Asian American Community College Presidents:

The Power of Identities, Positionalities, and Ideologies in Equity and Social Justice

By

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Abstract

The factors of identities, positionalities, and ideologies are critical on how leaders lead, guide, engage, and communicate with their constituencies to create equitable learning experiences for students. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the experiences of three Asian American community college presidents' recognition and consciousness of their identities, positionalities, and ideologies as they work on equity and social justice in their campus context. To examine my research questions, my study utilized the qualitative approaches that consisted of a multi-case study that encompassed semi-structured interviews with the college presidents and document analyses. Furthermore, I focused on institutional change and engagement from a community college president's perspective that reflected on how they prioritize and work on equity and social justice at their campus. The two following theoretical frameworks were used to explore and better understand how these leaders lead, implement, and promote equity, and engage with their communities in connection with their identities, positionalities, and ideologies. The first is the shared equity leadership framework (SEL), also known as the shared leadership for equity (Kezar et al., 2021). The second framework is transformative leadership (Shields, 2010).

In this multi-case study that was conducted during the pandemic between July 2022 to September 2022, the following themes were identified based on the evidence throughout the interviews: Identity in Equity and Social Justice Work, Ideologies influencing Equity and Social Justice Work, Equity in Action, and Dealing with the Pandemic: The Rise of Anti-Asian Racism and Hate Crimes. Within the major theme, Equity in Action, four sub-themes emerged from the evidence which are: 1) Leadership Style: From Positionality to Collaboration and Inclusivity, 2) Student Voice, 3) Professional Development, and 4) Challenges in Equity and Social Justice

Work. The findings indicate that identities and ideologies heavily influence how a college president engages and leads their campus in the work of equity and social justice. The factor of positionality is dependent on how the college president utilizes their position to influence and lead their campus.

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Chapter 1

Introduction & Purpose Statement

How do I engage with colleagues that have resisted talking about equity and social justice? This question has often crossed my mind since I started my equity journey at American River College in Spring 2018. Through my own journey, I have learned that equity begins with me. This means that I have to be cognizant of my identities and how each shows up in the various spaces I work in. Learning about equity has also affected me in how I reflect on my own ideologies and how they came to be; my ideologies impact how I approach, process, frame, and make decisions. I have also come to realize that, depending on which space I am working in, my positionality(ies) come with a certain amount of power. And with this power, I am capable to engage or disengage with the communities I serve. Overall, I learned that in order to work on equity and social justice, I must be color-conscious. As a woman of color, who aspires to work in a high-level administrative position in the future, this inspires me to better understand how community college presidents understand and work towards equity and social justice with a diverse administration, faculty, staff, and student body.

In the state of California, there are 116 community colleges that serve approximately 2.1 million students. Of the total student population, 42.5% identify as Latinx, 27.4% as White, 6.4% as Black and African American, 11.6% as Asian, 3.2% as Filipino or Pacific Islander, and 3.7% as muti-ethnic, with over 40% of students who are first-generation (Vision for Success and CCCCO, 2020). With such a diverse population at the community colleges, and overrepresented by students from marginalized backgrounds, equity and social justice couldn't be more important. As part of the Vision for Success, the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), intends to "reduce equity gaps among underrepresented students by 40% over

five years and eliminate it in 10 years, (California Community Colleges State Chancellor's Office, 2020)." And with the pandemic stretching to two years since Spring 2020, the CCCCO is committed to responding to the changing needs of students. Because there is a critical need to reduce the opportunity gap in 10 years, it is important to better understand how community college presidents lead their campuses towards these goals.

Equity and social justice are shaped by the individual's contextual experiences that influence their beliefs and how they understand diversity (Wilson, 2005). For the purpose of this study, I will be defining equity-mindedness, social justice, and equity as follows: "Equity-mindedness is conceptualized as being evidence-based, race-conscious, institutionally focused, systemically aware, and equity advancing (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015 as cited in Kezar et al., 2021). Additionally, "equity-minded leaders pay attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes by different social identities like race, class, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion, and the systemic, historical, and political nature of such inequities" (Kezar et al., 2021, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, I will be using the definition of social justice by Theorharis, (2007) as "leaders to make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools" (p. 223). Furthermore, equity is defined as "becoming culturally and linguistically responsive, eliminating deficit thinking, addressing racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other prejudices" (Shields and Hesbol, 2020, p. 3). Lastly, I consider the achievement or opportunity gap from the CCCCO definition in the student success scorecard, "the data represents an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability on student progress and success metrics. Additionally, it tells how well colleges are doing. This data

can be used to determine if colleges are narrowing achievement gaps" (2019 Student Success Scorecard, 2023).

In a study focused on White leaders, Theoharis & Haddix (2011) concluded that in order for school leaders to work on equity and social justice and to bring their sites to an equitable learning environment, school leaders themselves, must have done their own intellectual and emotional work on race. This includes recognizing and understanding their White culture, ideologies, and privilege. Once they have done this work, school leaders can then support and infuse discussions on race, self-reflective work, and include race-conscious discussions around data.

Systemic and structural changes that impact equity have been known to be a complex topic in higher education. Community college presidents planning to embed equity and social justice must consider all aspects of the campus community, comprehensive of students, staff, faculty and administrators (Chen, 2017). How a college president engages with their stakeholders is dependent on their identities, positionalities, and ideologies. Also imperative to this work, is that community college presidents need to assess what equity and social justice means to each group of stakeholders and lead their campuses in providing an equitable education that is attentive to closing the opportunity gap. Through this process, it is essential to understand how community college presidents frame initiatives related to equity and social justice to their stakeholders. Consequently, it is vital to understand the unique identities of these leaders in how they engage and move their equity agenda forward because they are the driving forces at their campuses.

In recent years, the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) population in the United States has had to deal with racist discrimination, physical assault, and verbal harassment at

progressively high rates. According to the Pew Research Center (2020), since the pandemic began, around four-in-ten U.S. adults confirmed that it has become prevalent for people to communicate racist views toward Asians. Though racism and xenophobic attitudes towards the APIA community are not new, many believe that the anti-Chinese and anti-Asian rhetoric spread by the Trump Administration during the current COVID-19 pandemic, has put the APIA community at further risk of violence and discrimination. The divisive language and racist rhetoric used in the early days of the pandemic likely contributed to the rise in APIA hate incidents seen today.

Stop Asian Hate has been tracking various incidents related to APIA hate crimes in the United States. There are undoubtedly many more that are not being reported. Between March 19, 2020 to February 28, 2021, there have been over 3,500 incidents received by Stop AAPI Hate. The types of discrimination include verbal harassment and shunning, physical assaults, civil rights violations, and online harassment. Specifically, "Chinese are the largest ethnic group (42.2%) that reported experiencing hate, followed by Koreans (14.8%), Vietnamese (8.5%), and Filipinos (7.9%)" (StopAAPIHate, 2021). For these reasons, I am also particularly devoted to conducting research aimed at understanding how community college presidents support their communities around anti-Asian hate and racism.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to gain understanding of the experiences of three Asian American community college presidents' recognition and consciousness of their identities, positionalities, and ideologies as they work on equity and social justice at their campuses. These factors are critical to how leaders lead, guide, engage, and communicate with their constituencies to create equitable learning experiences for students. I focus on institutional change and

engagement from a community college president's perspective, which reflects how they prioritize and work on equity and social justice at their campus. I have chosen to focus on Asian American community college presidents because the need to amplify the voices of Asian Americans is critical, even more so in recent years given the continuous rise of anti-Asian hate crimes and racism during the pandemic in our nation. Finally, there is a lack of empirical research focus on Asian Americans in leadership positions at educational institutions.

Research Questions:

1. How do the identities, positionalities, and ideologies of Asian American Community College presidents influence how they prioritize and implement equity and social justice in their campus context?
2. How have college presidents addressed the rise in anti-Asian racism and hate crimes and supported their communities during this time?

These research questions were addressed through a qualitative research study focused on three community college presidents and their campus. The work is grounded in the shared equity leadership and transformative theoretical frameworks, which I turn to next.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

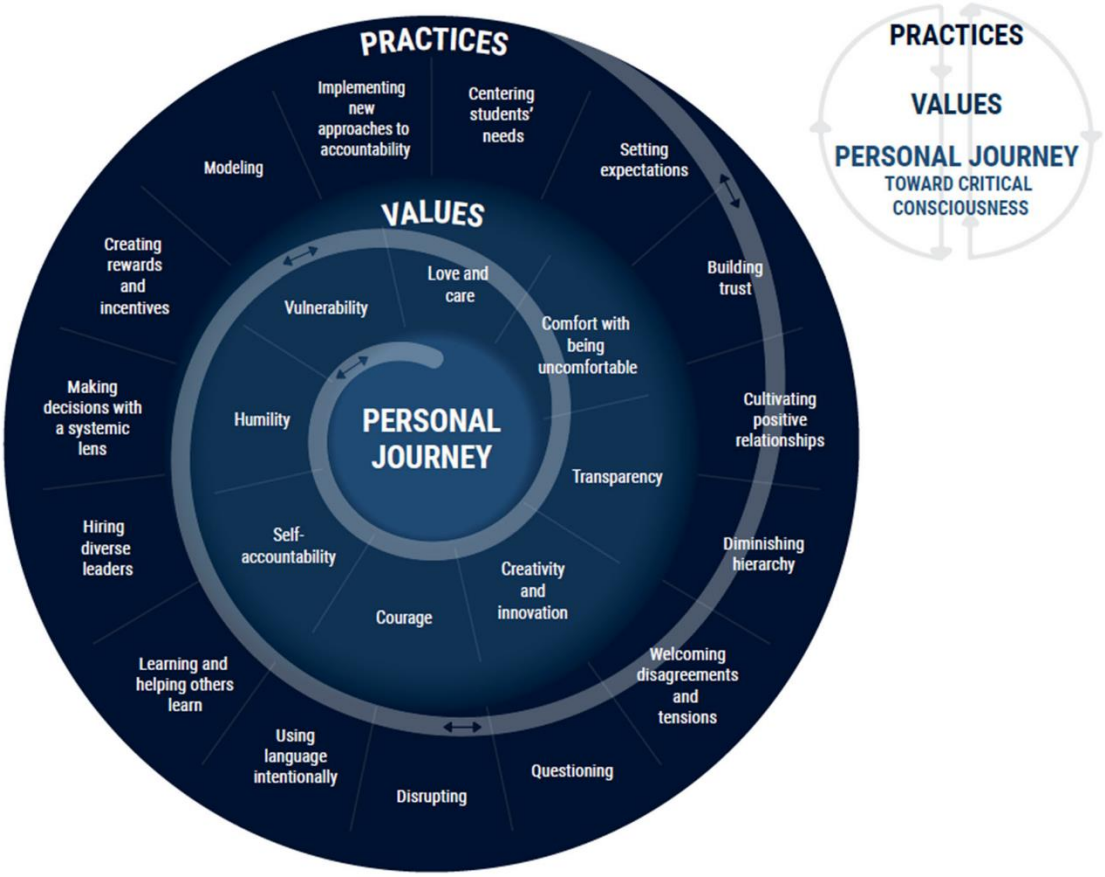
I focused on institutional change and engagement from a community college president's perspective that reflected how they prioritized and worked on equity and social justice at their campus. Two theoretical frameworks were used to explore how these presidents lead, implement, and promote equity, and how they engage with their communities in connection with their identities, positionalities, and ideologies. The first was the shared equity leadership framework

(SEL), also known as the shared leadership for equity (Kezar et al., 2021). The second framework was transformative leadership (Shields, 2010). Both frameworks focused on equity and social justice leadership in institutional change, which begins with the leader but also in collaboration with their communities.

The shared equity leadership (SEL) posits three critical components: personal journey, values, and practice necessary to transform an institute that directly addresses the opportunity gap: (1) individuals who have undergone some sort of personal journey toward critical consciousness or built a critical consciousness, cementing their commitment to equity; (2) values that are shared among members of the leadership team or group; and (3) a set of practices that leaders continually enact which both enable them to share leadership and to create more just and equitable conditions on their campuses. (Kezar et al., 2021, p. 8). Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the shared equity leadership model, with personal journey in the center, followed by values then practice.

Figure 1:

Shared Equity Leadership Model



Note. This image is from (Kezar et al., 2021) Shared Equity Leadership: Making Equity everyone's work. American Council on Education. USC Rossier.

As portrayed in the SEL framework, the commitment to equity needs individuals to critically reflect on their critical consciousness. This personal journey process involves exploring and revisiting one's identities, a process by which individuals can become vulnerable. In becoming vulnerable, a humanizing process of connecting with others on their experiences. What brings these experiences to light are their identities, especially their marginalized identities. These identities include, for example, race, class, and first-generation college status. Individuals with a strong critical consciousness recount experiences in navigating institutions and systems that are inequitable and discriminatory. A critical consciousness in equity reminds individuals of their own experiences that have at some point represented "exclusion, isolation, and not

belonging" (Kezar et al. 2021, p. 12). Overall, leaders will enter the work of equity at different points, but their personal journey of equity is critical for how leaders approach their work in shared leadership.

The second component of the shared equity leadership are the values of shared equity leadership. Values are developed through personal experiences (Kezar et al., 2021). Based on the SEL model, these values include the following components: love and care; vulnerability; humility; transparency; and being comfortable with uncomfortable (Figure 1). First, love and care is not the traditional value, as noted by Kezar et al., but it is most importantly a starting point in one's equity journey. Individuals showing love and care to those around them makes a difference to the experiences of those they serve. For example, when a student connects with a staff or faculty member and that staff or faculty shows that they care for the student, by doing this, it shows that the student is seen or noticed. Second, vulnerability is also important because it represents the willingness to share one's personal experiences and connect with others. Third, humility is recognizing that leaders don't have all the answers and understanding that one's experience does not represent everyone's experiences. Four, courage is "standing up for equity and remaining dedicated even when it's not popular or easy" (Kezar et al., 2021, p. 18). Five, transparency extends to being open, clear, and honest in the decision-making process. Six, comfort with being uncomfortable includes recognizing that when leading and talking about the topic of race, it can be uncomfortable and that is okay. Letting uncomfortable situations that are painful to the community, just sitting and digesting with the community is okay, because there are often no easy solutions.

The third component, practices of shared equity leadership is that the leader operates in a way that is "inherently collaborative and inclusive" (Kezar et al. 2021, p. 6). Kezar and

colleagues (2021) argue that leadership should not focus only on one individual, the leader, who makes all the decisions and guides the directions of the institute. Rather, shared equity leadership is operated by the individual and collective community simultaneously. This means that the voices and expertise of staff and faculty are taken into account and valued as essential for leading and guiding an institution. Additionally, the foundational piece of shared equity leadership is the notion that everyone collaborates as they work towards the shared equity goals (Kezar et al., 2021). Ultimately, shared equity leadership draws upon multiple perspectives from different individuals rather than one person (Kezar et al., 2021). Decision making does not rely on the person with the highest title or authority, instead decision making requires collaboration and values the voices of community members.

The SEL theoretical framework was an important frame of reference for my research because understanding how leaders recognize their own level of critical consciousness is imperative to the work of equity. Secondly, this framework provided a theoretical and methodological context that was particularly fitting as I engaged in a multi-case study designed to understand the thought processes of several leaders and how they led and engaged with their respective communities as they worked to provide an equitable education for students, particularly students of color.

