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Educator as Learner: The Role of Transformative Learning in
Elevating Faculty Work and Experiences

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

Catherine Choe

2026

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2026

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Educator as Learner: The Role of Transformative Learning in Elevating Faculty Work and Experiences

by

Catherine Choe

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2026

Professor Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Chair

The purpose of this study was to explore how faculty working in a First Year Experience (FYE) program at a California community college perceived their role as an educator, as well as how participation in FYE affected pedagogical approaches and the creation and sustainment of communities of teaching and communities of practice. This study used Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning as its overarching theoretical framework, supplemented by Habermas' (1981) theory of communicative action and learner-centered approaches (Baxter & Gray, 2002; Warmer, 2001), to guide its examination of faculty approaches to instructional strategies, serving as channels for them to become institutional change agents and contribute to pedagogical change at the departmental, institutional, and disciplinary levels. This qualitative single-site case study consisted of interviews and classroom observations with 15 faculty housed within the FYE

program at Bay College, in addition to document analysis of their course syllabi and an observation of the FYE faculty meeting that semester.

The study's findings highlighted how participants built communities of practice in FYE, namely through exchanging syllabi and sharing common themes and assignments, which led to interdisciplinary collaborations anchored by strong leadership. Participants were also able to find and foster these communities through formal and informal professional development and mentorship opportunities. However, many participants found college leadership treatment of faculty during contract negotiations to be dismissive and disrespectful, which contrasted complimentary surface-level messaging on campus. Participants cited inequitable allocations of work, such as through increased classroom caps and enforced unnecessary days on campus, that signaled distrust towards faculty and a fundamental misunderstanding of their work. Thus, I propose a model based on the study's findings that showcases the mutuality of faculty-student learning as facilitated through a structured support program incentivizing collaboration within an institutional context, such as FYE. The study's findings reveal the need for administration to be more receptive to qualitative indicators of success, such as individual student stories, in measuring outcomes away from purely numbers-driven criteria, in addition to offloading excess faculty work and providing legislative guidance that can help facilitate parallel trajectories of educator and student growth.

This dissertation of Catherine Choe is approved.

Mark P. Hansen

Nicole Bonne Barry

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2026

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VITA

EDUCATION

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<i>Graduate Research Mentorship</i>	2020 – 2021
North Carolina State University <i>Postsecondary Career and Technical Education Research Fellowship</i>	2022 – 2023
University of Southern California <i>Asian Pacific Alumni Association Scholarship</i>	2015
<i>Henkin Scholarship</i>	2014
<i>Doris T. Westcott Endowed Scholarship</i>	2014
Kimbo Foundation <i>Scholarship</i>	2011
AmeriCorps <i>Education Award</i>	2011
University of California, Berkeley <i>The Leadership Award, Cal Alumni Association</i>	2010

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I remember preparing for my first quarter of teaching an undergraduate class, feeling unsure and hesitant about how much knowledge I would be able to impart upon my students. “What if they ask me something I don’t know? What if they don’t get as much out of the class as they had hoped?” These thoughts, and others indicative of the impostor experience, swirled incessantly around in my head. However, as soon as the quarter began, I realized how unfounded these worries were. Or rather, I realized I had been asking myself the wrong questions this whole time. These worries were unfounded, not because I was some kind of beacon of knowledge – it was quite the opposite. Of course, most of the students had enrolled in the class with certain learning objectives. However, many of them were equally hungry for an academic space where they could feel validated for bringing their rich life experiences, perspectives, and worldviews into the classroom – where they could simply be themselves. That is precisely what our seminar became: a co-constructed space for us to critically self-reflect, learn from one another, and make meaning of our lived experiences.

One moment that stands out to me is when we had an in-class activity and discussion regarding our social identities. I asked each student to reflect on and anonymously share their responses via an online poll. When the activity concluded, we had a brief small group discussion and then came back together as a whole class. Despite the active chatter just a moment ago, silence soon followed, which I understood, as they most likely still needed time to process. During this silence, I also took a moment to reflect on one of the questions: which social identity was/is the most relevant to you as an undergraduate student? I realized I had never taken the time to reflect on this statement myself, despite having graduated over a decade ago. However, the answer was clear as day for me: social class.

In hopes of jumpstarting a conversation, I began sharing my own experiences as an undergraduate student: having an EFC of zero, working two jobs throughout college to make ends meet, having to make certain financial sacrifices that seemed incomprehensible to some of my more privileged peers, and so on. As I shared, I saw many of my students' eyes light up, and many of them soon began sharing their own experiences navigating their multiple identities. After class, a couple of them came up to me and thanked me for sharing, as it helped them feel heard and supported and encouraged them to be brave in sharing their own experiences.

