continued to be there for the student and appreciated the student's expressions of thankfulness and appreciation.

Similarly, Henry went above and beyond to support his students. He mentioned, "There's a few set of students so far, and I'm sure that number will grow, where I've given them my personal number and I said, 'You can just call me at any time.'" Thus, Henry recognized the importance of emotional support. Despite no longer being their instructor, he maintained a strong connection with few of his former students, meeting with them periodically to check in on their progress and ensure they were on track to complete their degrees.

Henry's dedication extended beyond mere meetings and check ins. He actively leveraged his network and expertise to benefit his students. With his knowledge of graduate courses and familiarity with faculty members at prestigious institutions like UC campuses and CSU

campuses, he offered to arrange meetings with individuals who could provide further guidance and support. He regularly told his students:

> I know pretty well some of the faculty at some of the UCs and [CSUs]. If you happen to go to one of those places, I am more than happy to kind of set up meetings with you and have somebody there that I know will take good care of you.

By facilitating these connections, Henry sought to ensure his students had the resources and assistance they needed to succeed in their academic and professional journeys. Henry shared a story about his mentoring relationship with a student and reflected on his own experience in college. He stated:

> I remember being at a UC, and you're kind of on your own to figure things out. But if you don't have a network, a social network of people who can at least let you know, let you become aware of what's available to you, you're just going to kind of wander.

Instead of letting a student wander, Henry chose to provide support. However, Henry noted he tried not to spread himself too thin as to not "offer help to a bunch of people, but only half-ass it." When he could, Henry connected students to resources on campus. Still, at times, "maybe because they just didn't have anyone else to turn to in the college," students turned to him for emotional support.

Similarly, Tomas formed a special bond with one of his Latinx students who had a unique background as a former veteran and gang member in East Los Angeles. Recognizing Tomas as a former gang member himself, the student felt a sense of comfort and familiarity. Tomas recalled, "He wasn't a great student, but he was a very good human being . . . I tried to help him, even beyond school." Recognizing the student's aspirations to start a business and pursue personal growth beyond academics, Tomas provided guidance and assistance. He offered his help in navigating the challenges of entrepreneurship and encouraged the student's progress beyond the classroom. When the student successfully completed his studies, he hosted a graduation party to celebrate the milestone. Tomas made a point of attending the party, showing his support and

further solidifying their bond. Through his genuine care and efforts to help his student succeed academically and personally, Tomas exemplified the role of a mentor and advocate. His dedication to this student's growth and well-being showcased the impact educators can have beyond the classroom, providing support and guidance in various aspects of life.

Paola's commitment to her students was evident through her open-door policy and willingness to accommodate their schedules. Despite not having formal office hours, she ensured her students had access to her support by arranging meetings at unconventional times. She prioritized the needs and availability of her students, going above and beyond to ensure they received the assistance they required. Paola's dedication to her students was highlighted by a specific instance where she met with a student regularly at 8:00 p.m. during the COVID-19 global pandemic, sharing:

> One of the students who won awards, one of my colleagues said, "God, he never came to my office hours." And I was like, "Well, he didn't come to mine either, but I was meeting with him at 8:00 p.m. because it was during Zoom time." I was like, "Because that's when he could meet."

Even though it may have been outside of the typical working hours, Paola recognized the importance of accommodating the student's schedule and made herself available at the time that worked best for them. Her colleague's surprise at Paola's commitment demonstrates that such level of dedication may not be common among educators, further emphasizing Paola's exceptional approach. Paola's willingness to meet with students at their preferred times and her readiness to go the extra mile reflected her genuine care for their academic success. She exemplified the idea that educators often extend their support without a second thought because they are driven by a deep commitment to their students. Similarly, Valeria expressed the importance of meeting students when are where they are at, sharing:

> I think I typically go above and beyond even after hours. . . . So, I see them like 7, 8:00 p.m. at night sometimes because that's the time they can meet or I'll give them a call or

> I'll Zoom them. . . . I do that because I wish people would've done that for me. So, I don't mind it.

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, Meena opted for a hybrid approach, teaching one day on Zoom and one day in person across all five of her classes. Despite the attendance being inconsistent in both formats, Meena remained committed to supporting her students. She used technology extensively, treating the classes as a blend of online and in person, regularly sending out announcements and emails to provide guidance and keep students informed about assignments, grading, and office hours. Meena emphasized the importance of maintaining open communication and encouraged her students to reach out and visit her during designated office hours. She mentioned:

> For me, all boundaries were lost between . . . there was no boundaries at all. I was working constantly, especially those first 2 semesters, I think. I was keeping really . . . I was completely keeping tabs on what students were falling behind and stuff and I would constantly be emailing individual students and it was a little bit crazy making for me. Also, I had office hours, of course, at specific times that were posted, but if a student would say, "I'm working," I would meet them on Zoom at 6:00 or on a Saturday at 10:00. It was just all over the place. . . . I'm so privileged, right? I can do this and I have a job I love. I love doing this. I always tell everybody, "I want to drop dead in the classroom. I'm never going to retire." I'm very privileged. I'm happy to do it.

The blurred boundaries between work and personal life presented a significant challenge for Meena during the initial semesters of the pandemic. She found herself constantly monitoring student progress, reaching out individually, and accommodating various schedules, even outside of regular office hours. This level of dedication sometimes proved overwhelming but demonstrated Meena's commitment to supporting her students' success. Meena acknowledged her privilege in being able to adapt to the circumstances and continue doing the job she loved. She expressed her passion for teaching, stating her desire to remain in the classroom until the end, never intending to retire. Meena recognized the privilege she held and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to make a positive impact on her students' lives through her work. Although

faculty in this study provided student support after hours and above their expectations as faculty, they expressed a sense of duty and responsibility that was not burdensome because it was necessary for the students.

Deepening Awareness of Social Justice to Better Serve Students

Enacting equity involves learning about social issues and deepening personal knowledge to better serve students, particularly those of color. Isabel embraced the idea of being a lifelong learner and was open about her own learning journey with her students, sharing:

> I became curious about prison abolition. Why? Because I had students that were formerly incarcerated. And because we have a formerly incarcerated and system impacted program on our campus, they do incredible work. So, I had to learn about that stuff. So, it was really thanks to my students that I had to get my shit together. And then, I would say also thanks to my colleagues, I have an incredible colleague . . . she sat down with me and did a whole construction of race, conversation for me. And she's let me sit in on her classes. So with her, I really was able to level up my understanding of anti-Blackness and Whiteness. And that let me change what I do in my classes. I mean, I just had to learn. And I'm one of those teachers that changes what I do a lot, and I like to learn with the students. So, I'm okay being clear with them. I'm still learning about the construction of race. And let's learn about it together . . . it's kind of a continual process of learning more.

Isabel valued the opportunity to learn alongside her students and fostered a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. She acknowledged her understanding of the construction of race was an ongoing process, and she learned with students to expand her knowledge. Similarly, Ana pointed to the social context in which she began to learn more about social issues, recalling when she began her knowledge journey. She shared:

> Maybe since COVID because of access, right? Who had the laptop, who didn't have the laptop, it began there and then how society and what happened with the Black Lives Matter, Me Too Movement. We are a multiracial democracy. And the fact that Everybody Matters surfaced in very painful ways. And the campus had to come together saying we need a language because I was working with people who were represented by so many different races and ethnicities. And I wanted to know the difference between what is bias and prejudice. What is information bias? What is confirmation bias? What have I been socialized to believe? What should I learn and unlearn?

Similarly to Ana, Meena stated she had always discussed prejudice in her classes, but since Summer 2020, her teaching and learning had evolved. She noted:

> Since the summer of 2020, I've become more acutely aware of it and I have sort of done a lot trying to figure out . . . done a lot, no. Tried to learn a lot and have looked for the silver bullet. Give me a bag of tools, give me something that I can use to be better, to do better by my students. But I found out that that is not necessarily the case, it's a question of chipping away, and being aware, and examining, and reexamining, and re-reexamining as much as possible in all the realms of my work. I always have been relatively aware of my privilege, but I've become more aware and more willing to use that privilege to help, to fix, or to be better, to make things better for people.

Meena's journey toward inclusivity and self-improvement as an instructor had been a continuous and evolving process. Although she had always recognized the importance of addressing topics like prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping in her teaching, her awareness heightened in Summer 2020. Since then, she had actively sought opportunities to deepen her understanding and find ways to enhance her teaching practices. Initially, Meena hoped to discover a definitive solution or a set of tools that would instantly make her a better instructor. However, she soon realized fostering inclusivity and addressing privilege required ongoing commitment and a willingness to continuously examine and reexamine her own practices. She understood progress comes from gradually chipping away at ingrained biases and being attentive to all aspects of her work. As her awareness of privilege grew, Meena became more proactive in leveraging her own privilege to support and advocate for others. By embracing the process of continuous learning, self-reflection, and examination, she sought to create an inclusive educational experience that addressed social issues and empowered her students to become critical thinkers and agents of change. Valeria also shared how she engaged in learning about equity, saying:

> I'm starting to read more in diversity and equity. To be honest, I didn't know what the hell those terms meant [before working at WCC]. So, I'm trying to find the time to really talk about it and read about it. It doesn't cost me any money. I try to look for free books online and just learn more about it. Looking at our mission statements . . . I started looking at like, the master plans for community colleges, the ones I'm working at, like what are their goals and what are they trying to do? How are they trying to use their

> money? I've been looking more into that and asking those questions, like "Hey, you got a grant fund for formerly incarcerated students. How is that being implemented in the program?" That's what I've been doing.

Faculty in this study emphasized their continuous engagement in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) learning and training. They also stressed their commitment to applying their acquired knowledge to enhance their practices and policies for the benefit of students. In this section, faculty described an alignment with the racial and social justice orientations of equity.

"Equity for Whom at Whose Expense" – Challenges Enacting Equity in the Community College

This section aims to explore the concept of equity from a top-down perspective, highlighting inconsistencies and questioning the college's understanding of equity on a campus-wide level. It also delves into the challenges faculty of color face in departments where DEI initiatives are led by individuals from the majority group who may not fully comprehend the principles of DEI. The three themes that helped answer the third research question were: (a) (mis)aligned directives, perceptions of institutional equity initiatives; (b) (de)valued labor and dismissed attempts to engage in equity; and (c) the public image of the college and the actualities for faculty of color. When interviewed about their perceptions of the institution's commitment to equity, participants acknowledged WCC as a college that offered diverse opportunities for marginalized students, including programs catering to formerly incarcerated students, LGBTQ students, and students of color. However, faculty members expressed ongoing discussions and concerns about equity in the college. They raised questions about how administrators and their fellow faculty members understood and interpreted equity. One recurring theme was the need for consistent messaging and clear expectations regarding equity-related work. Faculty members observed variations in how different departments approached equity, leading to uncertainties

about who should be responsible for driving equity initiatives. Inconsistencies in labor expectations related to equity work further contributed to the challenges faculty members faced.

When reflecting on institutional commitments to equity, participants generally acknowledged the presence of resources available for students and expressed overall satisfaction with the college's orientation toward student equity. However, this section acknowledges the importance of examining faculty members' perspectives on equity and how they applied these principles in their work. Faculty members described actively advocating for and implementing equity-minded practices, but they often encountered challenges in the college, including policies, practices, colleagues, administrators, and leaders that hindered their efforts to promote equity effectively.