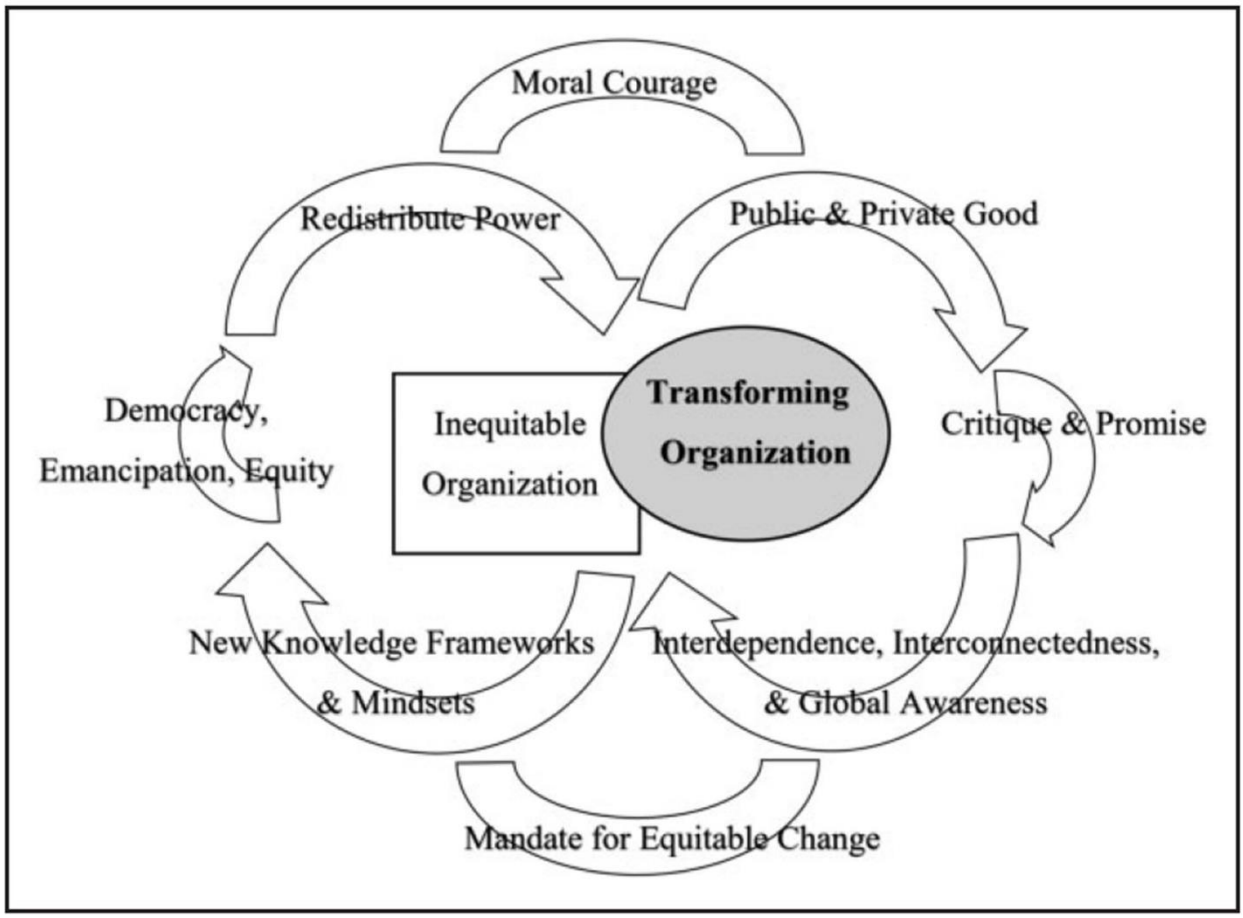
The second theoretical framework that helped frame my study was transformative leadership, which posits that "transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others," (Shields, 2010, p. 559). There are two parallel theoretical propositions and eight tenets that support the transformative leadership framework.

The first proposition as stated in Shields and Hesbol (2019) highlights the individual and the environment that is inclusive, respectful, and equitable (Capper & Young, 2014). With an inclusive, respectful, and equitable community, students are able to focus on academics and thus lead to favorable outcomes, such as academic achievement. The second proposition is focused on schools addressing issues such as democracy, civic life, and citizenship, with the idea that "democratic society will be strengthened through the participation of knowledgeable and caring citizens" (Shields & Hesbol, 2019, p. 3).

Figure 2 presents a visual model of the transformative leadership theory, highlighting the eight tenets.

Figure 2:

Transformative Leadership Theory



Note. This image is from (Shields, 2011, 2016) Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educational Administrative Quarterly*. 46(4), 558-589.

As stated by Shields and Hesbol (2019), "the eight tenets represented in the model indicate that one begins with a mandate for deep and equitable change, which requires knowing oneself, one's organization, and one's community" (p. 3). Next is to identify and include equitable approaches to both policy and practice such as "culturally and linguistically responsive, eliminating deficit thinking, addressing racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other prejudices" (p. 3). Pedagogical changes are also a key element: "It is the essential work of the educational leader to create learning contexts or communities in which social, political, and cultural capital is

enhanced in such a way as to provide equity of opportunity for students as they take their place as contributing members of society" (Shields, 2010, p. 572). Lastly, critique and promise, pushback, and moral courage needs to be enacted.

The shared equity leadership framework and transformative leadership framework, both center on equity. Because my study focused on the identities, positionalities, and ideologies of the community college presidents in relation to equity, these two frameworks provided a useful structure for examining the leadership of Asian American community college presidents. With this approach, it will help me understand how equity and social justice are prioritized and how leaders engage with their communities. The goal of my research was to understand how Asian American community college presidents prioritize and work towards providing an equitable education for students. In so doing, leaders' identities, positionalities, and ideologies played a critical role of how and what they think and do in their work towards equity and social justice. Next, I turn to a review of related literature at the intersection of leadership, equity and the Asian American experience.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

College president have many roles and responsibilities that are complex. College presidents define the values, directions, and priorities of the college (Kezar et al., (2021). Therefore, it is essential to understand how identities, positionalities, and ideologies impact the work of equity and social justice because of the power that are in the hands of community college presidents. As stated by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004), "Educational reformers have long claimed school leadership is a crucial component to any reform of

education, secondary only to the very act of teaching." Community college presidents are integral in moving the equity agenda forward because of the power they have. To understand how community college presidents prioritize and work towards an equitable education for students, it is important to understand the identities and experiences of those in power. Identity is crucial when it comes to being race-conscious (Watson, 2018). For example, "White leaders can and must engage in this equity-oriented, racially connected work" (Theoharis & Haddix, p. 1348). Additionally, marginalized communities have been historically oppressed by the systems and structures in place (Kezar, 2021). Because leaders in power have been an integral part in creating these systems and structures—intentionally or unintentionally—reproducing oppression on the same marginalized communities, culturally responsive leaders have a "principled, moral responsibility to counter this oppression" (Kahlifa, et al, p. 1274, 2016). In this literature review I focus on three bodies of relevant literature: 1) instituting equity and social justice changes in education; 2) challenges in equity and social justice leadership; and 3) the Asian American experience in educational leadership.

Instituting Equity and Social Justice Changes in Education.

Much of the literature on leadership for social justice and equity emphasizes the experiences of K-12 school leaders. Less is known about leadership in higher education in particular, the experiences of leaders of color and women. Specifically, less is known about how community college presidents address, engage, and work on equity and social justice. Learning from K12, I turn to research by Shields (2010) that focused on how two K-12 principals work towards transformative leadership in the work of equity and social justice; results from this study indicate that social justice leadership is not about raising test scores, but rather, it's about "instituting changes in the educational environment of their schools—structures, culture,

pedagogical practices—that resulted in more inclusive and more just experiences for all students" (Sheilds, 2010, p. 584). To reach institutional change, it takes recognition of one's critical reflection, taking into account the diversity in backgrounds of the student population the school serves, creating teacher teams that tackle professional development with social justice as the focal point, and finally a leader must guide discussions with their staff through their own critical reflection. Ultimately, the principals studied were proactive in working with community organizations to provide supports for their sites. The two principals in this study, demonstrated moral courage and willingness to lead their teams in vulnerable and uncomfortable discussions and situations so that students from marginalized backgrounds would have the opportunity to participate and learn (Shields, 2010).

Likewise, in another study of 98 participants, Boske (2015), found similar results where school administrators' beliefs and expectations make a significant impact in shaping their leadership in their community. Overall, in guiding schools to become more equitable, it starts with the leaders' understanding of their own critical reflection and leading their school community strategically to examine their institutionalized racial practices (Boske, 2015).

DeMatthews & Mawhinney (2014), argue that social justice leaders in educational institutions seeking to improve outcomes for historically marginalized groups must recognize the historical unequal circumstances of marginalized communities, policies and procedures that perpetuate inequalities, and experience a reflective process that includes "ongoing actions, skills, habits of mind, and competencies that are continually questioned and refined" (p. 847). In this study, the researchers focused on two elementary school principals striving to improve the inclusivity of their community for marginalized populations, specifically students with disabilities. The principals, had to "reorganize their schools to foster inclusive cultures and

values. Both leaders also actively challenged forms of resistance to inclusion that persisted within the school, throughout the district, and in the community" (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, p. 872, 2014). Being strategic and willing to address resistance in the community were what these principals had to be well prepared for. Correspondingly, Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica (2020) interviewed four Latinx principals and vice principals and found that their own experiences of marginalization shaped and deepened their understanding of leadership focused on equity. They recognized that their district's initiatives to serve all students differed from their vision, and that they needed to be strategic at their sites in carrying out the work of equity.

In a study by Kezar (2008), focused on college presidents, found that leaders who work on equity and social justice begins with their personal reflection. In this study, she interviewed 27 college presidents and found that in order for elite leaders to move the work of equity and social justice forward on their campuses, they must first, have a desire and be willing to reflect, learn, and grow from their experiences. The presidents identified the following strategies as most important in this work: (1) develop coalitions and advocates, (2) take the political pulse regularly, (3) anticipate resistance, (4) use data to neutralize politics and rationalize the process, (5) create public relations campaigns and showcase success, and (6) capitalize on controversy for learning and unearth interest groups (Kezar, 2008, p. 420). These strategies are crucial for leaders to navigate and move their campus toward providing an equitable education for all students.

To conclude, leaders must recognize the historical practices that have continued to marginalize certain communities for many generations (Watson, 2018). Additionally, social justice leaders need to understand that commitment in this work requires a revolving and evolving process of learning and growth. A leader committed to social justice is communicative, collaborative, listens, builds relationships, sets goals, and is willing to recognize the historical

practices that continue to oppress many for years (Brown, 2004; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, G. 2012). Overall, leadership in equity and social justice is complex and involves close communication and ongoing collaboration.

Challenges in Equity and Social Justice Leadership

Amplifying equity and social justice work must be done strategically and intentionally. "Social justice in schools does not happen by chance" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 253). School leaders have the power to influence and guide their campus towards a more just and equitable learning environment. With such a diverse student body throughout the community colleges, centering and enacting social justice and creating equitable campuses, should be a primary goal of college presidents. But in doing so, college presidents must challenge the traditional norms that have maintained power and privilege for people within certain groups and marginalize students due to their race, class, disability, sexual orientation, language, gender, family structure, and neighborhood (Theoharis, 2007). This section of literature review will address the challenges and issues leaders face in working with their communities on equity and social justice.

Brooks & Watson (2019), focused on exploring how principals in an urban school district setting influenced their community where discussions on race is at the heart of their equity and social justice work. The 85 leaders interviewed, expressed similar views that they recognize their position of power can influence their community, and as long as they are proactive about these issues, they can keep their community progressing forward. However, there were many challenges. One major challenge was having staff redirecting the conversations of race due to their mindsets. Other challenges were changes in staffing, competing initiatives, and lack of higher up management to guide this work. Diem et al., (2019), found similar results in their study focused on an educational leadership preparation program. They found the aspiring leaders in

their program having difficulty discussing race. Moreover, Kruse, Rodela, and Huggins (2018) also concluded in their study that the 12 superintendents they interviewed avoided discussions of race and racism, rather, they generally focused on equity for all.

Equity and social justice initiatives are political when institutionalizing this work. Theoharis (2007) argues that "social justice supports a process built on respect, care, recognition, and empathy." Getting buy-in and moving justice and equity work forward on a campus while facing resistance from differing interests and values among communities is a challenge.

Resistance was a key defining obstacle. The participants in the study faced resistance within and outside of their schools and communities. This resistance included obstructive staff attitudes and beliefs and privileged parental expectations. Staff attitudes, stemmed from having differing views from that of their leaders, causing them to resist. Similarly, Swanson & Welton (2019), found staff resistant outcomes that aligned with Theoharis (2007). Specifically, the two white principals who are advocates of social justice and attempted to lead their schools in this work, struggled with resistance from their staff in having meaningful conversations on race. More importantly, Swanson & Welton emphasized that the principals were unprepared to guide their teams in these important discussions. Lastly, Wang (2018), also found similar results when interviewing principals who identified themselves as social justice advocates. These participants found themselves struggling with the mindsets of teachers who "lack understanding from staff, their attitude, mentality, and values, change of staff, and other related issues as hindering their social justice work" (p. 486).

In a qualitative study, Kezar & Eckel (2008), investigated how community college and university presidents who identify as white or minority utilized transactional or transformational leadership styles to move their diversity agenda. Transactional forms of leadership were

described as “leaders who generally work in a reciprocal fashion with their associates, where they bargain and negotiate using rewards or power in order to influence and create change.” Whereas transformational leadership refers to “leaders who inspire and motivate people by appealing to their moral and intellectual sensibilities” (p. 381). More specifically, they find that presidents of color had challenges in comparison to their white counterparts. A particular challenge was that presidents of color were concerned about utilizing transformational styles because their white stakeholders might perceive that their diversity agenda is based on self-interest. Presidents of color also had to be strategic in creating allies and having an internal compass because they were more likely to be attacked for supporting a diversity agenda.

Another study by Kezar (2007), interviewed 27 presidents who have been progressive in moving the diversity agenda on their campuses. Though the focus of this study weighed heavily on how presidents successfully moved the diversity agenda on their campuses, they also shared challenges. These barriers included developing structurally, the support systems on their campuses. Without the support systems, the diversity agenda will suffer. Another barrier was resistance from staff. The lack of understanding the president’s vision and mission, often caused resistance from their community. Lastly, another challenge was that stakeholders were simply not ready for change when it comes to values that impact programming and curriculum. Overall, presidents must be meticulously strategic in moving the diversity agenda. In conclusion, although there is research focused on equity and social justice leadership, much of it has been centered on K-12 schools. Research on institutional change has been conducted at the four-year college or university level; however, there remains a lack of focus on equity and social justice at community colleges. Thus, my study will contribute to the gap of addressing community college leadership on equity and social justice.

Asian Americans in Educational Leadership

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), 52.3% of Asian Pacific Islander Americans (APIAs) have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to other racial minority groups such as Latinx and Black at 35%. These statistics partially contribute to APIAs being seen as the "model minority" (Lee, 2019). With the same comparison of these minoritized racial groups, APIAs are also found to be in high-status, high paying careers such as in post-secondary education positions and other careers in the medical and engineering field. However, regardless of APIAs educational and professional success, they remain underrepresented in high-level leadership positions in higher education (Lee, 2019). In academia, faculty who identify as APIA, hold 7% of full-time faculty positions, 3% are in dean positions, 2% in chief academic officer positions, and 1.5% as college presidents (Davis & Huang, 2013 as stated in Lee, 2019). For these reasons, it is important to center and amplify the voices of Asian American community college presidents.

Though the research shows that APIA are in high-status, high paying careers, there is a lack of APIA representation at the community college and university president level. Some researchers have indicated that this could be due to the "glass ceiling" (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009). "The glass ceiling is the result of two cultures clashing or, more specifically, two cultural styles in conflict" (Chou, 1992). Perceived work style may be another explanation. The work style of Asians has been described as "contextual, indirect, inner directed, and self-reliant, while the predominant work style amount white males is commonly described as hierarchical, controlling, aggressive, and oriented toward win-lose outcomes" (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009, p. 85). Several empirical studies focus on the Asian American in high-level leadership positions in education.

To better understand the leadership styles of Asian American leaders, Neilson &

Suyemoto, (2009) sought to understand how Asian American leaders in elite positions got to where they are; they interviewed five men and five women who identified as Asian American. Their positions ranged from associate vice president of a university to vice president of academic affairs at a community college. The participants they interviewed indicated that cultural values are instrumental to Asian American leadership and practices. The results also included the themes of hard work and achieving excellence, the value of being connected with one another, and taking risks in pivotal moments. These individuals navigated institutional racism while pushing the "glass ceiling" to get to where they are. Furthermore, Neilson and Suyemoto, (2009) state that cultural values, beliefs, and norms of Asian Americans influence their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. The outcomes of these behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs impact the communities in which Asian American leaders serve and how they are perceived. In a similar study, Liang and Liou (2018), found similar outcomes that female Asian American leadership practices were influenced by their race-gender consciousness in relation to their self-concept of being an Asian American woman, which informs their own expectations of their leadership style.

There are not many studies that focus and amplify the voices of Asian Americans in leadership. Chu, (1980) documents the challenges female Asian American school leaders encountered, including institutional racism, sexism, a lack of role models, and limited, if not absent, access to mentorship and professional networks. These outcomes are consistent with the experiences of other female school administrators of color, as Asian American women work in the context of white male supremacy that affects their underrepresentation, career mobility, and glass ceiling intersecting their race and gender status as argued by Fitzgerald (2003). Similarly, Hune (1998) found that female Asian American leaders' professional context is primarily influenced by a racial and gendered climate that contributed to these leaders' feelings of

isolation, sense of invisibility, and uncertainty about their leadership competence. Again, these conditions are at the intersections of race and gender. Furthermore, the findings by Rosette, Koval, Ma, and Livingston (2016), were consistent that the stereotypes of Asian American women as obedient and submissive as often working against them.