This moment was one of many that made me realize just how transformational and magical the experience of being in a classroom can be, even as an instructor. I was never expected to be the content expert, but instead a facilitator of critical discourse and self-reflection, an ally of student autonomy and collaboration. This was an incredibly exciting and liberating prospect, realizing just how limitless my own growth as an instructor could be. While this was perhaps an ambitious undertaking, this study aimed to help rekindle the spark for learning and growing as an educator that some faculty members may have lost sight of over time, becoming swept up in a deluge of institutional and administrative responsibilities, expectations, and pressures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the nexus between faculty pedagogical approaches and identity, perceptions of institutional and disciplinary culture, and prior and current teaching experiences, as well as how these areas can contribute to pedagogical change and faculty finding greater meaning in their teaching. This study focused specifically on the experiences of faculty members teaching in a First Year Experience program at a California

community college, where most faculty members were temporary (part-time) academic instructors.

Background of the Study

Community colleges enroll about 50% of all first-time college students in the U.S. and 43% of all undergraduates (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). Student enrollments have increased, particularly at two-year institutions (Fry, 2009). As over 95% of the nation's population live within commuting distance of a community college, their presence and accessibility to the general population cannot be overstated (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Furthermore, many empirical studies have highlighted the positive returns to two-year college attendance (Averett & Dalessandro, 2010; Baum et al., 2010; Day & Newburger, 2002; Jacobson et al., 2005). Forty-seven percent of all new job openings between 2000 and 2010 required some technical education beyond high school less than a bachelor's degree, highlighting the unique role of community colleges in increasing social mobility and employment opportunities for historically marginalized populations (Kochan et al., 2012).

The study site was a community college due to its ease of access for students in terms of both proximity and enrollment, while the study examined the role of faculty within this institutional type in facilitating student learning. Student-faculty interaction serves as a strong predictor of learning for all students, including students of color (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Many studies have documented the positive impact that frequency and quality of faculty relationships can have on grade point average, retention, adjustment, and persistence for students of color (Ananya & Cole, 2003; Hernandez, 2000; Wolf & Melnick, 1990; Swisher et al., 1991). Furthermore, Eimers (2001) found that an increase in satisfaction

with faculty interaction corresponded to an increase in levels of progress in the domains of scientific reasoning, career development, intellectual development, and problem-solving.

The conversation surrounding faculty impact on community college students cannot be furthered without first considering faculty demographics and how they inevitably shape working conditions and student learning outcomes. Using Data Mart as the source for this information, in Fall 2019, 70% of faculty were temporary and 30% were tenured or tenure-track. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) classifies part-time faculty as "temporary" and full-time faculty as "tenured/tenure-track." This data aligns with other studies, which have found that part-time faculty across the nation continue to grow at the highest rate compared to other faculty (AFT Higher Education, 2010; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). The terms "freeway flyers," "roads scholars," the "academic underclass," and the "manpowerization of the university" have also grown in popularity, reflecting the increasing activism surrounding this group and their rights (Schneirov, 2003). Thus, many studies examining community college faculty inevitably center part-time faculty due to their prevalence within this population.

While this study did not exclusively center part-time faculty due to its focus on a First Year Experience program, examining their precarious working conditions and predominance in the community college setting can shed light on systemic issues that exist within this institutional type and affect all faculty. Hiring part-time faculty may be an example of a "false economy" that results in hidden institutional costs, greater administrative burdens for tenure-track faculty, and high turnover expenses (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 102). Tenure-track faculty are also susceptible to greater workloads and decreased involvement in institutional affairs as their numbers continue to decline (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Student learning can eventually be hindered by the increased hiring of part-time faculty, as poor institutional working conditions due to job

insecurity and high turnover may make these faculty less able to engage in mentoring and advising activities (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). Eagan et al. (2015) found that part-time faculty may experience less overall satisfaction than their full-time counterparts, not necessarily due to the involuntary status of their employment, but due to a perceived lack of respect amongst full-time faculty and frustration with campus administrators. Administrative behaviors and culture often result in an environment where faculty decide to either stay or leave (Meng et al., 2014).

On the other hand, Gutierrez et al. (2012) found that more positive faculty perceptions of administration resulted in an increase in both positive work values and productivity. Many studies have also found that intent to stay at an institution can depend on mentorship for early career scholars, while work-life balance is especially important in the recruitment and retention of faculty members (Conley & Onder, 2014; Sanfey et al., 2006). Thus, considering the precarious circumstances many faculty members at community colleges face, combined with their potential to deeply impact the lives and academics of their students, it is important for institutions to take actionable steps to ensure they feel supported and appreciated in their work. My opening vignette portrayed a more idyllic depiction of transformative learning taking place in the classroom setting, but many faculty members may struggle to recreate similar experiences if their working conditions are not met, which may inevitably hurt student learning outcomes.