(Mis)aligned Directives: Perceptions of Institutional Equity Initiatives

Faculty reported inconsistencies between their definitions of equity and those of the institution, which at times led to conflicts in perceptions of what direction the college should go with equity. Carolina found herself grappling with new expectations and pressures during the COVID-19 global pandemic, particularly when it came to reaching out to students who were not attending Zoom class sessions. She recounted:

> [The dean] was urging faculty to call students that were not showing up . . . she was talking about calling them and reaching out and seeing what's going on and asking them how they're feeling. I almost felt like, "This is counseling work and this is not really my job description."

Although this specific dean strongly encouraged faculty to contact these students and inquire about their well-being, Carolina felt conflicted about taking on a counseling role that went beyond her job description. She stated:

> It's one thing to refer students to services, which I'm really happy to do. I'm glad we have those services, but it's another thing to actually be emotional support to students. I think somewhere there's got to be a line and I guess the culture at WCC is that and that

> surprised me because when I got hired, [I thought,] "I'm here to teach. I'm here to lecture." At WCC, I've been surprised that that gets blurred a lot.

From the faculty perspective, WCC goals created conflicting work requirements for faculty, and they received little support. For example, Carolina, a relatively new part-time instructor, shared how faculty were asked to be a support for students in a way that she was not expecting when she first took on the faculty role. Carolina, as an instructor, was not trained as a counselor and she found it "irresponsible" for her to try and provide students with personal emotional support. Carolina's dilemma became even more evident when a student shared a deeply personal struggle with her. Carolina said:

> I once had a student, she told me that she was absent one day because she was hospitalized because she attempted to kill herself and in that moment, in the back of my head, I was freaking out because I'm like, "I know that what I say to her can have an impact." So, as compassionate as I could be, I said, "I'm glad you're here. Don't worry about what you miss." And later, I spoke to a counselor who I was friends with and I was like, "What am I supposed to do? I don't want to say the wrong thing," because it's irresponsible to respond in a situation you're not trained for.

Carolina's experiences shed light on the complex challenges faculty members faced when confronted with expectations that extended beyond their traditional teaching roles. Balancing the need to support students emotionally while acknowledging personal limitations and the importance of trained professionals was a continuing concern for Carolina as she navigated her teaching responsibilities at WCC.

Paola reflected on her efforts to educate herself and engage in conversations about equity. She recalled attending a workshop on curriculum and equity but was disappointed because it did not provide the learning experience she expected. Discussing equity in her department had also been challenging, often leading to heated arguments due to the sensitivity of the topic. She said, "Talking about equity in [my] department, we've had screaming matches because it's so sensitive to people." She added, "A lot of the faculty . . . are like, 'I don't see color.'" Paola's

colleagues clearly adopted a colorblind perspective, which was insulting to her, as a person of color. Moreover, Paola shared a distressing incident she encountered during a faculty hiring committee, saying:

> We had a candidate. One of my colleagues said, "You want to be careful about where you rank that person because if they're ranked in the thing, they're going to get it because they're the minority." And I was like, "That is so inappropriate to say and so inappropriate to say with me present." And they were like, "But Paola, it's happened before." And I was like, "Again, inappropriate with me present." They're like, "We're not talking about you." And I was like, "I guess I should be thankful you're not talking about me? That is so insulting right now and so inappropriate." Yeah, you have to be comfortable with having conversations and not taking it personally, but when you're one of [the few faculty of color], it's really hard not to take it personally.

Paola's colleagues suggested that a minority might be given privileges based on their race and not their merit, assuming the candidate was unworthy of employment. Paola acknowledged her ongoing learning process in navigating these conversations and expressed the desire to find better ways to engage with her colleagues, even though it had not been comfortable thus far.

In another example, Carolina shared the varied perspectives and commitments to equity she believed faculty had. She mentioned, during a professional development day focused on equity, a debate arose when the dean asked faculty to express their understanding of equity. Carolina said:

> There was a little bit of a debate that came up, because our dean was asking us to express, "What is equity?" And there was an instructor who I would say is more of a traditional old-school thinking in terms of academia. They were a bit bugged by this emphasis on equity, because they were of the school of thought that there are some students that have limitations and they have to accept that they have those limitations. And they used the metaphor of, if someone that is a double amputee that doesn't have arms wants to be a boxer, you can't just say, "Oh, in the sake of equity, they can be."

Carolina found this argument to be "ridiculous" and a clear misunderstanding of the concept of equity. She countered with a personal example involving her husband, who had a blind student in his electronics class. Instead of dismissing the student's limitations, her husband went out of his

way to find a tactile electronics kit for the student, which brought her great joy and exceeded her expectations. She shared:

> I gave that example as a counterargument and [the faculty was] like, "Well . . . " There was a bit of a weird moment and I was almost like, "What are you doing here? Do you know where you are? This is a community college. If you think like that, I don't understand how you do what you do."

Carolina questioned the faculty member's compatibility with the community college environment because their mindset seemed incompatible with the values of inclusivity and support for students. Paola and Carolina's stories illustrated the challenges faculty of color faced defending and advocating for equity among colleagues who did not understand or agree with it.

Dolores acknowledged attending DEI events often felt like "preaching to the choir" because participants were typically individuals who already supported such initiatives. Individuals who may have contributed to "student trauma" through "ignorance" were often absent from these presentations and professional development opportunities. Only recently, in the prior couple of years, had professional development days emphasized DEI work. Even then, faculty members could find ways to opt out or fulfill their professional development requirements through alternative means, such as attending conferences or engaging in scholarly activities. Dolores found it "problematic" that there was "a clear path for a faculty member or a staff member who doesn't want to do that work, there's a clear path to steer right on out of it." This lack of mandatory participation raised concerns because the individuals who most needed to experience and understand the data and the lived experiences of students were the ones who were not actively engaging in this work. Although Dolores appreciated the positive strides made in DEI efforts, they believed it was essential for people who were causing harm or perpetuating ignorance to actively participate and learn from these initiatives. She shared:

> For me, I take issue with that because I feel like a lot of the work that's been done is great, but it's not being taken in by those who really need to experience that data or need to experience what that student goes through or feels like.

Henry echoed Dolores's statement, adding, "It's almost like the same set of people who are working in the areas of equity."

However, some faculty experienced a sense of exclusion engaging in campus-wide equity work. Paola detailed an experience, sharing:

> The DEI office was going to put together equity groups or hubs, or I don't know, some cute name, to discuss equity issues around the campus. We were asked to put our names on it as if we wanted to do it. I put my name on it. I was not chosen. I was like, "Okay." I just feel like a lot is like that here. For me, I'm chosen when they want to present someone who's super successful and is Latina. I am someone you want to put up there. My story, my success, great. But when I have opinions on things that are dealing with equity issues, those are not taken as seriously.

Paola believed she was usually only selected to represent success and diversity, but her opinions on equity matters were not taken seriously. She attributed this situation to a prevailing administrative group at WCC that held the power to lead and made decisions. In a related example, Tomas described his participation in a committee created to address issues for dreamers (i.e., undocumented students) on campus. He shared:

> At least for me, in the beginning, I would hear about these meetings, but then afterwards, I don't know if they continued the meetings or not, but I didn't hear about them anymore. . . . If I wasn't being included, then well, forget it.

Tomas noted this committee did not lead to any significant outcomes. The lack of communication made him feel excluded, leading him to believe the committee was not making progress. Tomas thought if he was not being included, he had other commitments to focus on instead. This section provided an overview exploring how faculty's perceptions of institutional equity initiatives often misalign with their own. Faculty often advocated and defended equity in their academic departments, and were at times dismissed.

(De)valued Labor and Dismissed Attempts to Engage in Equity

When individuals strive to implement equity measures in various ways but face dismissal or disregard from administrators or colleagues who may not fully comprehend their perspective on equity, it raises questions about the differing interpretations and understanding of equity in the institutional context. Faculty of color recounted stories of ways they attempted to advocate for diversity and equity. For example, Dolores shared the college allocated equity funding to pay for a valuable resource in her department. However, administrators questioned why they were using equity funding to pay for the resource. So, Dolores told her dean, "Hey, I would be happy to do a presentation for our equity folks and let them know how this resource is really valuable." However, her offer was rejected by her dean, who said, "No." Dolores remarked:

> For me, that was a prime example of a really missed opportunity that [we] could have had for faculty representation to really demonstrate the value of this really great resource that's very expensive that I know a lot of other community colleges don't have, because they just don't have that money, but we do. And it's very troubling that even when we bring these things up, sometimes they don't really get as much recognition, or even understanding of what this means when we're trying to share out this information of what impact it's making for our students, specifically for students who are impacted by perhaps not having that type of information available to them.

This missed opportunity was significant to Dolores because it could have been a chance for faculty representation to demonstrate the resource's value. She recognized many other community colleges could not afford such a resource, making its presence at their college even more valuable. Dolores expressed concern about the lack of recognition and understanding when sharing information about the resource's impact on students, especially students who may not have access to similar resources elsewhere.

When I asked Tomas what the most challenging aspect of his job was, he paused and hesitated as he attempted to communicate his experience in hiring committees. At first, Tomas stated:

> What I saw in the hiring committee, I just really considered the behavior . . . you know, kind of like, how can I say this? Well, there were some folks who were on this hiring committee who I believe were biased. You know, and it made it hard. Depending on who was on the committee, it made it hard to get somebody who was–

I noticed Tomas's hesitation to speak out and share details, so I encouraged him by saying, "You can be explicit. This is confidential." Immediately, Tomas perked up and confidently stated, "Some of the White folks, let's just say, that some of them, especially the White women, seem to be going out of their way to go after Latinas for every little thing." Tomas previously shared his department's faculty was primarily White, which did not reflect the student population. Having a racially diverse faculty was important to him, and he wished to hire more faculty of color in his department. Tomas served on several hiring committees where candidates of color "wouldn't make it to the final round."

Tomas recounted instances where certain committee members seemed to single out and scrutinize Latina candidates more intensely, making it challenging for them to advance in the hiring process. Tomas felt frustrated, sharing, "After a while, it made me kind of like, well, angry. . . . I got angry because as I said, I thought they were mistreating the Latina candidates who were coming in." Tomas shared specific examples, such as unfair judgments based on stereotypes, including assumptions about laziness or language proficiency. He said:

> There was one woman [candidate], she goes, "Yeah, my classes, I give them and they're great classes. And I know everybody shows up, so I don't even have to take attendance." That was her statement. Right. And all of a sudden out of that, the White women [faculty committee members] said, "Oh, she's lazy. She's one of those lazy Mexicans. She doesn't want to take attendance." Right. And I was like, "Not what she said." There was all these little things . . . And also, if somebody used, like I said, accent, right. They would say something with an accent, not that the word was wrong, but the accent was there. Right. [White women] would jump all over that, "Oh, we need somebody who knows how to speak well."

Tomas described how minor mistakes or differences, like accents or answers that did not align with the expectations of certain committee members, were blown out of proportion and used as

reasons to dismiss otherwise exceptional Latina candidates. Tomas observed a pattern of bias and expressed his frustration at the missed opportunities to hire qualified individuals due to overly critical assessments. Tomas also mentioned his dissatisfaction with the interview questions posed during the hiring process. He believed the questions lacked clear criteria and allowed for subjective interpretations, making it difficult for candidates to provide "correct" answers. Tomas thought different committee members had varying expectations and standards, leading to disagreements and a sense of wasting time. He shared:

> I would get terribly frustrated. I would finish participating, but then I'm like, "I don't want to do this again. This it's too much aggravation." . . . It was frustrating. That was the most frustrating thing. I mean, just to feel that somebody was not getting a fair shake, that was the hardest part, was I was arguing and these White women just join together like a block and just be immovable. And I was like, forget it. I'm just wasting my time. That's what I always hated. I hated being parts of the things where I felt I was wasting my time.