The next example centers on Asian American women and the intersectionality of their gender, race-ethnicity, and leadership (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Eleven women were interviewed in this multi-case study and the results showed all eleven women did not see themselves as leaders when they started their careers in teaching. Their own personal experiences of inequities inspired them to make change by taking on coordinating positions, which then led them to opportunities in leadership. While in those positions, the participants navigated stereotypes of being too outspoken or too loud when they should be quiet and submissive. They did not have mentors to help them get to where they are but would have appreciated them; though only one participant actively sought for a mentor. The participants also struggled with the notion that all Asians are the same, when in fact, they are different in culture, language, and religion. Other challenges in leadership included not wanting to play politics and needing not to be so sensitive to rumors or personal attacks. Regardless, these women continued to push themselves to get to where they are in their administrative positions as school principals. To further understand the experiences of Asian American administrators and leaders, this research will contribute to the gap that seeks to understand and elevate the voices of Asian American administrators. Specifically, this study will address this gap by looking closely at how Asian American community college presidents' identities, positionalities, and ideologies affect how they lead and make decisions on equity and social justice issues.

Chapter 4

Research Design

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of three Asian American community college presidents, and their recognition and consciousness of their identities, positionalities, and ideologies as they work on equity and social justice at their campuses. These factors are critical to understand how leaders lead, guide, engage, and communicate with their constituencies to create equitable learning experiences for students. To examine my research questions, my study utilized qualitative research methods, which consisted of a multi-case study that encompassed stakeholder interviews and document analyses to uncover "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). This research design has enabled me to unpack the "lived experiences" of the participants and with this lens, I was able to "study people's conscious experience of their life-work, everyday life, and social action" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 26).

As stated in Creswell and Creswell (2018), the case study design approach is imperative because "case studies are a design of inquiry, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2014). Specifically, I interviewed three college presidents and conducted document analyses on key artifacts from their respective campuses. With this approach, I was able to collect detailed information using multiple data collection procedures within a timeframe that represented a snapshot of what happened in the three community colleges in recent years (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The following research questions guided this study:

How do the identities, positionalities, and ideologies of Asian American Community College presidents influence how they prioritize and implement equity and social justice in their campus context?

How have college presidents addressed the rise in anti-Asian racism and hate crimes and supported their communities during this difficult time?

Site & Sample

The multi-site case study approach included three community colleges that have a college president who identifies as Asian American. I approached my research from this angle, because it was best to "purposefully select participants and sites that will best help the researcher understand the research questions" (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018, p. 184). In addition, pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity of each participant and campus. The following information describes the student body broken down by race and student success scorecard per college.

Site 1: Hills Community College Context

As of Fall 2019, Hills Community College has 9,774 full-time students. Of the full-time student population, there were 43.2% Hispanic or Latino, 40.6% Asian, 6.23% White, 2.49% representing two or more races, 2.17 Black or African American, 0.379% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.348% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders.

In table one below, the percentage of students by race/ethnicity were obtained to highlight the "student's lowest course attempted in Math and/or English in the remedial level" (2019 Student Success Scorecard). To further explain, table one demonstrates how each group of students by race/ethnicity experience remedial courses. In other words, how does taking remedial courses impact their chances of getting a degree in six years? As noted below, African American

(26.9%), American Indian/Alaska Native (14.3%), and Hispanic (32.6%) would have lesser chances of completing their degree or transfer in six years. Based on this data, these three groups are disproportionately impacted.

Table 1

Hills Community College - Completion Metrics: Degree/Transfer – Unprepared for College

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage Represented
African American	26.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	*14.3%
Asian	41.2%
Filipino	45.8%
Hispanic	36.6%
Pacific Islander	*50.0%
White	40.0%

Note. The data are from "[2019 Student Success Scorecard]" by the Community Colleges

**Cohort fewer than 10 students*

Site 2: Parks Community College Context

As of Fall 2019, Parks Community College had 19,101 full-time students. Of the full-time student population, the demographics are as follows: 39.3% White, 37.7% Hispanic or Latino, 4.82% Two or More Races, 4.58% Asian, 2.06% Black or African American, 0.55% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.387% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders.

In table two below, the percentage of students by race/ethnicity were obtained to highlight the "student's lowest course attempted in Math and/or English in the remedial level"

(2019 Student Success Scorecard). Table two demonstrates how each group of students by race/ethnicity experience remedial courses. In other words, how does taking remedial courses impact their chances of getting a degree in six years? As noted below, Hispanic (37.7%) and Pacific Islander (25.0%) would have lesser chances of completing their degree or transfer in six years. Based on this data, these two groups are disproportionately impacted.

Table 2

Parks Community College - Completion Metrics: Degree/Transfer – Unprepared for College

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage Represented
African American	51.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	*60.0%
Asian	40.0%
Filipino	40.0%
Hispanic	37.7%
Pacific Islander	*25.0%
White	42.9%

Note. The data are from "[2019 Student Success Scorecard]" by the Community Colleges

**Cohort fewer than 10 students*

Site 3: States Community College Context

As of Fall 2019, there were 8,760 full-time students. The following represents the demographics of the full-time student population: 48.4% Hispanic or Latino, 24% Asian, 12.8% White, 5.97% Black or African American, 3% Two or More Races, 0.708% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders, and 0.126% American Indian or Alaska Native.

In table three below, the percentage of students by race/ethnicity were obtained to highlight the "student's lowest course attempted in Math and/or English in the remedial level" (2019 Student Success Scorecard). Table three demonstrates how each group of students by race/ethnicity experience remedial courses. In other words, how does taking remedial courses impact their chances of getting a degree in six years? As noted below, African American (31.3%), Pacific Islander (20.0%), and Hispanic (30.8%) would have lesser chances of completing their degree or transfer in six years. Based on this data, these three groups are disproportionately impacted.

Table 3

States Community College - Completion Metrics: Degree/Transfer – Unprepared for College

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage Represented
African American	31.3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	*0.0%
Asian	45.5%
Filipino	36.4%
Hispanic	30.8%
Pacific Islander	*20.0%
White	46.3%

Note. The data are from "[2019 Student Success Scorecard]" by the Community Colleges

**Cohort fewer than 10 students*

Data Collection

The interviews were semi-structured; the semi-structured approach allowed me to prepare open-ended questions that permitted me to follow up with the participants as needed and with flexibly rather

than predetermined wording or order (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Draft questions that served as the starting point for my interviews are provided in Appendix B. The questions I created were organized in categories. The categories are: 1) personal equity journey, 2) positionality, equity, and social justice 3) college community and 4) self-reflection.

Due to the location of the campuses and considering that the community colleges are still partially online in Spring 2022 and Fall 2022, I conducted all interviews using ConferZoom during Fall 2022. This approach was flexible for myself as well as the participants, and made scheduling and execution of the interviews much easier. Each participant was interviewed twice. The first interview for each participant took approximately two hours and the second interview took about another one to two hours. In addition, I used the transcribing feature on Zoom, which helped to obtain the raw data transcripts from these interviews. After I obtained the transcripts from Zoom, I analyzed the data with an inductive approach and coded key words by theme.

In addition to the interviews, I analyzed two of the college documents (see Figure 4). These documents included the college's mission and equity plan. It was important for me to analyze the college's mission and equity plan because it was needed to understand how the college incorporates equity into their goals. I asked for a minimum of two documents and each president provided a minimum of two. Exploring and analyzing these documents helped me understand how the college acknowledges and prioritizes equity and social justice at least in its stated goals. Other document analyses include exemplar artifacts the college president chose to share with me. These included communication with campus community, and community engagement flyers. I reviewed these artifacts to gain a better understanding of how the college presidents communicate and engage with communities in the work of equity and social justice (see Appendix C for protocol).

Additional data that were examined included institutional demographic data for the

purpose of establishing the context of the study. As aforementioned, document analyses were conducted to gain a better understanding of the college president's communication, priorities, ongoing and established progress within their communities in relation to equity and social justice. I invited the college presidents to choose such documents as representative of their communication around issues of equity and social justice, and specifically asked about each college's mission and equity statements, if they exist.

Table 4 outlines specific data, documents, and interviews that were gathered for this study.

Table 4: Data Collection Matrix

Hills Community College	• Demographic Data: Student Enrollment Data (race) • Student Success Scorecard (student success data) • Interviews: College President • Document Analyses: Mission/Vision, Equity Plan, President's choice of 1-2 exemplar artifacts
Parks Community College	• Demographic Data: Student Enrollment Data (race) • Student Success Scorecard (student success data) • Interviews: College President • Document Analyses: Mission/Vision, Equity Plan, President's choice of 1-2 exemplar artifacts
States Community College	• Demographic Data: Student Enrollment Data (race) • Student Success Scorecard (student success data) • Interviews: College President • Document Analyses: Mission/Vision, Equity Plan, President's choice of 1-2 exemplar artifacts

Data Analysis

I adopted Saldana's (2021) approach to analyze the interview transcripts for themes. Through this process, I first reviewed and analyzed the data and coded the evidence into categories. After analyzing them into categories, I then identified themes or concepts applicable to the categories. Using an inductive approach, I aimed at capturing themes, categories, or tentative hypotheses in response to my research questions. I also aligned the themes I discovered from my data analysis to the theoretical frameworks that frame my study: Shared Equity Leadership (SEL) and Transformative Leadership (TL). Specifically, under SEL: (1) individuals who have undergone some sort of personal journey toward critical consciousness or built a critical consciousness, cementing their commitment to equity; (2) values that are shared among members of the leadership team or group; and (3) a set of practices that leaders continually enact, which both enable them to share leadership and to create more just and equitable conditions on their campuses (Kezar et al., 2021, p. 8). And for TL: 1) attempts to affect both deep and equitable changes; 2) deconstruction and reconstruction of the knowledge frameworks that generate inequity; 3) acknowledgment of power and privilege; 4) a focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice; 5) evidence of moral courage and activism.

In my analyses I first identified how each college president understands their identities, positionalities, and ideologies. Secondly, I identified how their identities, positionalities, ideologies influenced the work of equity and social justice. And third, I identified strategies of how each president worked and communicated the prioritization of equity and social justice. Fourth, I identified strategies of how each community college president addressed and supported their communities on anti-Asian racism and hate crimes. Based on each element of shared equity framework and transformative leadership framework, I then aligned the themes from the

interviews with each of the elements from both theoretical frameworks.

Next, I triangulated my interview data with the document analyses process by reviewing the college's mission/vision, equity plan, and one to two exemplar artifacts. In analyzing these documents, I identified key ideas or efforts that provided evidence on how each campus prioritizes and works on equity and social justice at their campuses. Furthermore, I adopted a content analysis process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The approach of content analysis included analyzing data to obtain the "meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents they have and of the communicate roles they play in the lives of the data's sources" (Krippendroff, p. 49, 2013 as stated in Merriam & Tisdell, p. 179, 2016). As I reviewed documents from each campus, I coded using the list of terms / codes identified in Appendix C. These codes were developed to align with the theoretical frameworks that motivate the study, and the empirical studies summarized in the literature review.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

To ensure internal validity, I incorporated member checks to make sure that I am interpreting the data I have gathered accurately. In doing this, I solicited feedback from the members that I interviewed so that I did not misinterpret or misrepresent the interviewee's responses. Member checks helped justify that the data collected are reliable. In addition, I used an audit trail to address the process, methods, and procedures involved in my study. The audit trail involved "a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 259). This section of the study supported how and why I chose to formulate the study as I did. Moreover, the audit trail "provided information and rationale for the study's processes and adequate evidence so that readers can determine the results are trustworthy" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 260). Finally, each of these strategies

contributed to the reliability of the study.

Positionality & Reflexivity

Next, I address my positionality. I feel that I am an outsider in this research project because I am a faculty member and not an administrator at the community college. I do not have any prior experience or current knowledge of what is involved in the professional life of a community college president. I can only assume what their role is like and the types of decisions that they have to make. However, I also have some insider positionality because, I too, am Asian American. I have this part of my identity that might connect with the Asian American college presidents. I bring to this study my own experience as a tenured faculty member of eight years in the community college system, which contributes insights to my insider status. With my privilege and power as faculty, coordinator, and leader at my campus, I have first-hand experiences of what it has been like to serve and lead equity and social justice work at a community college. Thus, my knowledge and experiences in this work gives me the insider view of understanding equity and social justice goals.

Reflexivity will be an important element that will influence how the findings in my research are uncovered. This includes my assumptions, worldview, biases, and relationship to the study. My worldview and biases will influence how I interpret the responses of my interviewees. And because I am a leader around issues of equity on my campus, my relationship to this study will be an essential piece because equity is at the heart of my work.

Lastly, addressing my biases is an important consideration in qualitative research. I seek to remember to “not judge” and collect the information as I hear it. I connect the data I collected back to my frameworks and use this, in part, as criteria for the trustworthiness process. All the data I collected were carefully analyzed for themes based on the evidence, not

based on my own judgment of one's experiences and thinking process. Nevertheless, my own biases and blinders are a filter for what I heard, and as such I am aware that these biases in the process of data collection and analysis may still be present.

Chapter 5:

Findings Part 1: Portraiture of Participants

In this chapter I offer short portraits that focus on each of the participant's background, upbringing and professional experiences to frame the subsequent analysis of their leadership. Each community college president interviewed represents the APIA community and is currently serving as a community college president. I also review the respective campus context for each leader, including student demographics, community college student success scorecard, the mission and vision of each college, and student equity plan.

Portraiture of President G

President G. President G identifies as a Korean Asian American. President G uses she/her pronouns. Prior to her role as president at Hills Community College, she was a faculty member, served as dean, vice president of student affairs, and assistant executive vice president at various community colleges in the United States.

President G frequently stated that her upbringing is not like most Asian Americans. This is due to the fact that she was adopted at a very young age after the Vietnam War. Her mother was a beautician and her father served in the military then later worked in the produce industry. Her adopted parents are White and she was surrounded by white siblings until her parents became foster parents to children of color. President G, who identifies herself as an immigrant, grew up in a diverse family in the Bay Area that includes racial backgrounds of White, Black,

and herself, Asian. Unlike her siblings who are American citizens born in the United States, she became a U.S. citizen through the naturalization process.

"Who am I, what am I like?," was frequently asked of President G throughout her youth. She recalled growing up and feeling different because of the way she looked. Her siblings had pale skin and blonde hair while she reflected of Asian descent. President G is the youngest sibling and the only daughter in her family. Lastly, her birth name is important to her however, at a very young age, she was uncomfortable with her birth name because her siblings made fun of it.

Church and love were the focal points in the household of President G's family. President G's parents were religious and had the entire family attend church on a weekly basis. Love as President G described, was all around. She felt love at home and at church. After President G was a little older, her parents became foster parents to more than 150 kids. She recalled so many childhood memories with different kids in their home. She saw how her parents took care of the foster children and she described herself as a surrogate mother to those children. She found herself parenting many of them and no matter what needs these children had, love was always at the center of giving and receiving in their household. Love continues to be the foundation of how President G carries out her leadership. For example, she shared, "I really believe in the ethic of love. I believe that, like love is a real foundational piece, just the sense of humanity right that cuts across like a recognition people."

The identities of President G evolved throughout her childhood and college years. She is cognizant of her identity as a Korean Asian woman and carries this with her in the various spaces she engages in. She remembered how her parents connected her to her Korean culture with the traditional Korean dress and pictures that reflected her heritage. In college, she had a Korean

roommate who taught her some traditional dishes and a few Korean words. Though she felt connected to her roots in this way, she often felt othered. She remembered feeling othered while she was an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley. Externally, she stood proud as a Korean Asian woman, but internally, she felt as if she wasn't Asian enough. She simply did not feel accepted in the Asian community. President G had mixed feelings because of the way she felt othered and so, she found other groups to connect with. For instance, she found herself connecting with African Americans during her college years. She found herself being welcomed in their homes, had many African American friends, and took part in the gospel choir. Overall, she found herself being seen in the African American community where she received much support.