Significance of the Study

This study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on faculty pedagogy and development by examining how a theoretical framework that has historically been applied by faculty members instructing students, transformative learning, can be utilized by institutions to uplift faculty experiences, guide them in finding greater meaning in their work, and empower them in their roles as institutional change agents. Furthermore, this study sought to elevate the

voices of First Year Experience faculty, who have typically been understudied in the scholarly literature. While some studies (Murray & Wolf, 2016; Cox, 2003; Stassen, 2000; Wills & Allegratti, 2013) have highlighted the largely positive experiences of faculty who teach first-year seminars, they also report participants feeling reluctant to pursue future teaching opportunities in the same seminars due to negative departmental perceptions. Thus, this study was uniquely poised to utilize the theoretical framework of transformative learning to better encapsulate faculty pedagogy and illustrate how institutions, departments, and disciplines can encourage the development of pedagogy by adopting a learner-centered culture and crafting communities of teaching and/or communities of practice.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do First Year Experience program faculty perceive their role as an educator?
 - a. In what ways have the past and current teaching experiences of these faculty helped shape this perspective?
2. What role, if any, has teaching in a First Year Experience program had on faculty approaches to pedagogy and creating and/or sustaining communities of teaching and/or communities of practice?
 - a. In what ways can communities of teaching and/or communities of practice created in First Year Experience be sustained outside the program?
3. What do First Year Experience faculty perceive as institutional conditions that shape pedagogical growth?

Ultimately, study findings and implications contribute to the creation and maintenance of an administrative-led culture that better supports faculty and directly informs their instructional

strategies, resulting in higher levels of faculty satisfaction with and fulfillment in their work, and eventually filtering through to better student learning outcomes and overall engagement of undergraduate students with their education.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework this study drew upon is Jack Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning, which emerged from the innate human desire to better understand and make meaning of one's own experiences, often crafted through an established belief system, or a frame of reference, that allows meaning to be constructed. Transformative learning provided the requisite framework to encourage faculty and students alike to evolve beyond a more rudimentary awareness of their surroundings to an awareness of the reasons behind these experiences (Mezirow, 1991). This study also drew upon Jürgen Habermas' (1981) theory of communicative action, which Mezirow applied to the realm of adult education in the form of communicative learning, to shed light on the myriad ways individual experiences can be transformed through the exchange of dialogue. Mezirow's and Habermas's theories have frequently been applied to the field of adult learning (E. Taylor, 2000; Brookfield, 2005) and are utilized for the purposes of this study to highlight the transformative nature of learning that faculty and students alike can experience, guiding them in reshaping their own frames of reference and acting based on the construction and deconstruction of their experiences.

Learner-centered approaches rounded out the theoretical framework and demonstrate the need for a new culture of learning that prioritizes learners and positions them at the center of their own education (Baxter & Gray, 2002; Warmer, 2001). The theories reviewed have mostly been directed toward faculty in the higher education context, providing a framework to inform their instructional approaches while contributing to better student learning outcomes along the

way. This study was eager to unpack the critical discourses that take place between faculty and students, observing how “complementarity and mutuality among the participants” (Hart, 1992, p. 142) can extend beyond the classroom setting and eventually percolate through shaping faculty identity. This study’s goals in applying theory differentiated it in its vision of utilizing transformative learning to further strengthen the professional identity of faculty, providing them with a stronger understanding of and fulfillment in their deeply meaningful and transformational work and impact on students and institutions.

Methodological Overview

To answer the research questions, this study drew upon a qualitative single-site case study (Yin, 2009) and interviews based on a protocol divided into three domains: (a) pedagogy; (b) professional development; and (c) department, institution, and discipline (see Appendix B). These interviews were conducted with faculty working in the First Year Experience (FYE) program at Bay College, which is a community college located in Southern California that was chosen for its ease of access. Semi-structured interviews were employed to allow the researcher to respond to the situation at hand and emerging worldview of the respondent while permitting a semblance of structure through the interview protocol (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Furthermore, document analysis in the form of FYE course syllabi and observations of each participant’s FYE class and the FYE faculty meeting of the semester at Bay College were also selected to triangulate emerging findings while providing some knowledge of the context upon which follow-up questions could be further asked, in addition to showcasing how faculty exchanged knowledge and best practices through their course syllabi and implemented their pedagogy in the classroom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Meanwhile, a case study was employed to “[try] to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and

with what result” (Schramm, 1971), which aligned with this study’s goal of examining the evolution of faculty pedagogy through a variety of contextual factors.

Yin (2009) also identified a case study as an empirical phenomenon examining a real-life situation within its context when the boundaries between context and phenomenon are not immediately visible. As context was central to this study, especially as it pertained to the culture formed within the institution, department, and discipline, a single-site case study methodology seemed to be the most appropriate and suitable choice. As the literature review will shed light on, FYE program effectiveness can vary based on the needs and mission of the institution it is housed in, so taking a deeper dive into the experiences of faculty working within a specific program at a specific institution using this all-encompassing method seemed to make the most sense (Yin, 2009). As instructors in first-year seminars find greater value in teaching across disciplines through this experience (McClure et al., 2008; Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002; Wills & Allegratti, 2013), this site was selected and deemed to be ideal for examining the role of transformative learning in informing pedagogy.