Despite advocating for candidates who would prioritize student needs in a teaching-focused institution, Tomas often found himself in the minority. He added:

> I saw a lot of good people that were just offhand dismissed . . . Who I like and what I liked would always end up being shot down or whatever. I was always on the minority end of it . . . I was always thinking I wanted to pick somebody who would be the best for the students . . . I'm like, "We're not a research institution. We're a teaching college. We got to focus on the students."

Tomas's experience serving on hiring committees was frustrating and he believed his attempts to advocate for faculty who would best serve the student population at WCC were constantly shut down.

In another example, Meena shared an experience where she was advocating for students' mental health but was shut down by an administrator. She stated:

> I've hit brick walls a few times . . . before the pandemic happened, there was a time when I was walking students over to personal counseling 10, 15 times a semester. And I was just appalled at how long they had to wait for getting an appointment with a counselor. And I became close with the person who ran the counseling center, the personal counseling center. And he told me that there was just not enough people. There just wasn't enough funding for counseling. . . . [So I] went in to see the president of the

> college at that time and asked him for more funding for the personal counseling on campus. And I was told that we needed to "do our job." And "this is an educational institution. Call 911 essentially if there's an emergency." . . . I was shut down.

Meena's request was met with a dismissive response, with the president emphasizing the primary role of the institution as an educational entity and suggesting emergency services as an alternative. Meena's efforts were effectively shut down, leaving her disheartened by the lack of support for addressing students' mental health needs.

Dolores recounted an incident where there was a substantial amount of funding for students available and administrators made a call to the entire campus community, inviting them to submit requests and ideas of how to use the money to support students amid the COVID-19 global pandemic. Dolores and a colleague collaborated to generate ideas. Dolores shared:

> [We wanted] to figure out ways that we can meet [students'] needs in terms of getting them some mental health support. And not so much traditional mental health support, like counseling, things like that, but just fun things like crafts. We wanted to do a photo booth, slime making, things that were just like, [do-it-yourself] fun stuff. So, we put all that in. They make some decisions, they decide we get $0, no funding for any of that. So, later on, when we get this new dean, I brought it up with her. I said, "Hey, we had tried to apply for this, we didn't get it, maybe you have some other ideas of how we can go about getting some of this." And she interrupted me mid-sentence and says, "No, you're not going to get that." And I was like, "Oh, okay." And she says, "That's not what cares money is for." And she's like, "It's for other things like laptops and other items." And again, I was making some connections that the way she sees things are very on a surface level of how we should go about operating as an institution. And to me, that really reflects the Whiteness of this institution that we continue to see like, oh, access means Wi-Fi hotspots, access means laptops, or supporting students means we're buying things and we're going to let people use them.

Dolores perceived a shallow understanding of how the institution should operate and noted a reflection of the institution's Whiteness, where access and support were limited to material items rather than fostering community engagement. Dolores, "as a non-White person," believed more emphasis should be placed on community building and bringing people together, especially considering the low enrollment numbers. Dolores and her colleague saw mental health activities as an avenue to achieve this goal, but their ideas were continually shut down, denying them the

opportunity to move forward. Dolores observed a pattern where individuals with decision-making power and access to funding opted for different priorities. Dolores shared, “There’s people like myself who are willing to give their labor ideas and really do something with it, but we are locked out of the funding and we’re locked out of the opportunity.” This experience highlighted the frustration Dolores felt as their labor, ideas, and aspirations to create meaningful impact were disregarded. It shed light on the disparities in decision making and the need for a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of support and community building in the institution.

A noninstructional faculty member—who is not identified, per their request—described a point of contention between (a) instructional and noninstructional faculty and (b) the college administration throughout the time of the study. At the time of the study, employees at WCC were beginning to return to campus to resume in-person work after the COVID-19 global pandemic lockdowns ended. This participant shared noninstructional faculty were told they would receive a hazard pay compensation of $50 a week if they could prove they spent 7 hours face-to-face with students. This participant expressed frustration because not all noninstructional faculty spent 7 hours a day with students. However, they explained:

> Interestingly, the college president initially sent an email to all staff members, stating that everyone would receive the compensation. However, during a division meeting, the [vice president] of instruction clarified the situation, stating that faculty members would have to meticulously document their face-to-face hours, specifying the day, time, and location, in order to be eligible for the $50 payment. This additional requirement placed an unnecessary burden on the faculty members, deeming the entire process a waste of their valuable time. . . . So, when that was dangled above us, “Hey, you’ll get $50.” And then we’re told, “Oh, wait, no. What you need to do is cobble together these hours and tell us face to face.” So, now we have to say what hour it was, what day it was. What a waste of our time.

The initial promise of receiving $50 was abruptly retracted, leaving faculty members feeling deceived and frustrated. Instead, they were required to meticulously track and report their face-

to-face hours, further complicating the already challenging task. The demand for such detailed documentation appeared to undermine the trust and confidence of the faculty members, who felt their time and efforts were undervalued. The entire ordeal left a sense of disappointment and resentment among the faculty because they perceived the process as a significant waste of their time and energy.

In another story, Isabel also highlighted challenges with administrators in her department. Several years prior to this study, Isabel was part of a movement to shift the community college's remediation model to one focused on providing wraparound support and immediate access to college-level courses, now known as California Assembly Bills 705 and 1705. However, during the beginning of the movement, Isabel described a hostile reception of the idea, stating, "The onslaught that we faced from the majority of our colleagues was just awful. That was the closest I came to just running away." As she attempted to gain buy in from her colleagues, Isabel referred to the social justice implications of removing remediation classes. However, she shared, "We were cautioned by our dean at the time that we shouldn't use the phrase social justice, because it was very upsetting to many of our colleagues." To ameliorate her colleagues' concerns about using language that could be viewed as "upsetting," Isabel stated, "We started to use the word equity. And that was right before equity became the accepted terminology. But equity was more palatable than social justice. Facing numerous challenges, Isabel decided to disengage from her department and redirect her energy, revealing:

> At that point, I was just like, "I'm done with this." So, I just left that work. I was like, if this work is going to exist, it can't exist on my back. It has to exist by buy in of everybody, or at least the majority of folks. It can't just be a project by a few people.

Isabel reflected on the experience, stating, "My survival strategy for that was to basically just divest myself of the department. . . . I just stopped, and focused all my energy on [other programs]." Isabel shared she was recently invited to coordinate some work that was meaningful

to her, sharing, "[Now, I am in] a place right now where they value what I value. And this work is not limited or taboo in some way, I'm not constantly fighting." Moreover, the program supervisor was like minded and had a similar perspective as Isabel. With a joyful tone in her voice, Isabel exclaimed, "This is the shit I used to do on the side for myself and my students. But it wasn't sanctioned by my dean." Now, Isabel felt appreciated in another space that shared her values.

Jeanette shared her perspective on the impact of the pandemic and "top-down" administrative decision making on the faculty. At the time of these interviews, faculty were asked to return to in-person work at WCC. Noninstructional faculty were asked to return to campus quicker and without proper precautions. Jeannette noted:

> I've been surprised and disappointed at how little care I have felt as an employee at the college in a pandemic. I think the missing piece is that maybe this lack of understanding or care, that when you really care about your employees, you help your employees to best help the students, and that hasn't happened. It's been more like, "Okay, these are the mandates, and we're putting these mandates down because we're student centered." But then my argument is that, "Actually, if you were student centered, you'd be talking to us, and there would be more transparency so that there isn't all this confusion, so that the services that we come up with as a collective, that makes sense, that uphold safety are really student centered." That has not been happening, it's been more like top down, and then there's this expectation that we're supposed to be student centered where the leadership thinks it's student centered. But if you're not treating your employees like the experts that we are, and if the mandates don't make sense in terms of safety and efficient protocol, then it's not student centered. It just creates a frazzled employee population, and it's going to impact how services are provided.

Jeanette described a surprising contrast between the campus's eagerness to reopen and the lack of clear guidance on ensuring safety during the reopening process. This lack of direction has hindered Jeanette's ability to focus on her daily responsibilities, and she expressed disappointment at the perceived lack of care and understanding from the college as an employer during the COVID-19 global pandemic. She believed that when an institution genuinely cares about its employees, it enables them to better support the students. However, in her experience,

there was a disconnect, with mandates and directives imposed without open dialogue or transparency.

Faculty in this study recognized and abided by the student-centered value of the college, and they came to learn and adopt the value as their own. Although the college and faculty agreed on this value, the implementation of policies and practices often clashed with faculty labor and working conditions.

Relatedly, faculty described a desire for empathy and compassion, particularly during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Dolores shared a personal experience during a Zoom meeting where she opened up about the challenges she was facing due to the pandemic, including a family member being intubated. However, instead of receiving understanding or empathy, she was met with a dismissive response from her boss, who essentially brushed off her concerns by saying that everyone was going through a difficult time. Dolores shared:

> I was met with not even, "I'm sorry to hear that," met with not any type of warmth or compassion. It was like, "You know Dolores, we're all having a hard time." I don't mean to get emotional, but the lack of support that, that was, it really hurt. And that's what we need. We need compassion and we need support too, not just our students. We need it also, because if they want us to show up for them . . . and when I see them, the students, they want us to show up for them. Our administration needs to show up for us too. They need to demonstrate that we matter in that way as well. And I called her out. I'm not going to lie. I got pissed when she did that. And I told her in that meeting, I said, "I know it's not in your job description to be caring and warm, but we need that from you too."

Although her boss did not further address the issue or reprimand Dolores for her response, Dolores realized she could not trust her boss and did not feel safe around her due to the lack of compassion. Dolores also noted, "As I talk to other faculty of color, the stories are there that are similar," highlighting the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on faculty of color compared to their White colleagues. However, she believed the level of support she and others received was inadequate.

The narratives in this section exemplify the ways faculty of color attempted to advocate for equity, keeping students' best interests in mind. Faculty believed they could make a difference in the lives of their students by hiring more faculty of color, having resources to research topics related to equity and justice, and improving students' rates of college completion by eliminating barrier courses. The stories in this section described each participant's values and moral stances, or why they thought it was essential to advocate for such causes. Additionally, they showed how their attempts to discuss and advocate for such changes were challenged and dismissed by people in power. Throughout the narration of their stories, participants displayed how the events made them feel discouraged and dissuaded them from advocating for similar agendas.