How one looks goes a long way. There was a turning moment in President's G's professional career. Because she grew up feeling othered in the Asian community, she did not feel as though she could connect much or represent such a large racial group. It wasn't until she was invited to a conference, representing her role as vice president of student affairs, many of the Asian counselors in that session came up to her afterwards and expressed how much they appreciated her presence and representation of the community. It was at that moment that President G knew that it was not about her. It was about who she represents, and that is the Asian community because of what she looks like.

President G described her journey to becoming president in the community college system as someone who was seen and given the opportunity to work with other leaders. Those who noticed her, encouraged her to consider leadership positions. President G is someone who has courage and was always willing to take risks because she believed in herself and her leadership to serve. She frequently described herself "not so much as a college president, but as teacher still, chief teacher of the institution."

Hills College's Mission and Vision

The mission and vision of Hills College, both explicitly state equity and social justice. For example, in the college's mission statement, a primary goal is creating an environment that is welcoming and inclusive for all students. As for their vision, "advancing equity and social justice" are both at the core of their vision. Both equity and social justice statements are explicit in their language about creating inclusivity and promoting diversity that includes diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. Hills College holds itself responsible for creating such an environment.

Hills College's student equity plan aims to identify, remove barriers, and support students of disproportionately impacted (DI) populations. The California Community College State Chancellor's office defines DI as "disproportionate impact is a condition where some students' access to key resources and supports and ultimately their academic success may be hampered by inequitable practices, policies and approaches to student support" (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2013). Hills Community College takes ownership of recognizing and taking action on how the institute can identify, remove, and support DI students in using the following metrics: access; retention; attainment of the vision goal completion; transfer to a four-year institution; and completion of both transfer-level math and English. Support programs offered include, but are not limited to, community partnerships (e.g.. Foster Youth Success Initiative for Foster Youth), special programs onboarding, special programs outreach to DI populations, academic special programs course enrollment, and designated safe place centers. Special programs targeted to specific DI populations include Umoja, which supports students of Black/African American backgrounds.

Portraiture of President F

President F. President F has been in his role at Parks Community College since 2012. Prior to his role as president, he started his career in higher education as dean and then his desire to take on a CEO role motivated him to become president at two different community colleges in the U.S. And prior to taking on administrative leadership positions in the community colleges, he served in various leadership capacities such as director roles in a few nonprofit organizations. Aside from his administrative experiences in higher education, he also served as the deputy assistant secretary of community colleges during the Obama Administration.

President F identifies himself as an American Born Chinese from New York City. He is the youngest of five children and has always thought of himself as a leader from a very young age. His parents are immigrants from China and settled on the east coast decades ago. His upbringing was influenced by growing up in China Town in New York City with many other Chinese people who looked like him and spoke his primary language, Cantonese. President F is a proud Chinese American. He recalled recognizing his identity and being proud of who he is at a very young age. His identity as a Chinese American male is prevalent in his professional and personal life.

Recognizing his identities at a young age was a positive experience for President F. Growing up in Chinatown and speaking Cantonese he also befriended kids from the Puerto Rican, Black, Jewish, and Italian communities. Interacting with friends from diverse backgrounds contributed to his recognition of differences in his identities. The media also contributed to his identity development, but it also had the stereotypical influence on him. For example, he saw how Asians were portrayed in the media such as Bruce Lee being strong and assertive. These experiences also influenced him on how he sees himself and how the

community sees him. His upbringing influenced a lot of who he is today. For example, President F shared:

> You know, I grew up in the 60s and 70s, in the middle of the Civil Rights movement, anti-war movement and so, I was definitely influenced by that. So I grew up in New York Chinatown and that's always helped define who I am as a person. I am Chinese American and when I came to Berkeley to study Asian American studies and social work, it further broadened my definition of being just beyond Chinese American, Asian Pacific Islander, and a person of color. And so that, in some way, defines my identity and where I came from and who I am about and where a lot of my core values emanate from is really those experiences I had growing up in New York City, yeah.

The experiences President F had growing up, specifically his experiences as an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley, studying Asian American Studies and social work, further broadened his understanding of his own identities. He is a very proud Asian Pacific Islander (API), Chinese American, and person of color who appreciates his upbringing, which impacted his core values to this day. Though he was proud of his identities, he found himself having to navigate these identities in the western world. His transformative moment was when he learned so much about the history of Asian Americans at UC Berkeley and met many other API students such as Cambodians, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean students, including the LGBTQIA community. He learned that the community he lived in wasn't a monolithic community, but a much more complicated and complex one, which he viewed positively.

President F's journey to presidency began with his interest in higher education. His first leadership position in the community college was a department dean. His talents were recognized quickly and (in his words) his "ability to bring people together, the ability to be a strong leader,

and a problem solver," are just a few of his assets, which then earned him a promotion to department chair and then dean.***Parks Community College's Mission and Vision***

The mission and vision of Parks Community College also highlighted the core of what equity and social justice means to them. Putting students first and being aware of "anti-racism, cultural awareness, and equitable education" are what drives the campus. Along with this, the college aims to remove all barriers so that everything is accessible to all students.

Parks Community College's Student Equity Plan (2019-2022) includes the following metrics: access, retention, transfer to a four-year institution, completion of transfer level math and English, and earned credit for certificate, associate's degree, and bachelor's degree. The college aims to provide and assess activities that include outreach, orientation, placement assessment, counseling and education planning, tutoring, online resources, peer tutoring, and support services in writing and math.

With the new mandate on Ethnic Studies, Parks College is revitalizing their Ethnic Studies department as stated by President F. The plan is to hire an African American and Native American faculty member as the department chair continues to rebuild this much-needed department. Lastly, Parks Community College also has the Puente program that supports students of Hispanic / Latino / Latina backgrounds.

Portraiture of President T

President T. President T is currently serving her second presidency at States Community College. She first started her journey working in higher education as a professor in English with no intentions of becoming an administrator. Prior to her presidency at States Community College, she held faculty and administrative positions at two different community colleges in the U.S.

President T identifies as a first-generation, cis-gender Filipino woman. She was once a community college student and successfully transferred to a four-year institute years ago. She was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the United States with her family when she was five years old. She and her family first settled in Southern California. She comes from a family of four siblings. President T grew up being a proud Filipina American with the "dual experience." By this, she means that she had a community that provided a strong sense of the Filipino heritage, but she also felt a sense of "otherness." Though she felt inclusive in her Filipino community in Cerritos, she felt othered in school because everything she learned was Eurocentric. She first felt being othered when she and her family moved to a new community in the suburbs that consisted of mostly white folks. Being in a community with so many folks that did not look like her, she felt that she did not belong nor included.

Growing up in an immigrant family, President T described her parents as having to work a lot. While President T was in elementary school, her mom's educational journey started at the community college where she studied to become a nurse. Her mother first earned her certificate to be a certified nursing assistant and then continued her education in a for-profit nursing school to earn her Licensed Vocational Nursing certificate. After becoming a nurse, her mom worked the graveyard shift so President T and her siblings were left to take care of themselves during the daytime. President T's dad was an engineer and worked the double shift.

President T's childhood memories reflected positivity when it came to her family. Even though her parents worked a lot, she and her siblings loved and cared for each other. Household chores were shared amongst the siblings. She grew up in a home where there were specific duties tied to gender roles, and she her sister often found themselves assigned to do chores than her brother. This impacted her aspirations to go to college and focus on women's studies.

As for her professional career, she was often sought after to apply for administrative positions after she received tenure. She had passion, commitment, and skills that were noticed by colleagues and they encouraged her to apply for administrative and leadership positions. Prior to this though, she had experienced discrimination in college. Her passion for serving underserved students stems from experiences such as:

> I was angry when I started teaching in the community colleges and teaching my full-time job as a tenure track faculty because I had experienced racial trauma from grad school and that's why I left before finishing my doctorate. I was angry, and I had little tolerance of blatant acts of discrimination. And so I felt empowered to even say stuff to the provost or to the VP at the time, when I felt like I was being discriminated against or being questioned about course content or teaching versus other faculty. Again, I challenged racism during the tenure process because I was so angry with the white male professors at my graduate program; they emotionally traumatized me and that's why I left the program early.

Regardless of her negative and positive experiences as a student and faculty, and now having held many different leadership roles in higher education, President T reflects that "one would think that your status would be elevated because you're running an institution, that in leadership meetings, in the community, in the cities, for example, would be treated differently." This wasn't the case for President T. No matter what position she held, she found herself surrounded by white males that trivialized women's leadership. Even in her role as a faculty member years ago at a community college, she was treated differently by white male dean. For example, when she was hired on as a tenure-track faculty member, she was not given an individual office for a full year; instead, she had to share. Although, there were also white faculty

also hired at the same time as she, and they were given faculty offices before her. Experiences like this were upsetting.

States College's Mission and Vision

The mission and vision of States College centers the learning experiences of students. Through the social justice lens, the college's mission is to improve the curriculum, pedagogy, and inclusivity which impact the student experience. And as for the vision, it is focused through an equity lens to provide an empowering educational experience for all students so they can reach their full potential.

Furthermore, States College designed and developed a student equity framework. This framework was completed and launched in Spring 2021. In their framework, they have their equity statement, definitions, and rubric. In the equity statement, equity is centered around empowering students, providing ongoing professional development open to all members of the community, improving curricula, policies, procedures, and programs with an equity lens, and holding individuals accountable in their equity-centered work. The rubric designed by the members of the college campus include the following: awareness, assessment, advocacy, access, achievement, and action. Members of the community are responsible for submitting their progress through a portal for feedback.. The information (which includes curricula, programs, policies, services, and processes) is received by the member's department or unit in charge.

Lastly, States College has a very strong Ethnic Studies department as stated by President T, which is helpful in rolling out the requirements as mandated by the State. Additionally, the college is an AANAPISI Grant (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution), which makes the college eligible for certain types of federal funding. The college is also a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), which supports the Hispanic / Latinx communities ,

and has been grant-funded by the Department of Education several times, including cooperative grants with San Jose State University and University of California Santa Cruz.

Chapter 6

Findings Part 2: Identities, Ideologies, and Equity in Action

In this chapter, I include findings that explain the work of equity and social justice under these four themes: 1) Identity in Equity and Social Justice Work, 2) Ideologies influencing Equity and Social Justice Work, 3) Equity in Action which has four sub-themes (Leadership Style: From Positionality to Collaboration and Inclusivity, Professional Development, Student Voice, and Challenges in Equity and Social Justice Work).

The center of the SEL framework is the personal journey of an individual's experiences in developing a critical consciousness, which encompasses their identity and personal experiences. I define identity as "the physical, social, and mental characteristics of individuals" (University of Michigan, 2023). Through this journey, individuals become aware of their identities in connection with their personal and professional experiences. As a result, they have a better understanding of themselves (Kezar et al., 2021). These experiences and understanding of oneself impact their commitment and involvement in equity and social justice work.

Theme 1: Identity in Equity and Social Justice Work

The three presidents interviewed, all represent the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) population. Their upbringing in their families, cultural background, and environment all played an important role on how they saw themselves and how their identities developed and evolved personally, in their educational experiences, at work, and in the community. Knowing who they are, how they are, and having a consciousness of their identities as leaders, made a difference on how they lead, make decisions, and opt to engage in specific projects.

During President T's own experience as a community college student she was conscious of the intersectionality of her identities. Having this consciousness helped her navigate the community college system, four-year university, and professional settings. Because she herself developed an early consciousness of her identities, this led her to also be conscious of her identities when she works with students of color. She noted:

> I would say students of color as I've defined them, are historically underserved. You know, minoritized students, those have been the main population that I've been seeking to serve since I started working in the community colleges. Having said that, I am also very cognizant of the intersectional identities in students across different racial and ethnic groups. And then this consciousness informs ways in which I, you know, think about approaches, interventions, and programming in relation to increasing student retention, persistence, and success.

In addition, as a result of President T's conscious of her identity as an APIA leader, she is attentive to the APIA student population at her campus. Knowing that her campus receives HSI funding, she intentionally sought to better understand how the campus was allocating funds from that grant to support APIA students, especially when she recognized that there was "little attention and little resource allocation" to supporting these students. Through her gathering information and data, she found that APIA students were "experiencing a racial opportunity gap." Once she recognized this, she collaborated with her campus community members and developed a task force that included members from the faculty senate, classified senate, students, a researcher, and members from the management team to lead the work. Though these are only two examples that demonstrate how President T recognizes how her identity influences her work,

she reassured me that her identity is a critical factor on how she works, collaborates, and identifies projects that need attention.

Seeing himself as a person of color is part of his identity for President F. He is constantly focused on work that supports disproportionately impacted (DI) student populations. Again, according to the California Community College Chancellor's office, "disproportionate impact is a condition where some students' access to key resources and supports and ultimately their academic success may be hampered by inequitable practices, policies and approaches to student support" (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2013). President F has lived, understands and knows how the lives of students of color have been underserved for many generations. In his leadership, he is intentional about the projects he chooses to engage in because he wants to ensure that the voices of students of color are heard, considered, and that there are progressive actions towards supporting this student population. For example, in a nonprofit organization in which President F takes part, his goal is to center the organization's work on serving disproportionately impacted student populations. But when the organization hires a new chief that does not understand, ignores, and dismisses DI work, he is not afraid to voice his concern about the importance of DI work. As a person of color, he tends to be the one leading this effort, coaching, or advising others on how to center equity work. However, with this organization, President F was considering:

> Resigning because I don't want to be part of an organization that doesn't take DI work seriously and I'm not feeling like I need to be the person to coach them up, you know. I'm getting tired. I've been in this business too long. I'm tired of being as what I like to joke, Asian for the occasion. The only one in the room.

In his role as president, he feels that presidents "don't have the power; instead they have influence." His identities take part in how he influences his community to progressively move with him in centering equity and social justice at his campus. For instance, he stated:

> I think the challenge of trying to influence policies and positions that the college takes is really about self-reflection, self-respect, and empathy. It's how you, as a leader, find common ground when people have divergent viewpoints. To me, this is really challenging and tiring, and fatigue, because there is so much heart that goes into it touches and brain right, so you have the emotional piece, you have the intellectual piece and you're trying to reconcile them because these issues are the principles that are important to me. So, all I can do is state them in as powerful, articulate, and elegant way as I can, so that people can see that this is very important to me. It may not be important to them and hopefully, I'll have some influence in changing their mind, and this is why it's important. Additionally, if you have allies in the room, they will reinforce that and if you don't sometimes, you have to be the lone voice in the room, like, I was in the case with this board. It is tiresome and it is fatiguing and it is sometimes frustrating when you try to bring along people who don't see things your way. However, you should stick to your principles and beliefs.

Though it can be exhausting at times, President F's identities clearly play a critical role in how he leads, communicates, and strategically inserts himself in projects that represent who he is.

President G's identities are prevalent in all of the spaces she works, engages, and interacts in. She describes equity and social justice as being part of who she is, this is why she is deeply committed to equity and social justice. As an Asian American woman, she is cognizant of

her identities in her community and at work. She knows that the way she looks and appears, stems back to her identities.

In an example she shared, she worked on a special project and during a side conversation, she and a few of her colleagues discussed an open opportunity of becoming the next state chancellor in a community college system. She described how everyone in the conversation identified potential candidates, but when she voiced that she would be a potential candidate, they completely ignored her. In this experience, President G recognized how she, being Asian, was carelessly overlooked. She was not even seen as a potential candidate even though this was just a casual conversation.

To engage her community in the work of equity and social justice, President G recognizes that her identities play a critical role. Her lived experiences are part of who she is, and she carries these experiences in the spaces she engages in. As she stated in her interview, "my lived experiences influences the work I do." Her commitment to equity and social justice were influenced by:

> So much of my entire make-up is embedded into the work of supporting marginalized communities. Because of my lived experiences, having to watch over others and the importance of creating a sense of belonging in the community. And what does it mean to have the capital to belong in a society that we've sort of created or institutional structures, and so I really feel like that's a lens that I bring to it and it's absolutely a product of who, who I am and how I was shaped.

President G's upbringing and experiences influenced her identities and she isn't afraid to be vulnerable with her students. In a letter to a student, she writes:

> Thank you for taking the time to write to me after our meeting. It meant a great deal to hear from you and I wanted to take some time to be thoughtful in my reply given the care you put into your note to me.
>
> I'll tell you honestly that I never intended to share my experience. Like many, there is a great deal of trauma not only about the incident, but what happened to me and my family after speaking up that has had a lasting impact on my life. The powerlessness, the second guessing-the assertions of all the things the victim did wrong–it rings in my ears….