Overview of Dissertation

This study is presented in six chapters. Chapter 1 aimed to describe the background of the problem and how this study was significant in filling in a notable gap in the literature. Chapter 2 focuses on several domains of literature: pedagogical change, including barriers impeding it and organizational structures influencing it, faculty in FYE programs and community colleges, and faculty identity and faculty socialization. Each domain aims to contextualize factors related to pedagogy within the broader landscape of higher education while further justifying why the combination of this study’s site and research questions filled a much-needed gap in the literature. This chapter concludes with a presentation of Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative

learning and Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action, in addition to learner-centered approaches (Baxter & Gray, 2002; Warmer, 2001). While these theories have typically been utilized by scholars to center students within their educational and classroom experiences, this study aimed to apply these frameworks to faculty and provide them with a space for critical reflection to acknowledge their own growth as educators and potential as institutional changemakers. Chapter 3 covers the research design and methodology of this study, including the research site, participants, and data collection and analysis plans. Chapter 4 offers participant profiles in the forms of teaching histories and classroom observations, coupled with observations from the FYE faculty meeting that semester, to better understand and shed light on how faculty members' multilayered and nuanced educational, professional, and life experiences have shaped how they approach their pedagogy. Chapter 5 highlights the findings of this study as analyzed through interviews and document analysis of course syllabi, shedding light on how participants built communities of teaching and communities of practice through support, such as FYE, that necessitated administrative support for continued growth and sustainment. Chapter 6 discusses the implications the findings of this study have for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in examining and elevating faculty pedagogy.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the existing literature on faculty pedagogy, community college faculty, First Year Experience (FYE) programs, and faculty identity to illustrate how this study sought to contribute to the research by elevating the understudied experiences of community college FYE faculty. First, pedagogical change, including barriers impeding it and organizational structures influencing it, is explored to contextualize how issues related to pedagogy have been long embedded within the broader landscape of higher education. Next, studies pertaining to faculty experiences and development in community colleges and FYE programs are reviewed to further justify why the conjunction of this study's site and research questions filled in a much-needed gap in the literature. Faculty identity and faculty socialization are then covered to round out the literature review by bringing the onus back to institutions, disciplines, and individual departments to ensure faculty have access to plentiful opportunities incentivizing and rewarding pedagogical changing. This chapter concludes by reviewing Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning and Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action, in addition to learner-centered approaches (Warner, 2001; Baxter & Gray, 2002), to set the conceptual foundations for pedagogical change to take place by centering faculty in their journey towards empowering students, as well as themselves by becoming institutional change agents.

Faculty Pedagogy

This section reviews literature on faculty pedagogy, specifically as it pertains to socially constructed learning, pedagogical change (and barriers impeding it), student learning outcomes and key competencies, and organizational structure.

Socially Constructed Learning

Lave and Wenger (1991) called for a broader definition of learning that extended beyond the mere accumulation of knowledge and instead encompassed full participation in a community of practice that could shape the core of an individual. The concepts of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation provide a framework for better understanding the mutually constitutive nature of learning and experience (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The theoretical framework of transformative learning, which will be elaborated on later in this chapter, goes into further depth on the socially constructed nature of learning by centering the learner's experience and seeking to transform one's frames of reference through critical dialogues with others. However, it is important to headline the literature review by operationalizing learning and allowing this definition to guide the remainder of this chapter and study.

Although teaching is an integral core of the mission of even research universities, the responsibilities and reward structures placed on faculty members by their own academic departments can sometimes serve to de-incentivize teaching. The section below reviews studies underscoring how academic structures in place can obstruct pedagogical change and prevent faculty from engaging their students in transformative forms of learning, in addition to seeking out opportunities for professional development and institutional leadership.

Pedagogical Change

The educational model employed by many higher education institutions has been labeled counterintuitive to the research on human cognition (Halpern & Hakel, 2002). Despite a strong willingness on behalf of faculty to modify their approaches to teaching, many report feeling unprepared to do so and prefer more structured training (Hativa, 1995; Miller et al., 2000; Winter et al., 2001; Hanson & Moser, 2003; Luft et al., 2004; Yarnall et al., 2007). Studies have also

shown that the process of altering one's instructional techniques can be incredibly laborious and time-consuming (Krockover et al., 2002; Howland & Wedman, 2004; Stevenson et al., 2005; Schneider & Pickett, 2006; Malicky et al., 2007). Gaff, Pruitt-Logan et al. (2000) found that developing the capacity for teaching and learning about professional standards often turns into a matter of happenstance, especially when training is relegated to the classroom or laboratory of a research university.