The Public Image of the College and the Actualities for Faculty of Color

Faculty in this study described a disconnect between the college's image as a successful college, and the lived experiences of faculty of color. Faculty specifically questioned the institutions values, and whether their image as a top college was true for students only, as faculty seemed to be left out of the conversation. In the study, a participant—who is not identified, per their request—raised important questions regarding the college's public image and the actual practices related to DEI. They called for a deeper examination of the meaning behind "buzzwords" like diversity, equity, and inclusion and called for tangible and actionable steps rather than performative gestures, stating:

> What do these buzzwords actually mean? Are they actionable? Are they tangible or are they performative because it's what's in fashion right now? Nobody's talking about that. It's like**,** I hear DEI happening everywhere, but it seems like DEI is coming out of one side of the college's mouth, and then on the other side, they're doing things that are not inclusive and super oppressive. So to me, sometimes it reads as just performative. . . . Now, we have an actual DEI area on campus and I know it's fairly new, but I wonder how, on a college level, that could actually be embedded on department levels. Because as far as I see now, everything's just performative. It's like, we can order the most

> popular books right now around antiracism and this and that, but then what? Are we talking about the microaggressions among colleagues? Are we talking about how it reads when a dean praises the same people in the room who are White and Asian, but overlook the Black and Brown people? We're not having those discussions. It's super performative to me. So it's like, what does it mean? Is it tangible or is it just like, what's in fashion right now?

The faculty member expressed concerns about the disconnect between the college's statements and its noninclusive and oppressive practices. They emphasized the importance of defining DEI in the institution and department and integrating it into day-to-day operations, focusing on sustained changes and genuine relationships rather than superficial actions, highlighting the need for ongoing commitment rather than one-time workshops or events. The participant questioned how DEI could be effectively embedded at the department level and critiqued the current performative nature of the initiatives, adding:

> Whoever you are outside is what you're going to bring into your teaching environment or your work environment. Maybe we need to work more on how are we showing up as individuals versus how am I showing up as an [employee].

Regardless of someone's role in the institution, this participant highlighted the importance of genuine relationships and open dialogue. They emphasized personal experiences and perspectives inevitably influence interactions in teaching and work environments, suggesting a need to focus on how individuals show up as themselves rather than merely as employees.

Yumin shared her experience of attending workshops on equity outside of WCC because the institution did not provide proper training or workshops on the topic. Yumin mentioned that although equity is a significant "buzzword," she had not received proper training or workshops on the topic at WCC. She explained:

> I went to some workshops, but to be honest with you, a lot of the workshops I attended was through [another college], just because they offered to pay for me to go to these workshops. And so, honestly through Willow, I hear people talk about it, but I never really went through any proper trainings or workshops regarding equity.

Yumin's comment raised questions about the lack of support and resources for DEI initiatives in the college, especially for adjunct faculty.

I asked participants to share what they perceived to be WCC's values. One faculty member responded:

> Achievement. I think that's one of the biggest values at WCC. Achievement, we focus a lot as an institution, we focus a lot on making sure that students can achieve a goal. So, I think that's the broader goal of WCC helping students either transfer, getting a certificate, or an [associate's] degree. So ultimately, that's the true goal of WCC. . . . That's good and bad. Sometimes, if that's our only focus, if that's our only goal, things can fall through the cracks. Things can fall through the cracks or be easily overseen. If we are completely focused on achieving stuff or winning prizes, we are very good at that as an institution, [but] WCC is one of the lowest-paid community colleges. So, we're focusing on achievement. We're putting all our eggs in that basket. We're focusing towards that.

The participant noted that despite the prestige associated with WCC, there was still room for improvement, particularly in terms of equitable compensation and support for faculty and staff. Many employees felt discrepancy between the institution's reputation and the realities they faced, having to work harder and face additional challenges without commensurate recognition or compensation.

Isabel shared several areas where she believed the administration could make positive changes. One aspect she mentioned was transparency, particularly regarding the allocation of a significant financial donation from MacKenzie Scott (i.e., a wealthy American philanthropist). Isabel believed a public accounting of where the funds were used would be beneficial and help shape the narrative surrounding the institution. Isabel also highlighted the need for high-quality professional development focused on equity at all levels of the organization, which would require an openness to structural change and a proactive approach to address issues related to diversity and inclusion. Another area Isabel discussed was the administration's approach to returning to normalcy after the COVID-19 global pandemic. She suggested that rather than solely aiming for a complete return to prepandemic practices, the administration could seize the

opportunity for flexible workplaces and education. By offering options for remote work and embracing creativity and flexibility, WCC could improve employee satisfaction and retain valuable staff members. Isabel expressed concerns about the rigid mindset in the administration and the negative impact it could have on the institution and its employees. She specifically mentioned the unequal treatment of staff members and the lack of flexibility in allowing remote work, despite the feasibility of certain roles being performed effectively from home. Isabel noted:

> Let's be a leader in this area. Let's take this window of opportunity. People have long complained that we don't have enough space on campus, so let some people become permanent remote and then you have more space on campus and some jobs can be done just as well. . . . So, this lack of flexibility, of creativity, is a big problem. And the more they try to be rigid, I just think the worse it is for the institution and the people that are in it. . . . So, transparency, creativity, flexibility, empathy would be a really good one from admin . . . we're supposed to be this institution of higher education, so innovative. And if we can't figure out a better way to be, that sucks.

During the interviews, multiple participants expressed their perspectives on the college's emphasis on achievement as both a positive and potentially negative aspect. Although the institution prioritized student achievement, it could sometimes lead to overlooking other important areas or issues. Participants also discussed the significant pay disparities among faculty and staff at WCC compared to other community colleges, highlighting the need for equitable compensation. Overall, these perspectives underscored the need for substantive changes, transparency, and ongoing commitment to DEI efforts in the college, challenging superficial actions and promoting genuine dialogue and understanding among colleagues.

"I Don't Take on the Responsibility of the College in My Backpack" – Resistance Practices Among Faculty of Color

In the study, participants shared their strategies for addressing challenges and promoting equity in their roles. Three themes appear in this section: (a) faculty members discussed the

reorientation of their time and energy to provide support, particularly to faculty of color; they actively engaged in support networks, exchanging valuable information, resources, and emotional support among each other; (b) participants emphasized the importance of setting boundaries to avoid taking on excessive or low-value work, prioritizing their mental and emotional well-being and preventing burnout; and (c) they expressed the need for greater recognition and validation of their labor in the context of WCC, hoping to see more appreciation for their contributions.

Faculty Support Networks

Participants' stories highlight the importance of faculty networks and support networks in navigating the challenges and frustrations faculty members faced, particularly faculty members from marginalized groups. These spaces provided opportunities for validation, mutual support, knowledge sharing, and resistance against the dismissive and exploitative practices in academic institutions.

Despite pulling back from investing her heart and soul into the department, Isabel remained deeply committed to supporting junior faculty members. This dedication stemmed from her own experiences and frustrations in the department. Having served on a hiring committee, she developed a strong determination to protect and support the faculty members they brought on board. Isabel noted:

> I pulled back from putting my heart and soul into the department. But what I did put my heart into is supporting junior faculty. So, especially once I served on that hiring committee, I was not going to let anybody fuck with those people that we hired. So, when they started to experience a lot of the same things I experienced, I did advocate for them. I do advocate for them. And both individually and then in group settings. And I have made it a point to check in with them, see how they're doing, see what they need. Try to bolster and be there for when they need support from somebody who is more senior.

As one of the most senior faculty members in the department, Isabel recognized her position and used it to provide support and solidarity to junior faculty. She checked in with them regularly,

offering a listening ear and addressing their needs. When these junior colleagues began encountering similar challenges and obstacles, Isabel took it upon herself to advocate for them. She actively supported them both individually and in group settings, ensuring they had necessary guidance and assistance. By being there for the junior faculty, Isabel aimed to offer the kind of support she wished she had received in her own early career.

Dolores highlighted the significance of a faculty and staff association, which was a group open to anyone in the college community, including faculty, staff, and part-time employees. Although their primary mission was to support one another, they also prioritized serving their students. They gathered on Zoom once or twice a month, organizing programs and workshops that aimed to enrich the faculty members' experiences.

Examples of the association's initiatives included workshops on topics such as first-time home buying, continuing education, pursuing advanced degrees like a PhD, and exploring research opportunities. They also hosted events featuring authors to discuss their work. These programs were designed not only to benefit the faculty but also to foster upward mobility among the members. Additionally, the faculty and staff association took an active role in addressing employee relations issues. They communicated concerns to the college president regarding issues like the handling of the COVID-19 global pandemic, return-to-work policies, and the impact on the Latinx population. They engaged in community awareness efforts and collaborated with the college foundation to raise funds for scholarships. Dolores shared:

> That's the work that I think is really valuable for some of us that charges our batteries a bit more when we can do stuff like that to really give back to our students where for me, where I'm not always so fulfilled in my own area, when I have that space to really be able to work with my colleagues to make a difference, it feels good. And like I said, just feels like I get to recharge my batteries. So, [faculty and staff association] is really a space, not just for us to support our students, but to support each other.

Dolores found great value in engaging with the faculty and staff association because it allowed her to give back to students and collaborate with her colleagues in making a difference. It served as a space where they supported and recharged one another, providing a sense of fulfillment beyond their individual areas of work.

Similarly, I asked Dolores to share about a time when she felt validated as a faculty of color. Dolores found a sense of validation and support during the COVID-19 global pandemic through regular Zoom meetings with her colleagues. These meetings provided a space for open conversation without any set agenda. They used this time to discuss the impact of the pandemic on their lives, sharing their thoughts and feelings without expecting any specific solutions. It was like a talking circle where they could freely express themselves. Dolores said, "It was a place to vent and hear each other. And I feel like that was a really strong form of validation." The validation she found in unofficial spaces highlighted the lack of sanctioned institutional support. Dolores posed the question, "Is just like awakening more of that this institution cares about my labor, but do they care about me and my well-being?"

Isabel and Dolores's stories shared how they found and created spaces of support; these unofficial spaces were places where like-minded faculty members could validate each other, provide mutual support, share knowledge, and challenge the dismissal they experienced in their departments. Still, their stories expressed how "the institution" disregarded and did not care about them. Participants suggested the institution's values clashed with theirs. Dolores questioned what the institution cared about, and Isabel seemed to know what it cared about, which was not her, and she protected herself from the institution. Isabel also alluded to the emotional labor, quite literally, through her repetition of the word "heart" and putting it into the

work. These complementary stories offered accounts of resistance and resilience. However exploitative the work was, faculty of color found ways to challenge the dominant logics.

In another interview, Carolina shared her involvement with a group of adjunct faculty members who came together unofficially during the COVID-19 global pandemic to support and connect with each other. She divulged:

> I have communication with adjuncts because I'm part of a part-timers group. They're an unofficial group that banded together during the pandemic to share and support each other and I have noticed that too. . . . So, in the beginning of the pandemic, there was a lot of . . . what's the word? There's a lot of dissent amongst faculty because of what the college wanted to do in terms of requiring online education training and any compensation for hazard pay. It was a lot in the air because the college is figuring it out as we went along. So, there's a lot of dissatisfaction with our teachers' union and there was a feeling that they're really there to represent full-timers and that part-time benefits and rights are really on the side. So, during our big Zoom meetings, there was a lot of chatter in the chat box and a lot of people agreeing with each other like we're not happy here. And so, someone just took the initiative to say, "Let's all share our nonworking emails," and we have a Google group. And so, it turned into like, "Oh, who else do you know? Let's reach out and find out who all the adjuncts are in all the divisions. Let's reach out to them." There was real grassroots effort to connect everybody.

Adjunct faculty were dissatisfied with the college's handling of issues such as online education training and compensation for hazard pay. Carolina mentioned a sense of dissatisfaction with the teachers' union, thinking it primarily represented full-time faculty while neglecting the rights and benefits of part-time faculty. To address these concerns, adjunct faculty members took initiative and formed a Google group where they could share information and communicate with one another. They organized virtual meetings to discuss ways to improve representation and advocated for more part-time faculty to be elected to the board of the faculty association, resulting in positive changes. This grassroots effort helped foster connections and fostered a diverse community among adjunct faculty members.