Making connections and seeking to understand is important to President G. She has shared throughout her interview that amplifying the voices of marginalized communities is important to her as a leader. The lived experiences of all these individuals are critical to the work of equity and social justice.

In connection to the literature reviewed, understanding that work in equity and social justice starts with yourself is critical (Kezar et al., 2021). As Shields (2010) finds, K-12 principals also found it necessary to develop a critical consciousness of who they are in leading and doing this work.

In conclusion, each of these community college presidents I interviewed have a level of consciousness of their identities that affect how they interact with others and lead projects or initiatives. They understand how their identities influence their work, communication, and campus community. Overall, they reveal that equity and social justice work is deeply personal and can be exhausting. But their strong leadership is motivated by the continued need to engage and lead their communities in this work, and to make impactful differences in the lives of students from marginalized communities.

Theme 2: Ideologies influencing Equity and Social Justice Work

As portrayed in the SEL framework, the commitment to equity needs individuals to reflect on their critical consciousness of their own ideologies or worldview. This personal journey involves understanding one's ideologies and experiences. Through this process, values are discovered by individuals. Therefore, I define ideology as beliefs and ideals that lead to one's values that matter to individuals or groups (Kezar, et al., 2021). In addition, individuals can become vulnerable and humanize in the process of connecting with others.

In the following analysis, I will discuss how each community college president understands and recognizes their own ideologies, including how these ideologies impact their work, and how it plays a role in equity and social justice leadership.

All three presidents interviewed agree that equity and social justice work take individuals to develop and have a consciousness of who they are. This work is sensitive and can be exhausting. Leaders who continue to invest in equity and social justice with their campus community, must be collaborative while always thinking about the best interest of their campus community. For this reason, this work is rooted back to one's ideologies, their worldview leading to their values, on how they carry out this work.

President G from Hills Community College demonstrated how her own ideologies influenced equity and social justice work. Love as she recalled, was always at the center of her family and therefore, brought this to her work of equity and social justice. She shared that the most important element in this work is to show up authentically and to show love for her campus community. This means to be true to herself as a Korean American woman, having a consciousness of who she represents, and recognizing the inequity in the system that has brought the outcomes we have today for students of color. To do this work with love, she stated:

> If you don't feel safe in learning, you don't feel a sense of belonging. We're never going to change the system because it's the beliefs versus behaviors. I believe you have to work on them jointly together. I learned this early on when I was president at another community college and knew that if I don't show a level of vulnerability and humility and my own learning, how does anybody else do that right?

Putting love at the forefront of her work and showing the value of individuals, she shows her community that every person on her campus is important. For instance, she shared that she gets numerous emails from faculty, staff, and students. Though it is overwhelming, she makes every effort to read every single email. Every voice matters. Additionally, she described herself as the teacher leader of her campus and facilitates communities of learning with her faculty and recognizes the importance of self-reflection in this work. Her point on self-reflection is that, "If you don't have a sense of self-reflection, or willingness to learn the process of it, we're never going to get better." Lastly, President G admits that her own personal experiences are deeply connected as to why she is committed to equity and social justice. She shared that it has been the way "she was treated and othered," that made her deepen her commitment to this work.

Similar to President G, President T with States Community College shared similar feelings about how her ideologies influence how she leads her campus in equity and social justice work. She also emphasized the importance of self-reflection. Self-reflection plays a key role on how one takes the time to reflect on who you are, what led to your decisions, and how you have come to be based on your ideologies. Specific individuals or frameworks influence their ideologies. For example, President T shared that the concept of Pinayism and Pinay pedagogical practice by Allyson Tintiagco-Cubales (Pinayism, 2020), is critical to how she develops her critical consciousness:

> I see myself as a critical pedagogue. And so I reflect. I do that cycle of reflection and assessment so I can change. And I also don't perceive that knowledge is just gained in the traditional way. So I really want to value lived experience. So that grounds me as a CEO, and I call myself, an educational leader, a president who is grounded in equity and social justice frameworks. So some of the research that I have been doing since I went back to school for the EdD connects to the activist work that I was doing as a volunteer organizer. I'm very much grounded in social movement theory.

From the interviews, I can conclude that being a CEO is overwhelming and stressful. There are multiple issues that need to be handled and many demands or requests for attention. Everything needs to be handled in a proactive, professional manner. In discussing how ideologies influence President T's focus on equity and social justice, she went on to emphasize the importance of building community. Like President G, the sense of belonging is important in building community for President T. And because education is to teach others, as well as to learn from others, the process of doing this is "humanizing the educational process" as President T states. Overall, President T remains humble with her own student experience as a Filipina. When she is feeling "stuck or bogged down", she reminds herself to "pause and reflect, and ground herself in the students and student experience. This brings her to feeling lifted and reenergized." As a result, President T and President G, have their lived experiences that influence their ideologies. Their ideologies, as a result, impact how they lead their campuses through their equity and social justice journey.

As for President F with Parks Community College, he stated that it starts for him with the notion that, "I have to believe that there is some good in every person and if in some way, we could bring it out." With such a powerful statement, President F's ideologies resort back to what

was taught to him and influenced him. Those around him influenced his ideology in the work of equity and social justice. It's not so much about the title someone holds. One's ideology depends on what influences them on how they think and what they think. For instance, he stated that:

> You need to play on your own strengths. You got to where you are because of who you are, and so, but I've always tried to beg, borrow and steal from people that I admire. Their way of doing things, their way of thinking. I'm very mindful that very few of my ideas are original and that I am a composite of a lot of other people who have influenced me in my thinking. And so, there are really great people who have made such a difference, whether it's President Obama or Arnie Duncan, who is my mentor. These people are just like everybody else. They're there, as they don't look at their title and use it as a way to bully people. It's the humility people have. It's an ability to bond, as fellow humans, rather than by title. I really believe that the power that we all have is not your title.

As stated in the literature review, equity and social justice are shaped by the individual's contextual experiences that influence their beliefs and how they understand diversity (Wilson, 2005). The individuals around you play an integral role in influencing your thinking, actions, and being. Ideologies are foundational elements in carrying out equity and social justice work. How an individual thinks, acts, reacts, and behaves has to do with their ideologies, which were influenced from their upbringing and those around them. For example, Boske (2015), found that administrators' beliefs make a significant impact in shaping their leadership in their community. Leaders focusing on equity and social justice as stated by Theoharis & Haddix (2011) concluded that school leaders themselves must have done their own intellectual and emotional work in

developing their critical consciousness of their own ideologies, because their ideologies influence their work.

Theme 3: Equity in Action

In this next theme, equity in action, I will address the practices and decision-making processes of the three community college presidents who choose to center equity and social justice on their campus. There are four sub-themes which include, 1) Leadership Style: From Positionality to Collaboration and Inclusivity, 2) Student Voice, 3) Professional Development, and 4) Challenges in Equity and Social Justice Work. All four sub-themes encompass equity in action for leadership in equity and social justice work. Lastly, each sub-theme coincides with specific components from the theoretical frameworks, shared equity leadership (Kezar et al., 2021) and transformative leadership (Shields, 2010).

Sub-theme: Leadership Style - From Positionality to Collaboration & Inclusivity

The type of leadership style is critical to how a college president or CEO leads their campus. In my interviews with these three presidents, all of them had a similar mantra carried out in their leadership style. Each president is cognizant and implements leadership that encompasses at some level or combination of collaboration, inclusivity, engagement, building trust, and is attentive to communities of color. They use their positionality to influence their community and share the power alongside their team. The work of equity and social justice is shared amongst varying levels of staff, faculty, and students.

In the shared equity leadership model (Kazar et al., 2021), the third component, which is practices of shared equity leadership, denotes that leadership is operated in a way that is "inherently collaborative and inclusive" (Kezar et al. 2021, p. 6). Additionally, SEL also calls for lessening the hierarchy of power within positions (Kezar et al., 2021). This means that equity and

social justice work is shared amongst the entire organization, regardless of the level or position an individual holds. SEL in equity and social justice work isn't so much about how one individual leads the organization, but rather how much of that power is shared and distributed amongst the various positions within the organization.

In my interview with President T, she described the importance of working collaboratively with her direct reports. She emphasized that collaboration was key to seeking understanding from one another. It is within her positionality to use the power she has to collaborate and distribute the power of engagement and collaboration. Without collaboration, each individual may not understand each other's intent or directions with purpose. For instance, President T explained that if she and her team were looking at data, it's important to look at the outcomes collaboratively and understand "what has not been realized thus far." In collaboration with her team, they are to discuss how they arrived at the results and strategize on next steps and hear each other's opinions and seek to understand them. Without this process, the team can't understand each other, and they could reduce President T's intentions as to a personal agenda. "You know what? She's just Asian American, and that's why she wants to do it."

Furthermore, President T emphasized that "building relationships, like a professional relationship," was key to understanding where someone is coming from, especially because there are many viewpoints. This brings me to connect what President T stated to be in alignment with the transformative leadership theory (Shields, 2016). In this theory, knowing one's community is essential to leading a community in equity and social justice work. And a start to this is, to build community by building relationships. As President T stated in her interview:

> Trying to understand where everyone is coming from, and what expectations they have for the work that we're doing are critical elements to working collaboratively together.

> And I think you do have to start there. So I often will come into collaborative spaces, wanting to do community building. Some people don't like it. They just want to start working. But I want to do community building, but also community building from a cultural lens. So oftentimes when I'm in a new team, I like to do a cultural artifact sharing as one activity where you get to talk about why this matter to you and where it comes from, etcetera.

Building community is essential to every aspect in the work that President T leads.

Another example provided by President T is an artifact she provided, which is the newly revised States Community College Educational Master Plan with a focus on equity and social justice framework. The revision of this new plan was created during a critical time in 2020-2021. In creating this new master plan, the entire community took part in it. This was a huge project that involved a particular focus on student voices and contributions from administrative staff, deans, qualitative focus groups, and campus surveys.

Another strategy that President T incorporated to build community was that she offered Conversations Beyond Chat with the president. The focus of these sessions was to engage and create dialogue for action. An artifact she shared was a flier that represented a monthly session of conversations the community could engage with the president to discuss and share knowledge from an equity lens. For example, a session open to anyone interested in joining the conversation was focused on Yosso's community cultural wealth theory. The purpose of these sessions was to build community, create inclusive spaces, have authentic conversations with the president, and learn from each other, while educating each other on equity and social justice.

In my interview with President F, collaboration and inclusivity was just as important to him as well, especially with communities of color. With his positionality, and in using his power

of influence, he aims to provide a safe space for people of color to share their opinion and most importantly, make them feel "like they have a seat at the table with me, the highest-level administrator at the college." As mentioned in the literature review, being race-conscious and distributing the power is imperative in doing this work. Knowing yourself and your community's background in doing this work, helps you better understand why people say or feel a certain way. And this is why President F emphasized:

> I didn't want to isolate people of color and meet with them separately. I wanted them to be integrated with everybody else, so it gives the opportunity for all of us to group problem solve and understand where there might be hotspots in different areas.

By bringing everyone together, President F suggests that this provides the opportunity for understanding and problem solving, thus resulting in collaboration and inclusivity. But collaboration and inclusivity are not the only two elements that are important in shared equity leadership. A point that President F mentioned was building trust in his community. This element is just as important as inclusivity and collaboration because without trust, it will be difficult for individuals to collaborate. Therefore, as President F emphasized, building relationships that leads to trust and collaboration can support everyone in working towards the same goals. For President F as the CEO of Parks College, he insinuated that his words and actions must be trustworthy. Trust needs to be built and ongoing for someone like him, coming from a position as the CEO, so that everyone following will want to work together. Specifically, President F shared, "You definitely want to have people trust that you try and do the right thing for the college and so your reputation, your trust or lack thereof, can be an impediment to getting to the outcome that you desire."

To continue on the theme of collaboration and inclusivity, President G with Hills College also brought up the importance of creating an inclusive community. In her positionality while the college was developing new goals or changing directions of where the college is headed, President G discussed the importance of recognizing and including those who need to be at the table. In doing this work, it was important for her to distribute power. For example, making sure faculty, staff, and students from marginalized backgrounds and communities took part and felt seen, especially when the goals are tied to people from specific backgrounds. In my interview with President G, she shared:

> Queer communities, from faculty, staff, including students, have expressed that they felt like they have not been seen forever. Especially when faculty come to me and express that they were deeply broken by the fact that they didn't feel seen. And then hearing transgender students say that this isn't a place for them.

The evidence aforementioned shows that this is more reason as to why the community needs to come together and work towards creating a more inclusive culture. For instance, creating a space for those who are underrepresented to be represented at the table because making decisions that focus on a particular group of people or groups of marginalized folks, is injustice when the purpose is to serve them after all. To take this a little bit deeper, President G shared that in collaborating with folks, particularly those with differing views, it's about learning where others are coming from. This includes their backgrounds and perspectives. Specifically, she said, "The only way to do the work is to actually have to change the hearts and minds of people. And to do this, we need to give them the capacity to do it." Overall, all three presidents understand the unique needs of bringing people of diverse backgrounds together. They also understand the need to put in the effort, dedication, and setting goals for creating communities based on collaboration

and inclusiveness. That is why these are their top priorities in moving an agenda or initiative forward.

Collaboration and inclusive leadership isn't only about the president initiating, creating, and fostering spaces of belonging on their campus (Kezar et al., 2021). In fact, staff, faculty, and student groups on campus are highly encouraged to initiate and create spaces of their own. President G takes part in them as well. For example, she shared an email communication between herself and a staff member about how she showed up presently at the staff meeting, participated, and provided an honest perspective. In this email, the staff member wrote:

> Hi President T,
>
> I really want to thank you for taking the time to be a part of our morning zoom meeting. I especially want to thank you for being so transparent. I do think that going forward that will prove to have been helpful. It's really tuff to lead (and think you do that well) but also knowing someone can relate and has personal experience can challenge one to up their own way of thinking I've found in my life. So being so transparent is really inspiring. I think it was also helpful to hear the districts vision for new buildings going forward, so people know this has been considered and is being considered very thoughtfully.
>
> I know how crunchy the meeting was today at times and I just wanted to offer you my point of view, as wordy as it may be (LOL). There are passions and concerns and a variety of experiences that have to be and are, I think, being addressed. So, I thank you again for joining us today and hearing us and advocating for everyone.
>
> Be well, and thank you for all you do.

Creating spaces for collaboration and inclusiveness isn't left only to the president. The power is shared (Kezar et al., 2021). Each president's positionality is used or practiced on how they influence and share their power in the work of equity and social justice. In fact, they all articulate that staff, faculty, and students know that they are encouraged and supported to bring more people to the table to do equity work within their own groups and parts of the campus organization. Such collaboration has had some positive effects, as reported by the presidents. This makes people feel that they do have a seat at the table and that their opinions really do matter.

In connection with prior literature, the collaborative and inclusive leadership practices President T, President G, and President F shared, aligns with what DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) find, that leaders can foster an inclusive culture such that everyone can work together to understand the goals, and work towards them as a team. In this study focused on three Asian American community college presidents, the efforts of building a collaborative inclusive culture are within their top priorities.

Sub-theme: Professional Development

In this next sub-theme, professional development, I will report on how each president addresses and provides professional development opportunities that are focused on equity and social justice. Professional development is an ongoing process and growth for anyone who wants to strengthen their knowledge and skills in this work. As stated in the transformative leadership theory, pedagogical changes are also a key element in creating and sustaining a campus climate that centers equity and social justice. Equitable approaches to practice and creating a learning context that enhances cultural capital is key (Shields and Hesbol, 2019). In order for a campus to reach this, professional development opportunities need to be available so that faculty and staff

can take on new and ongoing learning opportunities to support the students they serve in amplifying the experiences of the students inside and outside of the classroom. In interviewing the three presidents, I found that they all had consistently addressed personal outreach or leading the professional development themselves and focusing on students to incorporate their lived experiences as well using applicable texts and resources of their diverse student body. Funding for professional development was raised by one president as a key factor, because without funding, promoting professional development can be challenging. Finally, and most importantly, professional development starts with one's own journey into this work. This means that focusing first on one's own deficit mindset is critical.