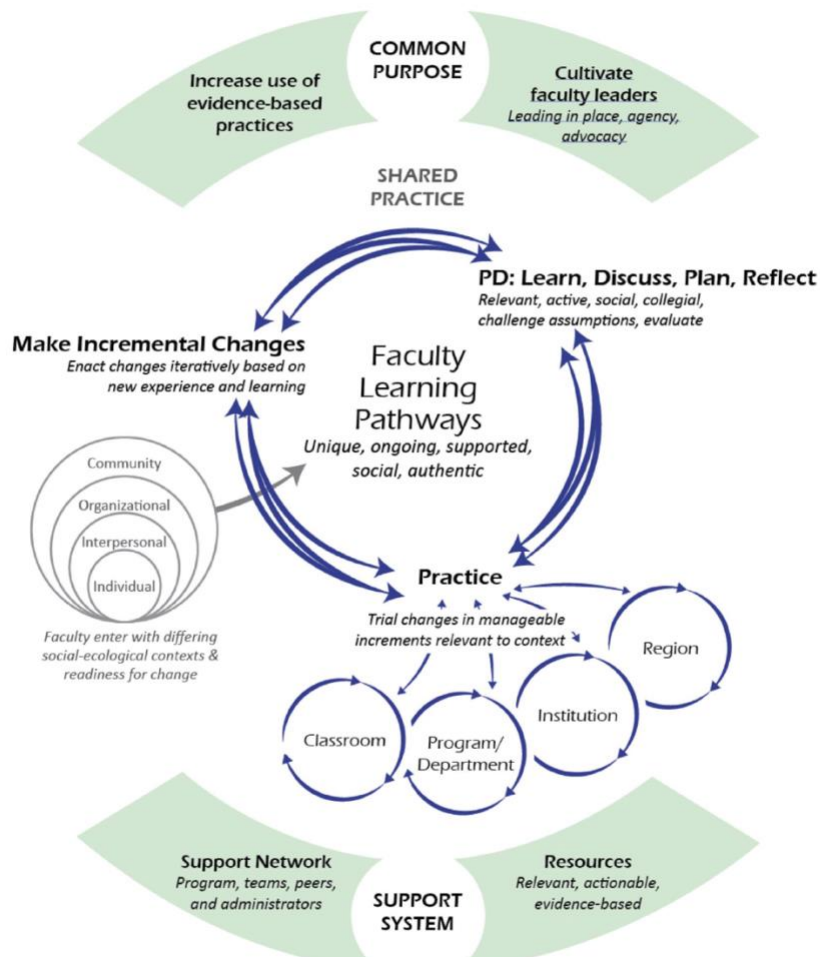
Furthermore, the pressure for discipline-based, content-focused lectures can serve to constrain faculty and actively discourage them from seeking out new instructional technologies (Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002). Interestingly, faculty training methods often involve the active learning techniques and inquiry-based strategies that first-year seminars provide for their students (McClure et al., 2008 and Adams, 2009, as cited in Murray & Wolf, 2016). Integrating teaching and research within the context of multidisciplinary learning communities has the potential to transform the landscape of postsecondary education (Brew, 2003; Healey, 2005; Summerlee & Murray, 2008).

Faculty Change Agent Model. O'Connell et al. (2022) introduced the Faculty Change Agent Model, which was based on a program consisting of three cohorts of over 80 faculty members at community colleges over a five-year period, with the overarching goals of increasing the utilization of evidence-based instructional strategies and building a national network of faculty leaders catalyzing change across multiple levels. The model is presented in Figure 2.1 and depicts “a community of practice with a common purpose (domain), a learning community at the program (national) and local (team) level, and a shared practice.”

Figure 2.1

Faculty Change Agent Model

FIGURE 1. FACULTY CHANGE AGENT MODEL. A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE WITH A COMMON PURPOSE (DOMAIN), A LEARNING COMMUNITY AT THE PROGRAM (NATIONAL) AND LOCAL (TEAM) LEVEL, AND A SHARED PRACTICE



Note. From O’Connell et al., 2022

The Faculty Change Agent Model is based on the notion of incremental change and accomplished through Professional Development (PD) that “[engages] participants in a shared reiterative practice of learning and implementation” (O’Connell et al., 2002, p. 14). Faculty members self-selected into the program and were thus motivated by the common purpose of improving their instructional practices (O’Connell et al., 2002). In this study, the model

implemented scaffolded leadership activities in the form of leading and participating in workshops and connecting with administrators, as well as requiring participating faculty members to design and facilitate PD for others (O'Connell et al., 2002). The authors observed several practice-related implications that emerged after implementing the model and reaffirmed the efficacy of integrating leadership development with faculty PD, which left faculty participants feeling more confident in their ability to contribute to student success and serve as faculty leaders.