Carolina observed various issues adjunct faculty members faced across different divisions, such as canceled classes without explanation, lack of communication from deans, and

being excluded from scheduling without a clear reason. She acknowledged her own fortunate experience of having good relationships with her deans and being able to address concerns during division meetings. However, she noticed this experience was not the case for everyone because there were widespread difficulties in faculty–dean relationships. Carolina also mentioned growing resentment among faculty members, including full-time faculty, toward the faculty association. Some faculty members were exploring the possibility of meeting with a different union due to dissatisfaction. Issues such as compensation disparity compared to other community colleges, insufficient benefits, and lack of essential facilities like a faculty lounge or mailboxes had been ongoing concerns for a while. The financial stability of the college further highlighted the need for better support and fair treatment of faculty members. Adjunct pay parity and the absence of benefits for part-time faculty were longstanding problems that were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Carolina shared:

> Adjunct pay parity has been a problem for a long time and we haven't had any benefits and apparently other colleges do provide part-timers with benefits. So, that's always been a big problem. And I think with the pandemic, people are actually being pushed to the breaking point.

Carolina emphasized how faculty members had reached their breaking point, expressing their dissatisfaction to the faculty association and demanding action. The faculty association, which had remained unchanged for years, often cited resistance from the district as a reason for the lack of progress, but faculty members were growing increasingly frustrated with this response.

Isabel described her role as a support system for fellow teachers when dealing with challenges imposed by the dean. She shared faculty would reach out to her when facing pressure regarding governance hours, an obligation that lacked clear accountability structures. The dean specifically targeted certain teachers, suggesting they join committees and fulfill additional responsibilities. However, Isabel provided guidance to these teachers, helping them navigate the

situation. She advised teachers not to feel obligated to reply immediately to the dean and coached them on self-protection. She encouraged them to seek assistance from a union representative or ask for a faculty member to accompany them during discussions. Isabel recognized many teachers were already doing more than required in terms of governance but went unnoticed by the dean. So, she assisted them in listing their existing contributions to demonstrate their efforts, telling them, "'Let's look at the governance you're already doing,' because of course, they're already doing way more than they need to do. She just doesn't see it. Right? So let's list it out for her."

Isabel also mentioned instances where she personally advocated for faculty members. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, she urged the dean to inform faculty they had the discretion to assess students' learning outcomes beyond the points in their grade books. Isabel stressed the importance of the dean explicitly stating this permission to alleviate concerns for junior faculty who might hesitate to deviate from traditional grading methods, fearing backlash from senior colleagues. Isabel explained to the dean that by voicing this permission, she could provide necessary support and relief to teachers, ensuring a more compassionate approach to student evaluation. Isabel recognized her limited institutional power but was determined to use it to improve the overall experience for faculty and students. Isabel added, "It's that kind of trying to use whatever little bits of institutional power I have to make things a little less horrible. So, it's some of that."

Isabel emphasized the significance of conversations and their potential to make a difference, even in small ways. She recounted an experience with an incredible teacher whom she took out to lunch. During their conversation, the teacher sought Isabel's advice on the timing of having children, considering the demands of her career. Isabel's response was simple yet

impactful. She shared, “Whenever you want. Do not put any of your life plans on hold for this institution or any institution. Live your life when and how you want.” To Isabel’s surprise, the teacher expressed gratitude for her advice, highlighting the importance of their conversation. Isabel did not initially perceive it as a significant act, but it resonated with the teacher on a personal level. Isabel said, “It’s not something she should have to need to hear. But I think our institutions are so toxic and dehumanizing, that just having somebody be decent can sometimes feel like a big deal.” Isabel and other faculty in this study described supporting other faculty in varied ways, from sharing knowledge to advocating on behalf of adjunct and junior faculty.

Upholding Boundaries

Faculty in the study also described how they purposefully upheld boundaries to maintain their physical, mental, and emotional health. They also described not taking on too much work, especially work that was not meaningful. Paola shared an instance where, as one of the few faculty of color in her department, she was involved in a DEI committee initiated by her dean. At the time, the campus leadership called for departments to address equity issues; thus, Paola’s dean decided to form the committee voluntarily. Paola took on a leadership role in the committee; however, the committee’s efforts fell short of expectations. For example, they read a book on DEI issues, but Paola found the process of reading the book to be ineffective. During discussions, Paola often found herself taking the lead due to disagreements with the ideas presented or a sense that the committee was not making significant progress. Due to her frustration, she shared:

> I decided to step down this year because I wanted to see if it would get further without me being a part of it, me leading it. So, I thought . . . we can see if it goes further and it’s not just me discussing everything from my point of view.

Ana similarly declared:

> I have specific priorities, and I don't take on the responsibility of the college in my backpack. My backpack is 45 students to 60 students per class. That is my responsibility. I don't try to do too much or too little.

Ana was very conscious of maintaining a balanced approach in her role. She was aware of her responsibilities and avoided taking on unnecessary tasks or excessive data collection. Her primary focus was to reduce attrition and ensure students who began her class were able to successfully complete it. She noted:

> I'm fully aware of how [the California Community College] system works, how is the funding funnel, what is my ethical responsibility. I'll not overstep my boundaries, but I will never trade ethics and integrity for helping anybody. That is your question, I cannot answer it because it doesn't come under the umbrella of my responsibility, my duties and responsibilities. It is an extended umbrella, so if it comes my way, I handle it, but it's not in my immediate umbrella. My umbrella is you start with me, you'll finish with me, and you will get your three units.

Although Ana was dedicated to helping others, she remained mindful of not overstepping her boundaries or compromising ethics and integrity. She clarified that certain questions fell outside the immediate scope of her responsibilities, but if they came her way, she addressed them while staying in the framework of her primary role. Her primary umbrella of responsibility was ensuring students who started with her finished the course and earned their three units, adding, "You need to know your responsibilities, and you shouldn't do more than what you're supposed to do because if you're not trained for it, you can make a mess of it."

Jeanette made a decision the prior semester to step back from being the sole messenger or decision maker. She believed in a collaborative approach where everyone, as colleagues, could come together and contribute to the decision-making process instead of relying on a top-down model. After experiencing challenges with a new boss, she decided to let others take the lead and make decisions, seeking a sense of teamwork rather than a hierarchical dynamic. She stated, "[I want] to protect my peace. I said, 'Okay, I'm going to pass the torch. Others need to start making decisions and let me know what you want to do.' So, that's been the way I've been protecting

myself." Throughout this process, Jeanette found support from certain colleagues, and she prioritized protecting her peace of mind. She decided to pass the torch and allow others to make decisions, while still remaining available to support and contribute as needed. By taking this approach, Jeanette aimed to foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment while safeguarding her own well-being.

Tomas expressed his desire to push for increased diversity in the faculty, acknowledging it might be a frustrating process but believing it was worth trying. He stated, "If you don't try then, well, then you got nobody to blame." Further, he said:

> I want to relax, enjoy myself, take care of what needs to be taken care of at home and the community, whatever, WCC will still be there. The institution will go on without me. There's some people that'll say they're going to miss me and stuff like that, but I don't know. I think I'm replaceable. I don't know. I don't think I'm indispensable. I have some experiences maybe that other people don't have, but I think there's good people out there who come in.

Tomas contemplated the challenges and frustrations he faced in advocating for diversity while maintaining a realistic view of his own replaceability. He opted to prioritize personal well-being and pursue other endeavors after contributing his experiences to the institution.

Finally, Henry described the process he took when it came to supporting students and taking on mentoring work. He shared:

> I have been trying to be very mindful in how I do it, in terms of stepping over boundaries. Right? So, I think my general, natural tendency would be to want to be of use and help [students] in any way I can. But then, I think, through the years, I learned that's not necessarily wise. I'm going to get burnt out, for one, but also sometimes I'm taking things on that are not mine to take on, and that prevents other people from stepping in and doing their part and supporting the students.

Henry developed a thoughtful approach to supporting students and engaging in mentoring work. Over the years, he learned to be mindful of boundaries and not overstep them. By maintaining this awareness, he ensured he struck a balance between offering guidance and allowing others to contribute to the students' development and well-being. Although the faculty in this study

consistently took on extra responsibilities and exceeded their labor expectations, they also maintained boundaries when the workload became overwhelming. It was crucial for faculty members to acknowledge when their efforts were ineffective or disregarded and make the decision to delegate tasks to others, providing themselves with the chance to step back and prioritize their mental well-being.

Validating Identities and Acknowledging Labor

Participants, who were members of the WCC community, shared their perspectives on various aspects of their experiences at the college. They discussed the importance of validating identities and acknowledging labor, recognizing the pedagogical intent behind teaching practices and advocating for faculty of color.

Isabel emphasized the need for administrators to understand the purpose and scholarly foundations behind innovative teaching approaches, offering a shield of support for faculty members during evaluations. She shared:

> When I'm on somebody's evaluation committee, I think that's really important work. . . . I think the administrators don't always see it. They don't understand that there's a pedagogical intent and that these are teachers, when I think of our best teachers, who they're not doing any of this just by accident, right? They're intentionally forming relationships with students. They're intentionally creating a classroom that is not hierarchical, right? They're intentionally un-grading or trying different equitable grading strategies. That all of this has a purpose, and a grounding, and often a whole body of scholarship behind it. Because the default in our department is like you just have traditionalist people who do things the way they've always been done. But they can't tell you why. . . . So, when I'm writing evaluations, I want to put all of that in there so that if they get criticized for any of that, it's a little shield for them.

Isabel recognized administrators may not always fully grasp the pedagogical intent behind these practices. She aimed to shed light on the purpose and grounding of such teaching approaches, ensuring administrators understood the scholarly foundations and thoughtfulness behind these methods. In contrast to the default traditionalist approach in her department, Isabel valued teachers who could articulate the scholars who informed their practice, such as bell hooks, Paulo

Freire, and Ladson-Billings. She considered it essential to include these scholarly references in her evaluations, serving as a shield for faculty members in case their innovative approaches received criticism.

Jeannette expressed her desire to find joy in her instructional work and incorporate her creativity and content creation skills into meaningful projects that connect with students. She noted:

> I learned that I had to create my own value even if I wasn't getting like, acknowledgements for it. So, I think I'm just trying to tap back into finding things that are fulfilling and meaningful that I feel help connect with students, and also help me to connect to like my best self as like a professional so that I want to be there.

Paola highlighted the need for recognition and space for faculty to openly discuss issues, particularly for faculty of color. She called for acknowledging the valuable work faculty do, emphasizing their role as mentors and the importance of training and resources to act as advisors to students. Paola mentioned:

> At WCC, I don't think it's recognized that faculty mentor, I think they are very student centered, student service centered. And so, it's like, they only acknowledge that student services or success coaches do this stuff . . . For me, just in general, acknowledging faculty that they are doing amazing work and that we do take on these other roles, and that's not saying that we're doing a counselor's job or anything like that, but that is a role that's important that faculty have. Acknowledging that we are a faculty, students spend 90% of their time on campus with faculty members. We kind of are the face of college. We are like that. And so, giving us the training and resources to act more as advisors, I think would go a long way. But yeah, so I think that would be really a powerful thing for them to do. And then, just acknowledging the work of faculty and especially underrepresented faculty, I think in highlighting their work.