Being a hands-on CEO isn't always easy, but President T and President G both discussed in their interviews how important it is for them to lead and participate in these efforts with their faculty and staff. A personal approach to professional development offerings provide President T a "personal intimate engagement" with her community. In reviewing her cultural artifacts, she hosted and led readings and conversations with other team members on her campus which are held once a once a month (both of these events are equity and social justice focused). An example of one of the series she held and had conversations about focused on empirical articles such as "Participation in Black Lives Matter and deferred action for childhood arrivals: Modern activism among Black and Latino college students" (Hope, Keels, & Durkee, 2016). In another cultural artifact, she shared a flier that alerted her campus to an upcoming discussion focused on "Our stories are our sanctuary: Testimonio as a sacred space of belonging" (Fuentes & Pérez, 2016). Both of these opportunities are led by President T and she engages with her community from start to finish on a monthly basis. These are open to anyone interested.

President G is also hands-on with her community. As president, she described herself as one who does not "sit in the ivory tower." Instead, she is in the community, learning and growing along with her members. Her goal in doing the work alongside her colleagues is to "cultivate the inherent genius" in each of them and "engendering trust with each other." For example, she worked with a cohort of faculty members in doing "deeper work" in equity and social justice. She described that each cohort consisted of 25 to 40 faculty members. This number depends on how many faculty opt in for this opportunity with her. During these "learning communities," they focus on reflecting on experiences in the classroom. For instance, faculty reflect and discuss microaggressions in relation to their own faculty identity. Topics on the syllabus and how they can decolonize it is also one that comes up in these learning communities. The meeting expectation set is for faculty to meet every two weeks on Fridays. President G attends every meeting and actively engages with her faculty.

Another key element in professional development opportunities is student focused. President T and President F shared how important and relevant these opportunities are in focusing on addressing the student experiences and the student experiences in relation to materials used in the classroom. For example, President T expressed that professional development opportunities need to incorporate how faculty can learn to "meet students where they are at." In doing this, we each need to explore our own deficit-minded thinking around this. As she shared, "we each have gone through a deficit-minded educational system ourselves" so it is imperative that we recognize this and develop equitable experiences for students. Furthermore, President F explained how a reflective process for faculty to think deeply about how the materials they select for their courses are impacting students, especially students of color. So, at his campus, he also has learning communities that come together "to share textbooks that are

selected" for their courses. They are particularly attentive to "books that are written by people of color."

Lastly, as president, it is important to seek resources and funding to support your community. In doing this work, President T is always proactively working on securing or seeking funding to support her faculty and staff. "Allocating funding in advance" is essential as stated by President T because there are always professional development needs. She herself would look for funding just because she knows that there is a need to increase professional development opportunities for her campus.

Overall, professional development opportunities vary but what all these presidents articulated is essential to this work is the need to provide ongoing opportunities for everyone. Having a president plan, lead, and engage with their community is one of the strategies in modeling equity and social justice leadership in action for one's campus community. The beliefs and expectations of the minds of those in charge and those teaching students can make a difference in the learning experiences of students. And in connection to prior literature, moving the needle in equity and social justice work is not just about raising students' academic performance, but rather, it's about "instituting changes in the educational environment of their schools—structures, culture, pedagogical practices—that resulted in more inclusive and more just experiences for all students" (Sheilds, 2010, p. 584). Moreover, prior work has found that school administrators' beliefs and expectations can make a significant impact on their community (Boske, 2015). Overall, presidents' internal mindset and actions they take make a difference in their community.

Sub-theme: Student Voice

The sub-theme, student voice, as shared by President F and President G, means that students from all diverse backgrounds are included in the campus community. Their input is essential in the development and decision processes, and of initiatives or goals of the college. Student voice aligns with a major component of the shared equity leadership framework in which the leader operates in a way that is "inherently collaborative and inclusive" (Kezar et al. 2021, p. 6). In the following analysis, I will explain how student voice is incorporated on each campus from the presidents' point of view. In summary, each president prioritizes student voice as being most important and their decisions all surround student input. The students are whom they serve, and they know how critical it is to embed student voice in all aspects of their leadership.

Student voice is essential to the work at President G's college. "Listening to student voice is always key to every approach," was said by President G. In developing Guided Pathways, student voice was centered in every step of the planning process. Student voice isn't only essential on initiatives such as Guided Pathways, but it's also imperative to incorporate student voice for anything that comes up in the campus community. For example, at President G's previous college where she also served as president, the campus community created the Lavender Project. This project was focused on creating gender neutral bathrooms. In the planning and development process, students, faculty, and staff were all involved and as always, student voice was central in the decision-making process. President G emphasized that "student voice is fundamental because though we may not always understand the experiences or lived experiences of the students," we must design to incorporate their voices. Lastly, President G understands that the culture of the community is heavily influenced by the staff and faculty and

thus has a ripple effect to the students of the community, so to her, student voice is always most important.

Incorporating student voice is more than being inclusive in the development and decision-making process in President T's perspective. Student voice is to incorporate their perspectives and to "foster students to develop agency and leadership." Part of this strategy is to "self-empower" these students so that they learn how to advocate for themselves when they take on their own roles at their workplace or in the community. And this is why President T strives to engage students in everything she does on her campus. Some examples of how President T incorporates student input is by having students from different programs participate in the revision of the college's educational master plan. Students from the associated student government, students who represent students with accessibility needs, and students of color all participated. To expand on student participation, President T and her executive team meets with the associated student body on a monthly basis and more recently, planned their convocation around student voice. During this experience, qualitative questions were asked of students to share their experience on life at the community college. Students had the opportunity to share how they were getting support, areas of need, accessibility to resources, and experiences as a transfer student.

Student voice is also incorporated into the college's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism Plan. The artifact shared by President T shows a section of the student voice as follows:

> The Office of Student Development and Activities is responsible for guiding and supporting the efforts of the Associated Student Government (ASG) that serves as the College's Student Senate in participatory governance. Furthermore, the Office of Student Development and Activities is also responsible for coordinating and hosting on-campus

> and virtual programming to engage students in campus life, celebrate diversity, foster leadership development, and promote engagement across all student organizations. The College's goal over the next ten years will be to increase the opportunities afforded students to learn and develop their leadership skills within the ASG, Campus Clubs, and special programs. Student leadership development is vital if the College is to prepare students to enter the workforce, become informed and involved citizens that can take action for social justice in their communities and beyond.

Overall, student voice is set as a goal for State's Community College , and they aim to meet the goals set upon them to engage with their student communities such as inclusivity and engagement.

At Parks College, engaging students, particularly students of color, is a priority for President F. This means being attentive to the multiple different communities and their needs is essential. The students at this community college know that there is an open-door policy to the administrative staff. They know that the administration is listening, and they are willing to bring up concerns. It's clear that President F has developed a caring community so that students of color feel safe enough to bring issues to them. For example, the "Black Student Union has made demands of the administration." This led the college to support and focus on the concerns brought by Black Retention Program Center which had a ripple effect in the college taking next steps in providing the college campus police and faculty to do anti-racism training.

In each of the examples shared by the college presidents, they all embrace and prioritize student voice. Their leadership and decision making is shared with students and it's clear that student voice is integral in every step and process of the colleges. Student voice is critical not only to the current culture, but also to the future campus culture of each college. Overall, student voice is pivotal in every aspect of the campus because it represents the people whom they serve.

Sub-theme: Challenges in Equity and Social Justice Work

In this next theme, I will address the multiple challenges each president faced, endured, and addressed while leading their campus on their equity and social justice journey. Equity and social justice work can be very personal, draining, and requires a lot of dedication. At times, individuals might feel alone while going through their equity and social justice journey, but the key is to continue the work because they believe in the work. The challenges addressed in this section include having influence as a president, understanding the meaning of equity and social justice, taking equity and social to a deeper level, working with resistors, and stereotypes of APIA women. In connection to Kezar's (2021), theoretical framework, the fourth component addresses that courage is "standing up for equity and remaining dedicated even when it's not popular or easy" (Kezar et al., 2021, p. 18). Having courage in this work is one of the foundational pieces in doing, leading, and actualizing the work into reality, especially when you have resistors.

In engaging with his college campus, President F described listening as one of the key strategies. He described listening that encompassed reflection upon oneself and processing the voices of the community. As you process, "you sort in your mind the strengths and challenges." In addition, he added that equity and social justice work requires one to fully be cognizant of their own identities as they do the work. President F shared:

> It's pretty heavy work, you know emotionally, and so, it's necessary right and it's hard work to unlearn biases and racism and this includes people of color. We all need to acknowledge our own racism and biases and being the president, you kind of have to set the example and set the tone.

Having influence is another challenge. In addition to this work, President F acknowledged what it means to be a president who centers equity and social justice. He stated that in his role, his view is that,

> Presidents don't have power, they have influence. So rarely, if ever, I will make a decision by saying I'm making this decision because I'm the president of the college, you know. I think the challenge is trying to influence policies and the positions that the college takes, is really about self-reflection, self-respect, and empathy. How you find common ground when people have divergent viewpoints is all necessary. That to me, is really challenging and tiring because there's so much heart that goes into it. Then you also have the emotional piece, intellectual piece, and you're trying to reconcile them because these principles are important to me. Overall, I can state my messages in as powerful, articulate, and elegant way as I can, so that people can see that this is very important to me and it may not be important to you, but hopefully have some influence and change their mind. This is why it's important to have allies in the room. They help reinforce that. But sometimes, you may find yourself as the lone voice in the room. And this can be fatiguing and frustrating.

In this response, President F demonstrated courage. With courage, it comes with many internal feelings a president might feel, but it's important to keep the community moving forward. Therefore, I found that as president, having influence is a major factor, especially when you are alone in a room with people who have the opposite view from you. Having strategies on how one might influence their community is imperative in carrying this work forward. And of course, having allies in the room is always a positive approach.

Understanding equity and social justice is another challenge. Though, challenges differ from college to college, and for some, it may be similar in some way. Centering equity and social justice has been a long-standing goal of Hills College. However, President G admitted that though it has been a long-time goal of the college, not everyone understands the definitions of equity and social justice. This has been a challenge in her perspective since joining the college.

In addition, historically, the college has embedded equity and social justice in the vision and mission, including job postings, which means that the college values it. There are policies and procedures surrounding equity and social justice, too. According to President G, on the exterior, it looks great. This goes to show that the college values and speaks the language of equity and social justice, but she described that "this work needs more."

Next is another challenge, which is taking equity and social justice beyond the surface level. As stated in the transformative leadership theory, pedagogical changes are also a key element in equity and social justice work: "It is the essential work of the educational leader to create learning contexts or communities in which social, political, and cultural capital is enhanced in such a way as to provide equity of opportunity for students as they take their place as contributing members of society" (Shields, 2010, p. 572). In response to this component of the theoretical framework, the presidents discuss how it becomes a challenge when there are faculty that are just "fluffing" the work, as described below.

Curriculum that speaks to equity and social justice needs to be intentional. President G spoke about how the campus has such a diverse faculty and student body, but "the outcomes are not any better." There needs to be deeper work done at every level. For example, "disrupting the disparate outcomes that we have for our students." And to do this work, there needs to be work focused on "critically assessing and doing deeper work" with the faculty and the faculty prioritizing this work. And with this, President G led a cohort of faculty on her campus to reflect on their syllabi and microaggressions in the classroom. In addition to this, she worked with the Curriculum Committee. She saw some curricula come through where there was "fluff". The challenge was obtaining a rubric that reflects as she shared:

> How is this really actually going to change the outcomes for how you design a course. The big question is, are we really looking at the racialized experiences of our students and making sure it's here in the content?

Sending a new or revised curriculum to the Curriculum Committee without really thinking deep on how the content reflects the experiences of the diverse student body, isn't going to move the needle. "Checking off the box" simply isn't enough. Redesigning teaching and learning through an equity and social justice lens requires a lot more work.

In addition to curricular needs, working with leaders on campus to better understand themselves, how their brain operates such as how feelings are developed in certain parts of the brain is tied to one's growth on equity and social justice was shared by President G. Leaders need to develop skills and comfort in talking about equity and social justice, and it starts with having conversations focused on race. President G expressed that for some folks, it can be difficult when they operate from a deficit mindset. In connection to the transformative leadership framework, Shields and Hesbol (2019), knowing oneself and recognizing how their brain operates in building relationships is the first step in one's equity journey.

Another challenge in this work is dealing with stereotypes. Stereotypes influence how folks are categorized or treated. For example, President G shared in her interview that "people have filed a complaint against me due to the way that I was speaking in slang." Though, other male counterparts have spoken the same way to the same audience and nothing has been done to them. Stereotypes are a challenge, especially for Asian women. As discussed in the literature review, stereotypes are a barrier that has negatively impacted Asian women because of preconceived notions about them.

Furthermore, as stated by Shields and Hesbol (2019), transformative leadership framework requires a lot more than just the equity talk. Policies, procedures, structural changes,

practices, programming, and pedagogy, cultural change, all need to operate through an equity lens. Some colleges may move a lot faster than others, but when there are many discussions that contradict the goals of equity and social justice set by the college, this can hinder the institution. For example, in my interview with President T, one of the challenges of her campus was that:

> Faculty and employees tout themselves as they're down, they're woke. But the reality is that you as a CEO have to work on cultural change. So it's not just the unity talking, or that people are not challenging themselves anymore to do deeper work in anti-racism, standing up against toxic masculinity, all of that, homophobia. And when you have a social justice campus and people feel like they're operating with a social justice lens, they don't realize that they're actually paying lip service, too, because their actions are contradictory.

Equity and social justice work are more than talking. It is the actions and inactions that speaks volume about how an institution values this work. It encompasses how students are viewed, how staff, faculty, and administrators are willing to come together to talk and make changes through an equity lens. And though, some leaders may have a lot of patience like President T, sometimes, an institution just has to keep moving forward but always provide opportunities for resistors to join in at any point, as described by President T:

> I still provide all the opportunities, but I'm not going to worry about the naysayers who have been naysayers for ten, fifteen, twenty years. Because they have not moved yet even students to talk to them because they don't value students as having valid experiences. I feel like I really have a lot of patience and strive to take the cultural humility approach where they're at. But there are some people in my experience as both a faculty member and an administrator who will never move. And I just don't want to burn my energy on that. So that's one of the struggles that I have experienced is for those who don't want to move on this topic of equity and social justice.

And though the opportunities are there, there will always be folks in the community that choose not to join the efforts in equity and social justice work. Or there will be folks doing the work while operating from a deficit mindset. In connection to President T's response about recognizing students' valid experiences, those who operate from a deficit mindset "place the burden of change on the students rather than the institution" (Kezar et al. 2021, p. 2). So to center equity and social justice, the people creating the culture of the school need to undergo their own reflective process in their equity journey, which requires them to reflect on themselves and their institution. Without this process, working on equity and social justice will remain a challenge.

The willingness to always learn and grow is one of the biggest components in the shared equity leadership framework and transformative leadership framework. But when a leader runs up against individuals in a community who feel that they have done enough or are already doing the work to the max, it becomes a challenge to teach, share, and foster a community that refuses to grow. For example, President T shared that one of the challenges is that some practitioners already feel "woke" and that "they don't have things to learn." Every time professional development opportunities are provided and your own community questions "why do I have to learn all of this? Why do I have to keep doing this when I'm already down right? I already have anti-racism down." Instead, President T shared that at some point "I just don't want to burn my energy on that." So as a result, she turns to her new hires and focuses on hiring folks who understand the equity and social justice goals and responsibilities of the college and go from there. These are some continuous challenges CEOs have to be attentive to and be proactive about and lastly, to never give up.

Working with resistors is always present and always a challenge. In this challenge, President T had to face was working with faculty resistance. This resistance occurred during her

tenure as faculty at another community college. As President T explained, her goal was to do multicultural infusion in the curriculum. However, the pushback from faculty came from a place of confrontation. Comments such as “How can I be biased when I’m treating everybody exactly the same? Or Why should I change my evaluation and grading?” Further complaints from faculty such as “I’m not doing equity work because I’m not just prioritizing Latinx students or Black students in the classroom.” These examples show that these faculty come from a place where they either do not understand equity and social justice or do not care about it for the sake of their students.

In her current role as president at States Community College, she recognizes that many of her staff and faculty also come from marginalized backgrounds like her. From her perspective, they also understand and value equity and social justice, but the challenging piece is the sense of urgency. Some staff tend to carry a mantra of “someone else will do the work or President T is going to carry everything or classified professionals are the ones doing that engagement, or faculty can stay in their bubble, or treat all students the same is okay.” As a result, faculty and staff with this mantra run up against faculty and staff who do feel the urgency to make changes.