O'Connell et al. (2002) also noted that participants shared feeling more comfortable speaking up in meetings and agreeing to lead on-campus initiatives, as well as possessing a greater ability to align program goals with institutional plans, observing improved student outcomes, and having overall greater visibility across campus. They also offered four recommendations. Two of them highlighted the importance of modeling evidence-based practices, such as active learning and cultivating learners' sense of belonging, and allowing participants to consider the college context to better sustain this change and encourage the exchange of ideas between peers.

While the role of transformative learning at the individual faculty level in shaping and informing their work and experiences was a focal point of this study, the role of institutional agents and academic departments in sustaining an organizational culture that is receptive to this form of learning was equally pertinent. Thus, the Faculty Change Action Model offered an invaluable framework for understanding how shifts in institutional priorities (in the form of PD), student learning outcomes, and greater faculty engagement (both amongst peers and campus constituents at large) influence each other cyclically and reap positive benefits. It is important to not place the burden of responsibility solely on faculty to improve their pedagogy when

structures and systems in place do not promote this culture. However, O'Connell et al.'s (2002) Faculty Change Agent Model provided a powerful example of how institutional support of faculty student success goals can have a wide-ranging and positive ripple effect.

Student Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are defined as changes in people that result from learning experiences allowing them to do something they were previously unable to do (Watson, 2002). Although these shifts come about in transformative learning perhaps most notably through critical reflection, the outcomes in transformative learning may be different from typical disciplinary student learning outcomes that are more quantitatively driven and less organic. Higher education has traditionally been argued to prioritize the content and process of learning over its outcomes (UDACE, 1989), although there has been more of a cultural shift in recent years where institutions have started to value student-centered approaches to learning, such as the flipped classroom and inquiry-based learning (Robertson, 2001). By centering students within their own education, they are given a real stake in their learning that causes them to learn better and stay more motivated (Knight & Trowler, 2001). Barr and Tagg (1995) advocated for the evolution of the instructional paradigm into a learning paradigm that encourages students to construct knowledge for themselves and thus take responsibility for what they learn.

As this study focused specifically on empowering faculty to engage in transformative learning with their classes in the context of a First Year Experience program, studies have found positive student learning outcomes associated with multiple areas of the study's topic. For example, Murray and Summerlee (2007) found that students who take a first-year seminar tend to have higher research and analytical skills. While literature on First Year Experience programs will be reviewed in further detail in a later section, studies have shed light on the positive impact

these courses can have on student learning outcomes. Frequent course-related interactions with faculty, even in a less structured format, also encourage students to feel more challenged and engaged in learning activities, in addition to observed increases in their general education knowledge, practical competencies, and personal and social development (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Delaney (2008) also found that First Year Experience students who reported higher satisfaction with the amount of faculty contact they received experienced more growth in their analytical and critical thinking skills and knowledge both in general and specific to a field. These students also reported greater satisfaction with their instructional quality and its relevance personally and professionally, their sense of community amongst their peers, and their overall college experience (Delaney, 2008). Finally, Delaney (2008) observed a smoother journey of academic adjustment for these students, who were more successful in understanding their professors' expectations, managing their time effectively, and utilizing study skills and campus services.

The studies above provided examples of student-centered learning that have allowed students to engage more closely with faculty and subsequently reap benefits not just academically, but in other realms of their lives. This then leads to greater contentment and a keener understanding of the purpose of their education. Thus, it is important for higher education institutions to adopt student-centered learning approaches and align curricula more closely with specific student learning outcomes. FYE programs, as well as seminars offering greater faculty-student contact, have been associated with positive student learning outcomes due to their explicit student-centered nature, as cited above. Institutions should seek to continue this momentum by prioritizing the improvement of pedagogical approaches and providing faculty with opportunities to pursue these avenues professionally. Similarly, institutions may want to

consider taking this student-centered learning approach and adapting it into more of a faculty-centered one specifically for professional development purposes. Since faculty are constantly learning too in their pursuit of new knowledge, what is not to say they cannot be empowered to take charge of their own learning in the realm of instructional practices?

Key Competencies. Understanding the concept of key competencies can better illustrate how societal change can be facilitated through formal and informal learning opportunities, providing an alternate means to understanding transformative learning and contextualizing the student learning outcomes detailed earlier. There is little consensus on a universally agreed upon definition of competencies, but they may be defined as dispositions to self-organization that are comprised of various psycho-social components and are context-specific (Barth et al., 2007). These competencies can be acquired gradually through stages and are reflected in more successful actions, and some examples include communication, problem-solving, and adaptability (Barth et al., 2007).