Yumin emphasized the importance of equity as an employee, particularly in terms of access to supervisors and leaders, regardless of position or hours worked. She also expressed her appreciation for leaders who involved others in decision-making processes and valued open communication, sharing:

> I love my job and really want to be good at my job. And so, I think I spent the last 3 years of being a counselor, learning a lot of different factual things that would actually help my

> students. [And] I want equity as an employee. Meaning, I want access to my boss, to my supervisor, regardless of who I am as an employee. So, regardless of how many hours I work at WCC, regardless of my position, whether I'm adjunct or full time, just someone being available or making me feel like that they're available for me whenever I could reach out to them for any reason.

Yumin expressed her desire for equity as an employee at WCC, emphasizing the importance of having access to their boss or supervisor regardless of their position or hours worked.

Ana reflected on the positive impact of WCC on her professional growth and development; she felt supported and had sufficient time and resources to navigate her responsibilities, including the opportunity to learn from mistakes with the aid of technology. Despite not being able to physically access the campus due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Ana appreciated the nurturing environment and the campus' role in fostering her strength and resilience. She expressed gratitude for the opportunities provided by WCC, including attending conferences, and felt a strong sense of belonging and support from the institution. Ana shared:

> Sometimes, I have to catch myself and remind myself, "Oh my God, Ana, remember you're an adjunct." That never enters, because I've been to a conference every year that WCC has sent me to, as far as I can remember, there's nothing that WCC has not done for me because I ask [WCC] for what I need.

Carolina expressed feeling supported and welcomed as a woman of color at WCC, while Ana reflected on her ability to execute her responsibilities effectively in the scope provided by the college. She expressed gratitude for the support and opportunities they received, including attending conferences and feeling a strong sense of belonging. Faculty wanted to see more transparency, creativity, flexibility, and empathy from the administration at WCC. These changes could contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment for both staff and faculty. Overall, these voices shed light on the importance of recognizing and valuing the labor and identities of faculty members, promoting inclusive practices, providing support and resources, and creating spaces for open dialogue and collaboration at WCC.

Conclusion and Summary of the Findings

In this chapter, I provided an analysis of the collected data. Through thematic analysis, several themes emerged in response to the research questions. First, identifying as a faculty of color allowed participants to connect with students on different levels, encouraging them to pursue careers in the system and offering a deep understanding of the unique student characteristics. Additionally, faculty thought their roles resonated with the democratic and open-access mission of community colleges that emphasized student opportunities and services. Second, participants perceived equity as a means to address disparities, aiming to balance the scales by ensuring resources and opportunities for student success. To realize this, faculty employed strategies like using OER, competency-based assessment practices, mentoring, leading initiatives, advocating for faculty of color, and bolstering accessible education and student services. However, many of these equity endeavors were not always part of the official labor expectations, with faculty frequently undertaking these roles voluntarily and without extra pay. Moreover, when defining their understanding of equity, several faculty lacked an explicit acknowledgement of racism and expressed their views aligned with the generic concept of equality. Finally, faculty experienced (mis)aligned directives and views on institutional equity initiatives, (de)valued labor and overlooked efforts in equity, and a contrast between the college's public image and the realities for faculty of color.

In this study, participants expressed their desire for administrators to recognize their labor and provide them resources and/or compensation. Through their stories, faculty attempted to show their value, possibly in ways they could not share directly with administrators or leaders. It is important to acknowledge that equity is an evolving concept and not all faculty members possessed the same level of knowledge, training, or messaging regarding what equity entails.

This variation in understanding added complexity to the study because it emphasized the need to capture diverse perspectives and interpretations of equity in the faculty community. By doing so, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how faculty members conceptualized and implemented equity across different contexts. It is important to continue fostering open dialogue, addressing faculty concerns, and promoting consistent messaging and expectations around equity to ensure a cohesive and effective approach to advancing equity at WCC.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I examined the labor expectations and perceptions of faculty of color in community colleges. My main objective was to gain a deeper understanding of how faculty of color comprehended and navigated the concept of equity, how they described their efforts to enact equity in their work, and the challenges they encountered while doing so. I situated this study in the frameworks of institutional logics, critical race theory (CRT), and resistance. Using these frameworks, I analyzed the organizational norms that shaped labor expectations; the underlying logics that influenced individual behavior and meaning making; and the significance of race, racism, and power through counterstorytelling for people of color in community colleges. Additionally, I focused on the ways faculty of color resisted oppressive norms and structures and challenged labor expectations to engage in meaningful work, which made a positive impact on the community college students.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the study and provide a comprehensive understanding of the implications and significance of the study's outcomes by establishing connections to theoretical frameworks and existing literature. Further, I provide insights to the implications of this research for future studies, theoretical advancements, policy considerations, and practical applications. The implications from this study can contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding labor expectations and perceptions of faculty of color in community colleges and pave the way for meaningful changes in research, theory, policy, and practice.

Discussion

In this section, I discuss the study's findings, interpreting them through the lens of the theoretical frameworks. I specifically address how the institutional logics of neoliberalism, democracy, and equity framed the sociopolitical and economic context of community colleges

and faculty labor expectations. I also discuss the findings through a critical race lens, uncovering how participants' racial and ethnic identities influenced their experiences, particularly their experiences with racism, microaggressions, and feelings of (in)validation. Finally, I shed light on the ways participants' actions served as a form of resistance against oppressive dominant logics.

Labor Expectations Shaped by Institutional Logics

The central focus of this study centered on examining the institutional logics of neoliberalism, democracy, and equity because these logics are instrumental in setting the sociopolitical and economic frameworks in community colleges. The term institutional logics refers to a set of guiding principles that dictate individual and organizational norms and behaviors (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Evidence gleaned from institutional documents and participant interviews underscored the intertwined logics of equity, democracy, and neoliberalism, serving as guiding forces for the purpose of community college education and shaping the labor expectations placed on faculty.

The findings illuminated how the logics of democracy influenced faculty's perceptions of community colleges as intrinsically democratic institutions, a perspective that originated from their historical mission of open access. For example, faculty described the purpose of community colleges are to provide opportunities, particularly to populations who may not have had other opportunities to attain a higher education. Tomas and Valeria both noted their belief that community colleges can offer a "second chance" at education. The logic of democracy is evident in the community college's purpose and "manifestation of opportunity" (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018, p. 466). Faculty behaviors, norms, and beliefs are largely influenced by the open access opportunity and democratic logic. Relatedly, faculty described an alignment with the idea of equity, and equity-mindedness, a race-conscious approach that acknowledges the structural and

systemic nature of racial inequities in higher education and focuses on generating equitable outcomes for students. As reported in the findings, participants related their roles to the overarching goal of equity, which was essential in their attempts to "level the playing field," as Dolores noted. Faculty members displayed a deep awareness of the student population they served and exhibited a profound commitment to the mission of providing opportunities and serving the student population. Yet, while participants acknowledged the inequities in the outcomes of students in the college, they often lacked institutional support to promote equity within their roles.

The context of neoliberalism was equally pervasive and manifested through the community college's mission of adopting a workforce focus. This focus heightened concerns about student enrollment, educational outcomes, and funding sources. The drive to enhance the productivity of the workforce for the state has arguably resulted in a series of consequential decisions, including shaping the orientation of the community college's purpose, often with shrinking financial resources (Ayers, 2015; Baber et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2011). Unfortunately, these actions have also led to the creation of an insecure labor force, a reality particularly stark for adjunct faculty members (Kezar & Maxey, 2012), such as Carolina and Yumin, who expressed how they faced job insecurity at the end of each semester. The neoliberal environment has precipitated additional burdens for faculty of color, including mounting unspoken labor expectations such as leading diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives; mentoring students of color; and championing social justice in their departments.

The study's findings on the experiences of faculty of color teaching in community colleges resonate with existing research. Faculty of color displayed an empathetic understanding of their students' backgrounds, especially when they shared similar life histories and

characteristics (e.g., growing up low income, first-generation students). This finding mirrors the experiences of Latinx leaders who forged relatable connections with community college students (Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020). Faculty members in this study revealed their drive to work in community colleges was motivated by a desire to give back to their communities. Specifically, Valeria, Luz, Diego, Dolores, and Tomas, who were community college students themselves, experienced what it meant to have a second chance at higher education—an opportunity that may have been inaccessible elsewhere. These participants held a steadfast belief in the mission of community colleges and their capacity to provide marginalized and underserved students with educational opportunities. The logic of democracy was evident through the continued phrasing of community colleges as institutions that offer opportunity.

All participants, including those who had and had not been community college students, identified with their students in various ways such as sharing identities as first-generation college students, immigrant students, and student parents. For instance, Henry described growing up in a working-class immigrant community that resembled the student population at Willow Community College (WCC). James Logan related his experience as a parenting student in college to the student parents he saw on campus. Faculty emphasized the importance of understanding the student demographic they served, stressing the need to provide essential resources and support to level the playing field for students. Such resources included the development of OERs, which Meena and Valeria championed. Faculty members demonstrated a deep commitment to their student population, suggesting a strong alignment with the core logic of democracy and opportunity in community colleges.

Regarding the impact of neoliberalism on faculty of color in community colleges, several core themes and insights emerged that shed light on how neoliberal ideologies have reshaped

institutional dynamics, roles, and responsibilities. Although participants in this study described an alignment with the logic of equity and democracy, they also described going above and beyond their traditional expectations. For instance, faculty described enacting equity by offering mental health resources, displaying care, and getting to know their students' individual needs. Although these actions are noteworthy and admirable, such labor often goes uncompensated and underacknowledged; yet, this labor is an unspoken expectation. Carolina noted this expectation in her description of conducting "check ins" with students, and Henry acknowledged he did not get compensated for mentoring, despite it being an unofficial part of the job. Paola added, "I don't think it's recognized that faculty mentor." The introduction of neoliberal market orientation extends faculty responsibilities beyond the classroom, adding administrative burdens that often exceeded the scope of compensated labor (Gonzales & Ayers, 2018). One of the most concerning impacts of neoliberalism is the overreliance on adjunct faculty. The lack of clear pathways to full-time employment further inhibits the professional growth and stability of faculty members, as described by Carolina and Veleria when expressing their concerns about the value of their volunteer labor on opportunities to gain full-time employment at WCC. This situation resonates with Giroux's (2010) critique of the reduction of part-time faculty to "a new subaltern class of disempowered educators" (p. 185). There is an overreliance and marginalization of adjunct faculty in institutions. Moreover, there are unclear pathways to full-time positions and inadequate compensation and benefits for adjunct faculty in community colleges compared to adjunct faculty at other types of institutions.

It is also important to consider the neoliberal policies that influence top-down decision-making processes and the marginalization of faculty voices in institutional decisions. The neoliberal approach exacerbates existing power imbalances and dismisses the unique needs and

perspectives of faculty of color. Moreover, neoliberal policies have resulted in underfunding for faculty professional development. This underfunding is problematic because it hinders faculty members from engaging in meaningful learning experiences and perpetuates inequities in the system.