Lastly, stereotypes of APIA women are a challenge in itself. Similar to President G, President T also experienced stereotypes that negatively impacted her. Stereotypes such as Asian women being quiet and submissive was one that President T dealt with and affected her in her professional workplace. There were several instances when she was touched inappropriately and had to speak up to defend herself. Specifically, in casual conversation, her colleagues, board members she was serving with, touched her shoulder or back and she had to remind them that it was making her uncomfortable or that it was inappropriate. Prior to this incident, the dean of her department decided to take off his shirt in his office during their one-on-one meeting and she had

to speak up for herself. Stereotypes don't stop here. Just because of the way President T was dressed or appeared in casual dress in the community, people treat her like she's a nanny, just because she is babysitting a friend's child. Sadly, incidences like these stay vividly in the memories of those that experienced it.

As I mentioned previously, equity and social justice work takes the entire community to come together, reflect, and make changes together. The theoretical frameworks, shared equity leadership and transformative leadership, both amplify that leadership takes collaboration, reflection, and a community willing to make changes. Though there are challenges, people need to be willing to acknowledge those challenges and find ways to come together and work towards the same goals. To further connect to the literature review, Theoharis (2007) "social justice in schools does not happen by chance" (p. 253). School leaders have the power to influence and guide their campus towards a more just and equitable learning environment. In a study by Wang (2018), the participants (leaders) found themselves struggling with the mindsets of teachers who "lack understanding from staff, their attitude, mentality, and values, change of staff, and other related issues as hindering their social justice work" (p. 486). Similar to the challenges aforementioned, leaders can influence, but it's difficult when people from your own community have a mentality that simply does not want to change.

Chapter 7

Findings Part 3:

Dealing with the Pandemic-The Rise of Anti-Asian Racism and Hate Crimes

Recently, the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) population in the United States has had to deal with continuous racist acts such as discrimination, physical assault, and verbal harassment at progressively high rates. According to the Pew Research Center (2020), since the

pandemic began, around four-in-ten U.S. adults confirmed that it has become prevalent for people to communicate racist views toward Asians. In connection to the literature review, Chu, (1980) found that Asian American leaders, particularly women, encountered racism in their community involving colleagues. The findings below point to the anti-Asian racism that Asian leaders experience. This data is very telling because even when an individual is a CEO, their position does not protect or necessarily mitigate how others mistreat them from the lens of anti-Asian racism and hate. In this next theme on the rise of anti-Asian racism and hate crimes, I focus on two sub-themes: personal effects of anti-Asian hate racism and progressive actions on anti-Asian racism.

Sub-theme: Personal Effects of Anti-Asian Hate & Racism

In the findings below, each president shared how they experienced hate during the pandemic. Two of the three presidents experienced first-hand racism while the other president grieved heavily with her community. No matter how hate is encountered, it still hurts deeply for each individual.

"Go back to China" were the hurtful words President F received via email during the pandemic. These words are haunting and painful as President F described because they all stemmed from his college needing to make a decision on mandating the COVID-19 vaccination. There were groups who supported mandating vaccination and there were groups who did not support it. And for those that did not support, some sent many "ugly" messages to President F.

As for President T, she knew that the rise on anti-Asian really "hit her community hard." This recent experience during the pandemic on anti-Asian racism brought her to "grieve publicly," with her having to reveal her vulnerability to the community. She felt the pain along

with her students and staff. Any signs of hate or racism on Asians, President T felt the domino effect on her as well.

In interviewing President G, she too, felt the tragic pain many Asians felt. Specifically, President G was spat on and was told to go back to her home. These physical and verbal attacks made President G feel like she "was the virus." Furthermore, President G had to handle a highly publicized and sensitive issue during the pandemic. Specifically, an Asian student on her campus "took it to social media that their professor told them that they should anglicize their name" because it resembled a bad word in the English language. In fact, the student's name as said by the faculty member, it sounded like "fuck boy." This was a highly important and sensitive situation, so President G had to act on it progressively. Therefore, she could not fire the faculty member right away, instead, she worked with the collective bargaining unit to address the issue. Through this process, President G received hundreds of emails in support of the student and many others supporting the faculty member. And when she responded in support of the student, those against the student would email President G saying "fuck your college." Though it was a long process in handling the situation, President G followed the collective bargaining agreement, policies and procedures, and eventually fired the faculty member. These incidents demonstrate how leaders in high influential positions, not only have to deal with their own issues of attack, they have to remain strong in support of their community.

Disappointingly, as a result, each president had their own battles during the pandemic. Each one is as important as the other, and it is critical to understand where they are coming from and the stories they've shared amplify their experiences as Asian American leaders at this pivotal time. Overall, all three presidents, regardless of their titles, did not protect them from these distressing incidents.

Sub-theme: Progressive Actions on Anti-Asian Hate and Racism

In this sub-theme, progressive actions on anti-Asian hate and racism, each president took a unique approach to support their community during this sensitive time. Though there isn't a right or wrong way, each president had their own unique way on how they conducted their efforts toward the hate and racism as described below.

At Parks College, President F worked closely with his community to quickly pass a resolution addressing anti-Asian hate and racism. The resolution was well received by the county, but this does not guarantee that hate and racism won't happen on campus. Therefore, President F actively communicated and reassured his campus that any hate and racism will not be tolerated. By doing this, he is reaffirming to his staff and students that should anything happen, the administration is behind them and will support them.

With a different approach, President T held "racial healing sessions." These sessions were not limited to only Asian folks needing the space, but it was also open to anyone who needed the space to heal, for example following the murder of George Floyd. In reflecting on the healing sessions, President T shared:

> I strove to really hold it in, but the racial healing sessions, those were really difficult emotionally. And I just allowed myself to cry in the sessions. And I think people felt like they... Because remember I came in as the president and then the pandemic hit. So actually, the relationship building that I needed to do that I would usually do got cut, because everything was in the Zoom environment. So I think it allowed people in the community to understand me more and see authenticity and vulnerability. And so personally, but as a leader, when the events, multiple events were happening, I engaged in a collaborative fashion, the affinity groups and then campus life and student activities.

> The ethnic studies area and to do racial healing sessions. And then I did with my senior staff, we did listening sessions and of the affinity groups got to make asks.

President T found herself being vulnerable in front of her community during these listening sessions. Furthermore, with a large population of Latinx, President T reflects they too were "triggered with all the trauma with police in our city." With multiple groups feeling the hate and pain, President T shared that she became emotional during these sessions. She felt the pain and trauma her community felt. To take her support a little further, President T "engaged in collaborative fashion, the affinity groups and then campus life and student activities. The ethnic studies area also did racial healing sessions. And then I did it with my senior staff, we did listening sessions and of the affinity groups."

With President G, she centered the outcome of her students. She worked collaboratively with her team and took a "systemic approach" as she described it. She took an approach of how her campus could educate people on a deeper level in relation to racism and hate crimes toward specific groups such as Asians. Her goal was to "elevate" the conversation and have her community come together and reflect. Through this process, she was holding space for people to "learn, engage, and figure things out." And one of the things included in this plan was to "humanize the curriculum through a humanistic approach." Her overall goal was to bring everyone together in hopes of "bringing in other people and to bridge them."

Though these three presidents have different approaches to address anti-Asian hate and racism and support their communities, each of them actively engaged in the work. It always takes a leader to address their community, but it is that ongoing support and action that the community needs to see. In the case of these presidents, they were engaging, vulnerable, and supportive every step of the way.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Vision for Success intends to "reduce equity gaps among underrepresented students by 40% over five years and eliminate it in 10 years, (2020)." For these reasons, it is more important than ever to conduct research to better understand how leaders, such as the community college presidents, lead their campus community with equity and social justice at the forefront of their work. How do they make sense of their work to serve underrepresented students in reaching the goal set by the CCCCO?

In addition, with the lack of APIA leaders represented in higher education, and the rise of anti-Asian racism and hate crimes, this population is more important than ever for researchers to turn their attention to and efforts to collect data, and to amplify the voices of the APIA community. Understanding the diverse backgrounds within the APIA community, their experiences, challenges, ambition, and leadership styles are critical to understanding the barriers, successes, and practices of those who do make it that far in their leadership aspirations.

Furthermore, as stated in the introduction of this study, equity and social justice are shaped by the individual's contextual experiences that influence their beliefs and how they understand diversity (Wilson, 2005). From the interviews, it can be concluded that each president had a consciousness of their identities and their equity and social justice experiences were connected to their contextual experiences, in which, resulted how they understood the diversity of their students. Individual experiences, identities, ideologies, and positionalities, all influence one's capacity to understand and lead equity and social justice work.

Lastly, equity and social justice work is collaborative at all levels (Kezar et al, 2021). Planning and decision making should not be top down. Instead, everyone in the community, including students, have a voice, and everyone has a role on what to do and how to carry out this work. Overall, equity and social justice is shared. In order for the campus to reach its goals, everyone needs to do their part in moving the needle.

Next, I review my key findings in response to my two research questions. This qualitative research study showcased how community college presidents recognize their identities, positionalities, and ideologies and how each plays a role and influences the initiatives that they lead at their institutions. Though this study had a small sample, the findings reaffirmed that the identities, positionalities, and ideologies individuals have, particularly leaders of the APIA community in CEO positions, do affect the work of equity and social justice, particularly on how they prioritize this work. The work was grounded in prior literature, and the shared equity leadership and transformative leadership theoretical frameworks. These frameworks posit that leaders need to undergo their own equity journey, including reflecting on their own identities, recognizing the power that comes with certain identities and positionalities (Kezar et al, 2021). Such recognition makes a huge impact on how equity and social justice is valued and carried out.

In the first research question below, I attempted to better understand how APIA community college presidents recognize how much of their identities, positionalities, and ideologies impact equity and social justice work.

1. How do the identities, positionalities, and ideologies of Asian American Community College presidents influence how they prioritize and implement equity and social justice in their campus context?

Through my data analysis, I found that recognizing one's identity is a factor for all three community college presidents. As a person of color, each of them could not help but recognize their own identities early on in their lives, which played a critical role on how they see themselves and how others see them. Because of their own personal inequitable experiences, this also affected how they choose to prioritize equity and social justice at their campus. As stated in Wilson (2005), individual's contextual experiences are shaped by how they see diversity, which results on how an individual prioritizes and works toward providing an equitable and social justice learning environment. Being a person of color themselves, they choose to use their positionality to influence rather than dictate their community and amplify the voices of marginalized communities. These three CEOs work collaboratively in their community to center student voices, break barriers to access college opportunities and resources, and focus on marginalized populations. They are aware of the challenges and success rates at their own campus and know that there is work to be done to target the disproportionately impacted populations at their campus.

Consistent with the literature, leaders must be willing to undergo a process of critical reflection about their own identities (Boske, 2015) and recognize that there are unequal circumstances in the systems and structures that impact historically marginalized groups (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2020). In the interviews with all three community college presidents, each has shared their own inequitable experiences that have impacted their role as a CEO. And just as importantly, each is well aware of the data that proves that there is a need to address and support marginalized communities at their campus. In connection with the shared equity leadership and transformative leadership framework, the self-reflection element and willingness to recognize the inequitable practices and outcomes are essential to doing this work.

Furthermore, the work and outcome of equity and social justice are impacted by those who lead the work due to the multiple influences of ideologies. Ideologies can be influenced by one's upbringing and those who influence the individual. These ideologies lead to what individuals value (Kezar et al., 2021). In my findings, each president's ideology was shaped by their upbringing and professionals around them. For example, President F was heavily influenced by President Obama and his mentor, while President T was influenced by the concept of Pinayism and Pinay (Pinayism, 2020) pedagogical practice by Allyson Tintiagco. President G's upbringing deeply influenced her ideology of love and care. These influences of ideologies can either promote individuals to do equity work or even possibly see equity as passive work. Because each college president experienced oppression at some point of their upbringing, these experiences affected them on how they see the world, understand equity and social justice, and choose to prioritize this work. This finding is in direct connection with a study conducted by Kahlifa et al., (2016) in which the findings indicate that culturally responsive leaders from marginalized communities, have a shared responsibility to counter the oppression. As a result, ideologies play a role on how individuals process, understand, work, and prioritizes equity and social justice.

In the second research question below, I sought to understand how each college president dealt with and supported the uprising of anti-Asian racism and hate crimes.

2. How have the college presidents addressed the rise in anti-Asian racism and hate crimes and supported their communities during this time?

Because I conducted my research during the pandemic in which the rise of anti-Asian racism and hate crimes were becoming more prevalent, the three CEOs were dealing with their

own emotional and mental health while still leading their community professionally. Even with personal attacks, these community college presidents did not and could not lay low in a time when their community needed them most. They grieved alongside their community, they stood up and collaborated with their community to pass anti-hate policy, and they diligently worked through difficult situations between faculty and student. Each president had their own unique problems on their campus, strategized collaboratively, and dealt with issues while putting the best interest of the community first.

In connection with the literature review, the data I collected also coincides with prior literature on the stereotypes of APIA women as submissive (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). This stereotype was reflected in the lived experiences of two of the three presidents. Stereotypes are powerful. They're powerful, because when they are ingrained in an individual, that stereotype affects how an individual interacts with the subject of that stereotype. For example, President T shared how her white male colleague was chosen to get an office before she did. Her dean thought she would be submissive to the situation and not say anything, because she is Asian. Another example was when President G shared in her interview on how colleagues at the table completely talked about how other leaders would be a good fit for the next chancellor position, overlooking President G, who is very well qualified. These experiences demonstrate how individuals can make the wrong assumptions based on stereotypes and how stereotypes can affect an individual.

This research study finds that each president's leadership approach and practice in equity and social justice work reflect elements of the SEL framework. There are various points at which individuals enter equity work. Individuals can enter equity through personal experiences or undergo developing a critical consciousness (Kezar, et al., 2021). In this study, I found

consistency among all three participants, all of which are people of color, in recognizing their own inequitable experiences of marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination, which led them to have a desire to do equity and social justice work. Due to the inequitable experiences each college president had, their personal journey of recognizing their identity earlier in their lives, made a difference in not only a desire to do the work, but to also prioritize it.

Also contributing to the theoretical frameworks (Kezar et al., 2021 & Shields, 2010), the experiences of marginalization each college president endured, resulted in these individuals' critical consciousness of empathy towards marginalized communities. For example, President G feeling like she did not belong and President T enduring the sense of otherness. Experiences such as these affected how each leader empathizes with folks from marginalized backgrounds. These experiences and their own upbringing motivate how they choose to center equity and social justice at their campus.

Finally, positionality as seen by all three participants, is also the power of collaboration. In the SEL framework, equity and social justice work is shared amongst all community members of varying levels. Each individual is seen and respected as unique and talented individuals to lead this work. Each president involved their community from staff, faculty, and students to chime in on the planning and decision-making processes. As a result, all three community college presidents used their positionality to collaborate and share the work of equity and social justice. In order to do the work, collaboration and respect at all levels must occur (Kezar et al, 2021). Similar to the studies in the literature review found in (Brown, 2004; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014 and Furman, G. 2012), collaboration is key. The three community college

presidents interviewed, found this to be critical component in this work and applied it in their community.

To conclude this section, the findings of this study should be used to inform staff, faculty, administrators, and presidents in higher education as they work on equity and social justice work. First, recognizing the inequitable systems, structures, policies, and practices must be identified. Second, entering equity at varying points must take place with individuals. Third, the community must be willing to collaborate and engage in this work to move the needle. And last, more APIA leaders need to be represented in higher level positions in higher education. This information should be helpful to those seeking to advance equity and social justice at their campus.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Community college presidents play an integral role in moving their campuses forward toward providing an equitable education and closing the opportunity gaps. As the findings of this study indicate, working towards this goal requires a race-conscious effort because equity is focused on historically marginalized communities. Therefore, it is critical for leaders such as community college presidents to reflect on their own identities, positionalities, and ideologies because these factors affect how they approach, process, frame, engage with their community, and make decisions. Leadership practices can either continue to perpetuate systems and structures that oppress marginalized communities, or they can uplift the lives and experiences of marginalized communities. As a result, individuals in powerful positions must take into account, a leader's own identities, positionalities, and ideologies.

Secondly, as stated in the SEL and transformative leadership frameworks, people enter equity at different points. For those that come from privileged backgrounds, they need to undergo an equity journey of self-conscious development. Through this journey, they discover

their identities and ideologies, which help them understand and work towards providing an equitable education to underrepresented students. Community college districts should consider mandated trainings for all incoming faculty, staff, and administrators because the it is evident in the findings that it takes the entire community to move the equity and social justice needle.