Rychen and Salganik (2003) defined key competencies to be relevant for all individuals across various spheres of life. Despite the inherently wider net cast by key competencies to avoid being prematurely restricted to specific contexts and domains, identifying important key competencies can help narrow down options among the infinite possibilities (Weinert, 2001). As competencies by nature are learnable but not teachable, Barth et al. (2007) underscored the need to separate them from the viewpoint of learning as mere knowledge acquisition. Higher education can serve as an ideal platform to address the challenges posed by competence acquisition, as Erpenbeck and Rosenstiel (2003, cited by Barth et al., 2007) advocated for the need of a new learning culture that promotes personality development and guiding individuals in coping with complex situations, acting upon reflection and making decisions, taking on

responsibilities, judging consequences, and considering ethical standards prior to acting. Barth et al. (2007) detailed competence orientation, societal orientation, and individual centering as requisites to achieving this learning culture, which call for a normative framework that justifies chosen competencies, advocates for learning to take place in real-life situations, and shifts from teacher- to learner-centered processes. These learner-centered processes are reviewed in more depth below.

Barth et al.'s (2007) study, while investigating how the development of key competencies in sustainable development in higher education occur, found three learning processes they identified as crucial to the acquisition of key competencies:

1. Reflection processes, which refer to the ability to reflect on one's actions, as well as maintain a critical distance to one's actions, which are integral to acquiring key competencies (Rychen, 2003, as cited by Barth et al. 2007).
2. Self-reliance and self-direction, which refer to the gradual transition from guided to self-directed learning where students are provided with the opportunity to apply existing competencies and acquire new ones by testing real-life situations. This also strengthens one's responsibility within the learning process and leads to a deeper reflection of the first criteria listed above.
3. Multiple contexts, which refer to the "fundamental condition" of perceived demand context that is necessary for key competencies to be acquired (p. 426). This perceived demand context is essentially learning situations where acquiring competencies can be realized.

The reflection processes outlined above align closely with aspects of this study's theoretical framework of transformative learning. This study sought to grow closer to a stronger

understanding of how transformative learning could provide the necessary conditions for faculty to acquire key competencies in their own teaching, while simultaneously encouraging the acquisition of key competencies within their students.

Organizational Structure

Studies have also shed light on how the organizational structure of higher education institutions and academic departments may seek to actively discourage faculty from prioritizing undergraduate instruction. Academic departments serve as the primary unit for faculty at higher education institutions and are typically granted significant autonomy (Tagg, 2012). However, “academic organization and faculty reward structures are based on discipline-oriented departments” and department chairs often view themselves as preservers of their respective discipline, resulting in a cycle where research and publication benchmarks are prioritized over undergraduate instruction (Fairweather, 1996, p. 105). Fairweather (1996) also found that faculty perceived assistant professors who expressed a commitment to teaching and curricular reform as being at-risk (p.104). Within a system that collectively perceives student-centered approaches as actively hindering job security and longevity, it becomes apparent why faculty leave these priorities to the wayside in pursuit of more traditional benchmarks of productivity.

Furthermore, this organizational structure reproduces itself, as faculty who are underprepared for the rigors of embarking on pedagogical improvement may become less inclined to dedicate the requisite time and resources to excel in it. Tagg (2012) mentioned that many faculty lack “credible expertise, respected credentials, common standards, or a framework of meaningful review” regarding teaching, so they tend to view it as an unworthy investment of their valuable time, energy, and resources (p. 12). While faculty teacher training may be neither standardized nor prioritized, this study sought to move away from a model that centers the blame

on faculty, instead identifying institutional and disciplinary norms and culture as the primary culprit furthering barriers to pedagogical change. Tagg (2012) addressed how the lack of motivation towards pedagogical change becomes further incentivized when academic departments respect the individual space of the faculty and try not to encroach on it. This perspective is considerably more in line with what this study sought to elucidate regarding pedagogical improvement.

Faculty Training. Many studies have also found an alarming disconnect between the types of training students receive in doctoral programs, which is often where their journey of faculty socialization begins, and the types of careers they find themselves in after graduating (Tilghman, 1998; Golde & Dore, 2001; Austin, 2002; Dillenburg, 2005; Dillenburg & Connolly, 2005; Fuhrmann et al., 2011). While teacher training programs geared specifically towards graduate students and faculty have grown nationwide, programs with cutting-edge teaching strategies are often voluntary and service only a small number of the total graduate student population (Rushin et al., 1997; Austin et al., 2008; Ebert-May et al., 2011). Thus, graduate students learn how to teach through an “apprentice of observation” where they model their pedagogy after their professors and naively jump to incorrect conclusions about what constitutes effective teaching (Lortie, 1975; Borg, 2004; Cross, 1990).