Neoliberalism's manifestation in higher education also includes increased surveillance through managerialism and accountability mechanisms such as standardized tests and learning outcomes (Bylsma, 2015). In some ways, the push for competency-based assessments is a point of resistance, but California faculty in this study also faced the impending outcomes-based funding formula. In Bylsma's (2015) study, "The market emphasis on creating the best return on the investment of one's education thus prioritizes individual skills and competencies, leaving little room for qualities and values that contribute to the public sphere" (p. 10). Ayers (2005) contended community colleges' alignment with neoliberal ideologies often contradicts the pursuit of emancipatory and sustaining education. For example, Henry described wanting to educate for purposes that went beyond economic reasons, such as developing students to make a well-informed and knowledgeable society. Similarly, Paola described a desire to encourage students to get excited about scientific knowledge.

Findings from this study underscored the multifaceted and complex ways in which neoliberal ideologies impact faculty of color in community colleges. Findings also suggest a need for critical examination of the institutional logics and policies including how they shape faculty roles, responsibilities, and experiences in community colleges. Community college administrators and faculty should foreground the voices, experiences, and labor of faculty of color as vital inputs into institutional decision-making processes and practices. The neoliberal

focus presents a contrast to the logics of democratic and equity, highlighting the multifaceted influences that shape community college institutions and the experiences of faculty.

Applying CRT to the Study of Faculty of Color in Community Colleges

I used CRT to examine the experiences and perceptions of faculty of color in community colleges. Baez (2000a) stated, "As professionals often with extensive autonomy . . . much of what happens to faculty of color can be said to be individual phenomena. . . . Yet, as members of racial and ethnic minorities, these individuals are vulnerable to racially oppressive institutional structures" (p. 333). CRT provides a valuable lens for critically analyzing the structural challenges faculty of color face and how they respond to such challenges. The counterstories from participants challenged dominant narratives (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Participants' counterstories served as an effective medium to challenge dominant narratives in their institutions. For instance, faculty members like Paola questioned the validity of a claimed 98% success rate for a specific science course, arguing, "Only the most successful students get there." Paola interrogated the established perception of the community college as "excellent," suggesting the success rates may have been artificially inflated by limiting enrollment to only high-performing students.

Additionally, faculty like Luz and Jeannette questioned the label of WCC as a top institution dedicated to equity and diversity, noting a discrepancy between the institution's commitment to serve students of color versus faculty of color. Jeannette and Dolores, as underrepresented faculty, portrayed a socially isolating environment where their contributions and ideas were often dismissed, which conflicted with institutional perceptions of equity. These counterstories contested the established view of community colleges as models of excellence and fostered a broader discourse on the complex issues of quality and equity in education.

Furthermore, faculty of color often faced hurdles when advocating for equity and students of color. Interactions with administrators and White colleagues frequently exposed faculty of color to microaggressions—subtle, often unconscious or unintentional, forms of racism (Solórzano, 1998)—and invalidation. Faculty members of color like Isabel found their efforts to advocate for social justice dismissed. For example, Isabel's dean requested she avoid using the term "social justice." Similarly, Tomas experienced systemic bias in hiring committees when White members questioned the merit of applicants of color based on their accents. Paola also endured racist comments in her department when colleagues insinuated faculty of color were being favored in hiring decisions. The California Community College Collaborative (CCCC, 2013) found faculty of color often have an additional burden: "they are expected to serve on committees not only as faculty representatives but also as representatives of their race" (p. 9). This burden mirrors experiences reported by faculty in this study because they often played the role of the token person of color.

Moreover, findings highlighted the underappreciation for the emotional labor faculty of color undertook. Faculty of color often provided crucial emotional support to students, which administrators failed to notice and value. This unacknowledged labor added to the difficulties faculty of color encountered in academia. Faculty such as Meena, Luz, and Ana made concerted efforts to connect with students, refer them to resources, support them beyond office hours, and accompany them to mental health services and other support services.

Resistance Practices Among Faculty of Color

The institutional logics framework suggests prevailing norms and beliefs permeate organizations, influencing the beliefs and behaviors of individuals in them (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). In such context, resistance becomes essential because faculty use their agency and

practices to challenge and transform these dominant logics and norms. In this section, I use Baez's (2000a, 2000b) work and Giroux's (1983) theory of resistance to underscore how actions of faculty of color may be construed as practices of resistance.

Interview data revealed faculty of color engaged in a variety of resistance strategies in response to the obstacles they encountered in the pursuit of equity. Noteworthy strategies included knowledge sharing and building community. Faculty such as Isabel disseminated knowledge proactively among newer and adjunct faculty members, which fostered a sense of camaraderie and support. Carolina described a grassroots system in which adjunct faculty banded together to share knowledge about their rights and representation. Other faculty members spoke of creating supportive communities in faculty of color affinity groups. Through fostering such communities, and validating and supporting one another, faculty resisted marginalization and counteracted the dismissive attitudes they experienced from administrators or colleagues who did not support their causes.

Moreover, faculty of color often assumed mentoring roles with students, keenly understanding their students' needs and offering flexibility to ensure their success. They also countered deficit views held by other colleagues regarding students' capabilities. For example, Henry actively disputed the viewpoints of older faculty members who failed to understand the complexities of their students' lives and the external challenges they faced.

Faculty of color also displayed resistance through advocacy for progressive changes. These faculty members advocated for a variety of measures such as competency-based assessments, open access resources, improved mental health services, and abolitionist approaches in the educational system. Their efforts focused on dismantling oppressive structures and policies by raising concerns with campus decisionmakers. For instance, Ana advocated for

enhanced mental health support for students. Faculty of color also actively supported diversity and equity initiatives such as increasing the representation of Black students and faculty in their institutions.

Finally, a critical manifestation of resistance was faculty upholding personal boundaries. Recognizing the value of self-care and mental health, faculty of color consciously maintained boundaries and resisted additional or burdensome work or responsibilities that could harm their well-being. They exhibited a profound understanding that their ability to effectively serve and advocate for their students hinged on their own emotional and psychological health. This self-care was, in itself, an act of resistance, which rejected the institutional expectations of overwork and emotional drain that are too often placed upon faculty of color. It was a vital means of survival and resilience in institutions that did not always recognize their unique challenges and contributions.

Implications

In this section, I use the findings and discussions of this study to present implications for research, theory, policy, and practice. Specifically, I discuss implications for researchers and scholars interested in studying faculty of color in community colleges, highlighting areas for further exploration and understanding. Additionally, I outline implications for researchers interested in applying institutional logics as a framework, providing insights into its relevance and potential contributions to specific research inquiries. During the data collection process, I invited participants to share their perspectives on institutional changes that would enhance their work experiences. Consequently, the implications for policy and practice draw from participants' voices and key findings of this study to inform actionable recommendations in community college contexts.

Implications for Research and Theory

Findings from this research can influence future research and theoretical developments. In this section, I provide implications for scholars and their future research considerations. First, there has been a lack of research focused on faculty in community colleges. Community colleges have diverse missions and responsibilities, serving as crucial, albeit often overlooked, institutions in the broader higher education context (Cohen et al., 2014). Faculty in community colleges have also been understudied in higher education research, despite serving as key points of contact for students, particularly students of color (Contreras, 2017; Hagedorn et al., 2007). Future studies should focus on exploring faculty's varied roles and experiences in the classroom.

Regarding the evolving concept of equity and equity-mindedness, scholars should examine how community college administrators, faculty, and staff define and understand this notion. In this study, faculty defined equity as a generic concept of equality or fairness, aimed at leveling the playing field. However, this definition often lacked a critical examination of the structural and systemic nature of racial inequities in higher education. Bensimon (2018) calls for scholars and practitioners to integrate a focus on the centrality of whiteness in shaping educational inequities. Interestingly, although faculty in the study defined equity in a more race-neutral manner, their actions displayed equity-minded approaches. They demonstrated their commitment to dismantling these disparities by disrupting the status quo, advocating for faculty diversity, and actively engaging in efforts to support the equitable outcomes for historically minoritized and marginalized student populations (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

Findings illuminate that not all faculty members bring the same backgrounds or insights to their work with student populations or their understanding of equity and diversity. Future

researchers should continue to explore the perspectives and experiences of faculty of color and their perceptions working in community colleges, particularly from an organizational lens. Moreover, researchers should explore the intersectionality of race with other social identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age), focusing on how these intersections create varying systems of oppression and impact how faculty navigate them. For instance, gendered expectations of emotional labor may affect female faculty members more frequently than male faculty; thus, it is crucial to examine the gendered labor expectations of female faculty members in community colleges (Townsend & Twombly, 2007a).

Researchers should also investigate equity initiatives across various colleges, districts, and states. Assessing the implementation and effectiveness of equity initiatives across different colleges and districts could provide valuable information for improving practices throughout the community college sector. However, when considering the distinct cultures and contexts of single college districts (e.g., small, large, rural, urban colleges), it is important to disaggregate further to study various community colleges. Comparative studies across multiple community colleges can reveal common patterns, variations, and contextual factors that influence faculty experiences.

Researchers interested in applying institutional logics as a framework should examine how organizational norms and logics shape labor expectations and impact faculty experiences in community colleges. Future studies could help expand scholars' understandings of how faculty navigate and negotiate institutional logics and the tensions and contradictions that may arise. Comparative studies could also shed light on how institutional logics vary across different community colleges and their impact on equity and inclusion.

Scholars should also conduct discipline-specific studies on faculty. Specifically, researchers should examine faculty across varied disciplines—particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)—because these disciplines have historically been White institutional spaces, as displayed in Paola's minimization of race and equity discussions in her department. Moreover, enhancing faculty and student diversity in STEM, especially for Latinx and Black students, is an important and timely concern. Future studies should investigate faculty perceptions of equity and their efforts to enact equity in the classroom in STEM disciplines.

Similarly, the perceptions of noninstructional faculty members, such as counselors and librarians, warrant further investigation. Future researchers should study counselors, librarians, and other noninstructional faculty separately and examine the role of noninstructional faculty members in promoting equity in the institution. Further, there is a need to disaggregate full-time from adjunct faculty as well as faculty who teach in occupational programs and faculty who teach in transfer-track disciplines due to differing faculty experiences (Levin et al., 2011).

Additionally, faculty's experiences in community college shared governance also warrants further examination. Although faculty trust and collaboration are integral components of shared governance (Kater, 2017), shared governance in community colleges is still misunderstood and underresearched in higher education. More researchers should investigate the role of shared governance in community colleges and its impact on promoting equity and inclusive decision-making processes with particular attention to the experiences of faculty of color participating in shared governance.

The board of trustees is another crucial yet understudied aspect of community colleges. Understanding the board of trustees members' perceptions of equity and institutional

commitments as elected individuals could illuminate how these critical stakeholders shape institutional policies and commitments. Thus, future researchers should explore the perspectives of board members regarding equity and their role in shaping policies related to equity.

I also recommend the study of the impact of equity-focused professional development. Future researchers should examine the effectiveness of long-term, ongoing professional development programs centered on equity in enhancing faculty practices, cultivating equitable learning environments, and investigating the funding sources and decision-making processes related to the use of equity funds. Findings from these studies could increase scholars', administrators', and policymakers' understandings of resource allocation in the institution, which could provide key insights for policy improvement.

Lastly, exploring the perspectives on equity held by faculty and institutional leaders could provide a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities of promoting equity. Researchers should investigate faculty and leaders' perceptions of equity and the effects of neoliberal ideologies and policies on equity practices in community colleges, including their impact on institutional actors and decision-making processes. More studies should explore how faculty members at community colleges engage with CRT and resistance strategies to address equity issues in their teaching and advocacy efforts.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Implications of this study underscore the importance of consistent, long-term professional development. Faculty members highlighted their experiences with DEI training, specifically following the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020. They expressed dissatisfaction with singular workshops that lacked tangible outcomes or significant changes. Instead of holding isolated workshops, colleges should implement sustained, ongoing professional development

programs that provide continuous support and resources for faculty to enhance their understanding and implementation of equitable practices and social justice aims.