The third implication for practice is that due to the lack of APIA leaders represented in higher level positions in higher education, institutions should seek to recruit APIA individuals. APIA is a diverse community within itself. Many individuals from this community are eager to serve in higher capacity positions. To be specific, community college districts need to support and provide trainings targeted for marginalized communities who desire to serve in leadership capacity positions.

Lastly, because the California Community College Chancellor's office aims to close the opportunity gap, faculty and staff all need professional development with a focus on equity and social justice. Working together with faculty and staff unions, each community college district needs to develop policies that address this need. Professional development focused on equity and social justice should shed some light on revising curriculum, pedagogy, and practices that can serve students from underrepresented backgrounds. Professional development in equity and social justice should not be an option. It should be mandatory, especially since the CCCCO aims to close the opportunity gap. Policies aimed at equity and social justice that impact practices in the classroom and services provided to students should be part of the professional growth of all members of a community college system.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study was focused on three APIA community college presidents, who all had extensive exposure, practices, and valued equity and social justice in their work. To expand our

understanding of how community college presidents' identities, ideologies, and positionalities impact equity and social justice work, further research should include a broader background of community college presidents. Suggestions for broader diverse backgrounds, should include those who are new in their role as president, and seasoned incumbents who claim that their campus is already doing equity and social justice work. Through this lens, it would contribute to a broader understanding of how college presidents from varying diverse backgrounds work and prioritizes equity and social justice at their campus. Furthermore, including a multitude of backgrounds of college presidents, will shed light on how much of the factors: identities, ideologies, and positionalities, influence equity and social justice from a broader perspective. Lastly, as stated in the SEL transformative leadership frameworks, individuals enter equity at different points and levels. By including diversified backgrounds of community college presidents, this will also contribute to understanding how CEOs enter this work and what influenced them to do the work.

As stated in the literature review, there is lack of research in higher education focused on equity and social justice work. Further studies are needed to address how institutes of higher education are working to address the needs of marginalized communities. There are studies emphasized by scholars such as Ladson-Billings that opportunity gap continues to persist. Until scholars conduct more research and practitioners take a hands-on approach in higher education to tackle this issue, the marginalized communities, will remain marginalized.

Epilogue

My Personal Journey of Equity

Growing up, I struggled being Hmong and American. I separate these two identities

because being Hmong means that I am to follow directions from my parents and elders. I must obey my parents by being a good daughter who cooks, cleans, goes to school nearby, had limited opportunities to be with friends outside of school, and limited participation in school activities as a teen because I had "daughter responsibilities." I was taught to follow (not lead as a daughter/girl/woman) and that I do not have a voice. My actions and inactions are reflections of my parents and my entire family. I am seen as a group or community, not as an individual. But due to the American sociocultural context I grew up in, I needed to define myself as an individual, I had a voice, I needed to be motivated, and participate in school activities so I could learn to be a leader. Growing up in two separate cultural expectations felt like growing up in two different worlds which still affects me in my workspaces today, as I struggle to find my voice at work.

As a first-generation Southeast Asian female and second-language learner, I have been marginalized and underestimated as a student and professor, and those academic and professional experiences have had a huge impact on how I have (and sometimes continue to) struggle with not feeling "good enough" to be in the classroom or take the lead. My cultural background and experiences were often not shared by my classmates, or reflected in the curriculum; and even now, most of my colleagues in my current department do not reflect similar ethnic and cultural background as me. I have suppressed the pain of feeling like an outsider for a long time, believing what I have endured is my problem, as a result of my inadequacies, and not related to the teachers' or institutions' unwillingness or inability to recognize and celebrate the value I bring to the classroom or community. Experiences such as these led me to be highly sensitive to the challenges underrepresented students and faculty face in the educational system. The inequitable structural systems, practices, and expectations I

experienced affected my identity, personal and professional growth, as well as my self-confidence.

These identities have shaped me in who I am, what I do, and how I relate to others. Because of having been marginalized and underestimated as a student, colleague, and daughter, I can relate to students who feel invisible. When I have felt that I was irrelevant in the classroom as a student, I felt less welcomed and less motivated to come to class and do well. For these reasons, as a professor, manager, and facilitator of my own classroom space, I feel the need to be concerned of my students, be vulnerable, be understanding, and make connections with my students whether it's through the curriculum or on a personal level. To me, providing a safe space for my students to learn, feel inclusive, and be seen are most important. I believe that if I can at least make my students feel safe and important in my class first, then learning can then happen. Validating my students' cultural, language, and experiences outside of the classroom, inside my classroom are imperative to their educational and professional journey. Additionally, it has taken me a long time to build my self-confidence to do what I currently do. I believe that the people around me helps build my self-confidence. And, because my family don't typically praise me or celebrate my accomplishments, it has affected me in how much and how often I doubt myself. I also don't recall having teachers or many colleagues see me for my true potential. These experiences have affected me in how I communicate and interact with others as well as the choices I make in my educational and career goals.

Most Powerful Learning Moments

The most powerful learning moments I had when I entered the work of equity and social justice is the key to reflect on ourselves as individuals, as a community, and as a nation. As Vajra Watson (2018) states, "Equity starts with autobiography. If we are to interact

authentically with people who are often different from us, we must actively reflect on our own stories, biases, privileges, and assumptions" (p. 139). As much as I want an equitable education for our students, as an educator, I am not confident that we will ever reach this goal, specifically for our marginalized communities. The work we have to do in equity and social justice is far from where we should be, in my opinion. Until we can get resisters to reflect on their own power, privilege, and biases, equity work will be a major challenge. This is because the White race dominates social power in every aspect. Based on Claire J. Kim's racial triangulation theory, Kim explains how Asian Americans are racialized among other groups and operationalizes the model minority myth. As noted by scholars, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Asians faced exclusion (Kim, 1999). "David Theor Goldberg notes about this approach, the presumption of a single monolithic racism is being displaced by a mapping of the multifarious historical formulations of racism" (Kim, 1999 p. 105). Secondly, the racial hierarchy approach as explained by Kim, denotes how each racial group is categorized from top to bottom, which is Whites on the top and Blacks / African Americans at the bottom. The other racialized groups fall in between the two, with Asian Americans being one of them. With this single scale of status and privilege, Whites remain at the top. This racial hierarchy is problematic because "Asian Americans have been denigrated more often as outsiders or aliens" (p. 106). Racial triangulation has been ongoing since its inception in the mid-1800s. As Kim states: Racial triangulation occurs by means of two types of simultaneous, linked processes: (1) process of "relative valorization," where by dominant group A (Whites) valorizes subordinate group B (Asian Americans) relative to subordinate group C (Blacks) on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to dominate both groups, but especially the latter, and (2) processes of "civic ostracism," whereby dominant group A (Whites) constructs subordinate group B (Asian

Americans) as immutably foreign and unassimilable with Whites on cultural and/or racial grounds in order to ostracize them from the body politic and civic membership. Furthermore, until we can get resisters to reflect and prioritize this work, we will continue to have the outcomes we do. Those outcomes include marginalized communities underperforming in every aspect of the social economic world that includes an education leading to financial and social capital gains (that's power).

Additionally, for the longest time, we have been educated and are continuing to educate our children from a historical perspective of the White Europeans. From this perspective, the stories of the marginalized communities are not heard, studied, and known, and therefore, become hidden and lost for multiple generations. This loss has impacted marginalized communities to underperform in academics or not having access to education, and therefore, having financial consequences leading to loss of power in the world. Being educated from a European perspective means to have the White European cultural capital. Yosso challenges this notion (Solórzano & Yosso (2002). She challenges that marginalized communities should be viewed as those that bring assets into the classroom and the community. Marginalized communities bring rich culture, language, and practices that a classroom and community can gain insights from. However, with a deficit mindset, marginalized communities must be stripped from their culture, language, and upbringing, and must change to meet the needs of the dominant culture.

Racial Equity Gap in College Graduation Rates

When data on the opportunity gap is disaggregated by race and ethnicity, it is the communities of color that are not persisting and graduating from college (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). These communities of color include Latinx, African Americans,

and Asian Pacific Islanders. According to the Campaign for College Opportunity, these communities are all growing in the state of California. Their high school graduation rate is also increasing; however, these communities are not graduating college at the same rate as their White counterparts. And, as aforementioned, these communities are not represented at selective colleges. To summarize, these communities of color need an action plan from higher educational institutes and the government to provide programs and services targeted for their needs. The gap will continue to persist and the needs of the economy in California will not be met, if we remain stagnant in our practices.

From Student to Practitioner and Scholar, to My Dissertation

My journey in equity and social justice in the Equity Action Institute, Equitable Practitioner Development Program, both at American River College and my educational experience in CANDEL, have all influenced me to reflect on my own journey as a student of color, practitioner of color, and scholar of color. I have often felt different from other students, staff, and colleagues. What I have learned in school as well as a colleague in the educational system, prior to my equity journey, is that I should accept the European ideology. I have felt for the longest time that I need to forget my personal experiences and upbringing, because they are of no value, especially if I want to make it in the educational system. It wasn't until I began my equity journey at American River College in the Equity Action Institute, that I realized I was not alone in feeling this way.

In diving deeper on equity and social justice issues, I learned that "according to the National Governors' Association, the achievement gap is -a matter of race and class. Across the U.S, a gap in academic achievement persists between minority and disadvantaged students and their white counterparts" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3). In this article, I learned that students of

color continue to be marginalized and excluded from high-quality education. Secondly, the achievement gap really is not the achievement gap, it really is the opportunity gap. Students from poverty backgrounds and those without or limited social capital within their families or communities, will experience many challenges in their educational journey. For example, as (Lesiak, 1991) stated, historically, the goal of boarding schools was "to kill the Indian in order to save the man." This strategy of deliberate and forced assimilation created a group of people, according to Pulitzer Prize writer N. Scott Momaday, who belonged nowhere (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 5). This is a prime example of how one gets stripped of their identity and therefore, feels unimportant or irrelevant to their community. As a result, they are challenged with their own identities including how to navigate to seek opportunities that would serve them. These inequitable practices also affected Latino/a students. In the case of Mendez v. Westminster (1946), proved how Brown children were and continue to experience inequity in education.

These inequitable practices began historically and continue to persist, even in today's education. First the invisibility of data disaggregation continues to persist. Without disaggregating data by race and ethnicity, it is difficult to serve students equitably. This data is crucial to understand the experiences and challenges students from marginalized groups experience. With this information, institutes can then identify the unique needs of each group and then serve them purposefully and comprehensively. Sadly, according to Bensimon (2005), institutes are not practicing disaggregation of data. As a result, equity data continues to remain invisible and unequal outcomes continue to persist. Overall, focusing on the issue is not being centered from the administrators level to staff, and faculty, because the data is invisible.

My reasons to pursue the degree in educational leadership with an emphasis in equity and social justice in leadership at the community college are countless. But one of the major

reasons that sparked my interest in this area is due to institutional and structural discrimination (Pincus, 2000). The people with the power, who are the administrators, staff, and faculty, have the power to shift and change policies and practices that are discriminatory towards marginalized groups.

According to Pincus, institutional discrimination is "policies of the dominant race/ethnic/gender institutions and the behavior of individuals who control these institutions implement policies that are intended to have a differential and or harmful effect on minority race/ethnic/gender norms" (p. 31). Additionally, structural discrimination "refers to the policies of dominant race/ethnic/gender institutions and the behavior of the individuals who implement these policies and control these institutions, which are race/ethnic/gender neutral in intent but which have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority race/ethnic/gender groups" (Pincus, 2000, p. 31).

Institutional and structural discrimination are harmful to our students of color and can be detrimental to their experiences. Therefore, as a leader of equity, in my point of view, it is imperative that leaders lead their institutes to reflect and institute changes on their policies, procedures, and practices with an equity mind. With this research opportunity, it will provide me and others interested in equity work with insights on how leaders such as community college presidents lead and engage with their communities to implement these changes.

As I previously stated, my equity journey as a student, practitioner, and scholar have immensely impacted my decision to return to school to learn and better understand equity and social justice. Specifically, I am interested in deepening my understanding of how community college presidents' identities, positionalities, and ideologies affect how they prioritize and work towards an equitable education. This information is vital on how institutes serve and can

better serve their students, particularly students of color. My hope is to not to only understand how leaders think when it comes to equity, but to also understand how they engage and lead their institutes to address the opportunity gap, disaggregation of data, and address institutional and structural discrimination in relation to the students of color experiences. Overall, I too have power in my own community and can implement impactful changes through the lens of equity. This is the reason why I have a strong desire to pursue my doctorate in education where I will deepen and broaden my knowledge in equity and social justice so that I can lead purposefully through an equity lens in all aspects.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol Informed Consent

Hello and thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I am Neue Leung, a graduate student at UC Davis. The purpose of my study is to gain understanding of your recognition and consciousness of your identities, positionalities, and ideologies as an Asian American community college, as you work on equity and social justice at your campus. I am also seeking to understand how you address, guide, and support your campus during the rise on anti-Asian racism and hate crimes.

Upon arrival, you should have received the following forms:

- Consent Form
- Interview Questions

Please take a moment to complete the consent form. Because I will be audio recoding the interview for research purposes, I do need your informed consent before we begin. Please let me know if you have any questions. Your name and the name of your college will be anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Is this ok with you?

The interview will take about two hours, and I greatly appreciate your time. Your professional input, wisdom, and insights will serve as the most important data set for my dissertation. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for declining to participate. There is no anticipated risk or benefit if you choose to participate, and you may choose to stop the interview at any time. I want to thank you in advance for your consideration.

Although this project focuses specifically on your experiences around these processes, please feel free to speak about whatever comes to mind in relation to the questions. There are no right or wrong answers.

We will now start the interview. Do you have any questions before I begin the recording?

Appendix B

One-On-One Interviews with College Presidents (projected at two hours per interview)

Category 1 Questions: Personal Equity Journey (identities & ideologies)

1. Will you please share with me your experiences growing up? Probe: Where did you grow up? Who was in your family? What was your childhood like?

2. In thinking about yourself growing up, how would you describe your identities and how they have evolved over time? Probe: Identities could be your race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation or anything else you want to share as your identities

Category 2 Questions: Positionality, Equity, and Social Justice

3. What led you to become a community college president?

4. Can you please briefly describe your role as president on your campus?

5. As president, what does equity and social justice mean to you?

6. What does equity and social justice mean to your campus?

7. How do you think your identities impact your work such as your work centered in equity and social justice? Probe: When you think about your own identities, how do they inform your work on equity and social justice work?

8. Please describe the way in which your college centers equity and social justice?

9. In your point of view, please describe some examples of work that your college has done centered on equity and social justice.

10. Can you tell me about a time you felt like you were engaging in equity work on campus? How about social justice?

11. How has your own identities influenced that work? If so, how? If not, why?

12. Can you tell me about a time when you were making a decision related to equity and social

justice and walk me through how you came to making that decision? Probe: What are the things that influenced your decision? How did you decide on what to do?

13. How did you collaborate with someone with different viewpoints? And how did you come to consensus? Did your thinking involve equity? If so, how? If not, why?

14. In your opinion, how much of an influence do you see yourself having when making decisions related to equity and social justice?

15. With the pandemic and all of the incidences related to race and racism happening in our communities and in our nation, how has this impacted you as a leader? Probe: What actions have you taken? How has this affected your campus?

Category 3: College Community

16. What does student voice mean to you? When was the last time you incorporated student voice in a decision-making process? Probe: Who was involved? What was the outcome?

17. What is your understanding and awareness of marginalized communities? Probe: Who are these populations at your campus?

18. How much of your identities and positionalities are embedded into the work of supporting marginalized communities?

19. What is shaping your understanding and beliefs influencing this population?

20. In education, we have allowed deficit-based thinking to define our students (for example, describing our students as “ill-prepared”) and our faculty, (for example, using blanket statements such as “faculty are the problem. What work have you done to dismantle the deficit mindset and focus on what we (student, faculty, administrator) can do to cultivate the inherent genius in all of us?

21. What has your campus done in response to curriculum and pedagogy in alignment with equity and social justice

Category 4: Self-reflection

22. What are the challenges or key strengths in you doing this work?

22. Given the breadth and depth of equity, what are some of the areas where you can grow?

Category 5: Exemplar Artifacts

24. Will you please provide 1-2 exemplar artifacts to analyze? These can be a signature speech or articles that you or your office addressed to your campus.

Appendix C

Document

Analyses

Coding

A. Institute Goals

B. Student Voice

C. Social Justice

D. Equity

E. Programming

F. Sense of Belonging

G. Leadership Strategies

H. Decision Making

I. Equitable Changes

J. Accountability

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