Institutions should provide faculty with practical examples and strategies for integrating equitable principles into teaching methods and practices. Doing so can ensure a better understanding of how to enact equity in the classroom. In addition, faculty-led groups can identify and address equity issues in their classrooms or departments. Faculty should have the opportunity and be encouraged to engage in, develop, and take ownership of equity-driven practices.

Additionally, colleges should welcome faculty input in departmental and campus-wide decision-making processes. Specifically, they should establish mechanisms for faculty to contribute to decision-making processes actively at both departmental and institutional levels. Moreover, community colleges can promote shared governance and encourage all faculty to participate. To this end, colleges must intentionally create opportunities for faculty involvement in decision-making processes through transparent and inclusive mechanisms for committee selection, ensuring their voices are represented in shaping institutional policies.

Colleges can take measures to ensure that faculty salaries and benefits, including benefits for adjunct faculty, are competitive with those of neighboring institutions. To achieve this, regular salary and benefit assessments can be conducted to ensure that compensation for faculty and staff is both competitive and equitable within the local context. Administrators can also collaborate with existing faculty and staff unions to formulate new contracts that promote retention and attract a diverse pool of talent. College administrators should routinely review and update policies to ensure transparency, fairness, and equity in areas such as promotion, tenure, workload distribution, and labor recognition. Additionally, administrators should keep the

faculty handbook up-to-date, clearly outline expectations, and make this information easily accessible.

Promoting data-driven decision making is another important implication. Institutions should emphasize the use of data to identify and address disparities among faculty and students. Regular faculty campus climate surveys can be instrumental in assessing workers' concerns and senses of belonging. These surveys could provide valuable feedback from faculty and staff, highlighting areas of concern and nurturing a sense of belonging for all community members.

Fostering leadership support for equity initiatives is vital. Encouraging institutional leaders to actively support and advocate for equity initiatives can provide the necessary resources, guidance, and accountability for successful implementation and support for faculty championing these initiatives. Professional development on the topic of equity is also essential for leaders and middle management. Such development can equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead equitable institutional practices.

Finally, institutions should actively listen to and amplify the voices of faculty of color, creating spaces for their insights, experiences, and perspectives to be heard and valued. The input from faculty of color should be integral when developing and implementing policies and practices that directly impact their working conditions, professional growth, and ability to enact equity. Their contributions are vital to the success of students in community colleges.

Conclusion

This study deepened the understanding of the experiences and perspectives of faculty of color within the community college system. Utilizing a qualitative research design, the study drew insights from interviews with 14 self-identified faculty of color and a review of institutional documents from a single community college. A framework that integrated institutional logics,

critical race theory, and resistance theory guided data analysis. The study revealed a dynamic interplay of personal identity, institutional forces, and professional roles shaping the experiences of faculty of color at community colleges. Participants in the study viewed themselves as champions of social justice, a perspective deeply rooted in their lived experiences and personal identities. Concurrently, they expressed a need for appropriate compensation and recognition for their work, which would highlight their worth and contributions as professionals. Fujii (2014) noted, "Institutions can publicly claim to value diversity, but if no one understands what diversity means and/or how it is applied, then it has no value. It is merely rhetoric" (p. 912). Participants voiced a distinct desire for better recognition from the college's administrators, emphasizing the importance of resources and compensation for their labor. Through participants' narratives, they sought to communicate their value, possibly in contexts they felt unable to directly convey to the college's leadership. The research underscored the evolving nature of 'equity' as a concept, emphasizing the importance of ongoing dialogue, acknowledging faculty concerns, and promoting a cohesive and effective equity approach at the college. The study underscores the need for acknowledgment, compensation, and consistent messaging regarding equity practices at community colleges. Addressing the challenges faced by faculty of color in community colleges requires collective efforts and systemic changes. Through such changes, community college leaders can strive toward creating more inclusive and equitable environments that value the voices, labor, and contributions of faculty of color.

APPENDIX A

Demographic and Background Survey

Study information sheet	By filling out this survey, you agree to have read your rights as a research subject as they have been presented on this page, and consent to participate in this research study.
First name	Text response
Last name	Text response
Email	Text response
Race and ethnicity	Text response
Gender and pronouns	Text response
Do you consider yourself a first-generation college student?	[Yes/no]
Did you attend community college as an undergraduate?	[Yes/no]
Do you consider yourself an advocate for racial equity?	[Yes/no]
What is the highest degree you hold?	Multiple choice: a. EdD b. PhD c. Master's degree d. Bachelor's degree e. Associate's degree f. High school diploma Other: [text response]
Employment status?	Instructional faculty – Full time Instructional faculty – Part time Noninstructional faculty – Full time Noninstructional faculty – Part time
What is your current job title?	Text response
How long have you been employed in your current role (in years)?	Numerical
Adjunct faculty: Where else are you employed?	Text response
Why did you choose to work in the California Community College system?	Text response
Why did you choose to work at Willow Community College?	Text response
If applicable, what subject/courses do you teach?	Text response
In what ways do you think community college students are similar or different compared to other institutions?	Text response
What do you think are the most pressing challenges facing Willow Community College currently?	Text response
How do you engage in professional development?	Text response

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol 1

Part I – Introduction, Background.

Introduce myself and goals of this study.

1. Could you tell me about yourself?
2. How do you identify racially?
3. How did you learn about race and racism?
4. What are your thoughts about systemic racism in higher education?
5. What role do educators have in disrupting systemic racism?
6. How do you experience being a faculty of color at your institution?
7. What's important to you about advocating for racial diversity and equity?
8. What does equity mean to you?
    a. *Probe:* How do you enact it in your own work?
9. In the background survey, you mentioned that some of the challenges currently facing the college are X, could you elaborate?
    a. *Probe*: Are these issues specific to your department, your own role, or the college overall?
    b. *Probe*: What do you believe is your role in addressing these issues?
10. In the background survey, you mentioned your biggest concern in your own work is X, could you tell me more about that?

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol 2

Part II –Labor Expectations and Perceptions of Institutional Equity Agendas

Recap previous interview.

1. What are your thoughts on the distinction between instructional and noninstructional faculty?
2. What about full-time and part-time faculty?
3. What are the differences in what expectations based on those designations?
4. Are there any job responsibilities that you did not expect when you started?
5. Could you provide an example of a time you went above and beyond what is expected of you to help a student or colleague?
    a. *Probe:* How did that experience impact you and your work?
6. What are your beliefs about the gap in student outcomes such as transfer and math completion between White and Asian students and Black and Latinx students?
7. How would you describe the culture for students of color at this college?
8. Do you believe the college should focus on racial equity, if so, why?
    a. *Probe:* Who should be tasked with addressing it?
9. Are you personally satisfied with the racial and gender diversity of the faculty at the college?
10. What are your thoughts on hiring and retaining faculty and staff of color?
11. In relation to advocating for racial equity, what challenges have you faced as a faculty of color in your role?

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol 3

Part III – Purpose of Community College, Values, Agency

Recap previous interviews.

1. What do you think is the purpose of the community college system?
2. How would you describe the values of the college?
3. How do you envision your role in the overall agenda of the college?
4. What are *your* professional or educational values?
5. Could you tell a story about their involvement in an event, activity, or decision that challenged your professional or educational values?
    a. How did that experience impact you and your work?
6. How would you describe the college leadership?
7. What concerns do leaders at the college have?
    a. Are they focused on a particular aspect (e.g., student enrollment, diversity, equity, funding)?
8. Could you give me examples of new policies that have impacted your work (e.g., Guided Pathways)?
    a. *Probe:* What is the intention of these policies?
        i. *Probe:* Do they address equity?
    b. *Probe*: How have the policies impacted your work?
9. We've talked a lot about race and equity. Could you give me an example of when you explicitly discussed racism with leaders or colleagues at the college?
    a. What was the response?
10. In what ways do you feel empowered to make a change in your college or department?
    a. What are some challenges you face to making a change?
11. Is there anything I did not ask about that I should have, or is there anything that I did ask that you would like to clarify on?

APPENDIX E

Document Review – Memo

Document Information:

1. Title
2. File type (e.g., PDF, .docx, image, print)
3. Document file location/pathway
4. How was document identified (e.g., web search, interview)?
5. How was document accessed (e.g., public web page, in-office material)?

Description of the Document:

1. Why was this document selected for review?
2. Who authored or produced the document?
3. What is the purpose of the document/what information does the document provide?
4. Who seems to be the intended audience for the document (e.g., public, students, staff)?
5. How are faculty of color represented in this document?
6. Are there specific references to faculty of color?
7. How does this document offer insight on faculty of color in the college?
8. How is race and racial equity represented in this document?
9. Are there specific references to race and racial equity?
10. How does this document offer insight on race and racial equity in the college?
11. Other notes/observations.

APPENDIX F

University of California, Los Angeles

2021–2022 Study Information Sheet

Dr. Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Daisy Ramirez, and their research team from the School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA are conducting a study to explore the lived experiences of faculty of color at Willow Community College.

You were identified as a possible participant in this study. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
This study explores the educational and career trajectories of instructional and noninstructional faculty of color at Willow Community College. Over the 2021–2022 academic year, the research team will conduct interviews to examine participants' educational and career trajectories and current roles at Willow Community College. This study is an effort to identify the challenges that faculty of color face in their roles, and identify strategies to promote racial equity for students and faculty.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be contacted to arrange a convenient time to be interviewed online via Zoom or phone. The researcher will ask you to:

- Review this form, consent to participate in the study, and complete the background questionnaire that follows.
- Participate in three interviews and answer questions related to your experiences and current role working in the community college.

How long will I be in the research study?
Your participation includes:

- One background questionnaire completed via Google Forms (approximately 15 minutes)
- Three interviews over Zoom or phone (approximately 60 minutes each)

Will I be paid for participating?
For your participation, the following payment will be offered:
Full-time employees will receive a $100 Amazon gift card for participating.
Part-time employees will receive a $250 Amazon gift card for participating.
You will receive the full payment after completing the third interview.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?
There are no anticipated risks that you can expect from this study, but some of the interview questions might make you feel uncomfortable; you may wish to not answer any question, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. There will be no penalty to you, and you will still receive the payment.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?
The results of the research may be used to influence policies and practices to better support students and faculty of color at Willow Community College, including yourself.

How will the investigator maintain privacy in the research setting(s)?
Because the interviews will be conducted online via Zoom, the investigator will maintain privacy by interviewing the participant in a private room where others cannot hear the conversation. We will suggest the participant maintain their privacy by ensuring they are in a setting where others cannot hear the conversation.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of a data security breach. We will inform you if such a breach occurs; however, we will use encrypted storage for audio files, and information will not be shared with anyone outside the research team. Your data, including deidentified data, may be kept for use in future research.

When reporting on the research findings, we will not identify participants' specific work titles. Participants will be referred to according to their broad job title, full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, noninstructional, or instructional faculty.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you and no loss of payments to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions and remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, please contact Dr. Rios-Aguilar at XXXXX@XXXXX.edu or Daisy Ramirez at XXXXX@XXXXX.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the **UCLA OHRPP** by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406

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