Studies have also pointed to the existence of an institutional deficit model (as coined by Brownell & Tanner, 2012), which implies the institution itself lacks what is necessary for reform that will facilitate widespread faculty involvement in pedagogical change (Henderson et al., 2010; Henderson et al., 2011). Brownell and Tanner (2012) also referred to a discipline deficit model, in which the disciplinary culture itself, including active involvement and participation in national professional societies, lacks a critical mass of faculty who view teaching as integral to

their professional identities. Although Brownell and Tanner (2012) investigated how professional identity and pedagogical change can be more closely aligned in the sciences, their findings have significant takeaways for other disciplines. Their recommendations included more structured teaching requirements, such as designated training programs or faculty mentors, pushing for more education-specific research articles and sections in academic journals, and actively integrating evidence-based teaching methods during academic conferences (Brownell & Tanner, 2012). As certain practices and formalities for disseminating knowledge in academia may come across as antiquated, modeling effective instructional strategies in areas with high visibility for scholars will draw attention to them in hopes of setting a precedent for future scholars and planting the seed for change in organizational priorities.

The literature reviewed in this section highlighted the early yet pertinent role of doctoral training in shaping the approaches of future faculty to teaching and pedagogy. These findings are further compounded and supported by studies on faculty socialization, which will be reviewed in a later section. This study sought to add to the conversation by examining how teaching in a support program, specifically First Year Experience, shaped individual faculty member's approaches to and perspectives on pedagogy, faculty socialization, and academic structures within their department and discipline. Better understanding how doctoral training molds faculty pedagogical approaches, including less effective ones, sets the groundwork for discussing how deeply rooted organizational structures that undervalue teaching can be dismantled to provide faculty with greater support and an array of professional development opportunities.

Community College Faculty

Community colleges are a unique entity in the landscape of higher education institutions, as they hire many faculty without designated research responsibilities. However, the

organizational structure of these institutions remains largely unchanged compared to their more research-driven counterparts, as faculty are typically still hired, promoted, and tenured through skills or discipline-based departments (Tagg, 2012). Since the department retains its role in mediating reward structures, individual accomplishments that may help with granting tenure also become the criteria for recognition, and autonomy is retained even without a significant research component intact (Tagg, 2012). The profession of the community college instructor has also been characterized by a certain degree of isolation, where they shuffle from class to class and perceive their profession as one shrouded in mystery due to their minimal visibility across campus, eventually developing a resistance to adopting alternative approaches to teaching (Grubb et al., 1999). Again, rather than underscoring a certain form of resistance on behalf of faculty to improve their pedagogical orientations, this study sought to empower them as catalysts of change in more closely aligning their professional identities with the idea of pedagogical change. However, Grubb et al.'s (1999) findings are helpful in deciphering why organizational structures may interfere with faculty forming communities of practice and communities of teaching where they may actively exchange ideas and seek to improve their craft.

Furthermore, the number of instructional faculty at two-year institutions has increased since the 1990s, yet these positions have been difficult for colleges to fill due to shortages in the discipline (Chappell, 2009), the geographic isolation of certain colleges (Yates, 2001), and competition from higher paying sectors. Many community colleges tend to prioritize mastery of content within their faculty (Grubb, 1997). The emphasis placed on mastery of content is seemingly in direct opposition to the instructional paradigm proposed by Barr and Tagg (1995) and reviewed in the earlier section on student learning outcomes. Grubb (1997) cited this as a reason why community college faculty may be reluctant to engage more directly with pedagogy,

choosing instead to develop their teaching methods through trial and error and by modeling those of their own previous faculty.

However, as teaching makes up 89% of the time of community college faculty, compared to 63% of the time of faculty at four-year institutions (Provasnik & Planty, 2008), this seeming lack of interest in pedagogy may have alarming implications for the development of instructional strategies. This is further compounded by the fact that community college instructors tend to teach more students and have heavier courseloads than their counterparts at four-year institutions (Townsend & Twombly, 2000). Studies found that the community college mission and student populations served complicate the work of community college teachers in tailoring their curriculum to an exceptionally diverse student body with varying educational goals, needs, and backgrounds (Grubb, 1999; Roueche et al., 2003; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). As many community colleges have adopted the principles of the “Learning College” paradigm (O’Banion, 1997; Tagg, 2003), where institutional focus is placed on the evolving role of the teacher and creation of learning in the classroom, this creates a disconnect between the types of training faculty receive and the teaching they are expected to demonstrate in the classroom.

Many studies have underscored the fact that community college teaching is an honorable and incredibly nuanced profession requiring highly skilled individuals with a deep knowledge base beyond the subject matter (Baker, Roueche, & Gillet-Karam 1990; Grubb, 1999; Roueche et al., 2003; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Community college faculty, including minority faculty members, have also consistently been shown in national studies to have the highest job satisfaction across faculty groups in academia (Antony & Valadez, 2002; Flowers, 2005; Kim et al., 2008, as cited by Twombly & Townsend, 2008), with few, if any, statistically significant differences in satisfaction among full-time and part-time faculty members (Valadez & Antony,

2001). Despite this, however, a relative lack of attention has been cast towards community college faculty in the scholarly literature, especially those belonging to minority groups, and studies that do exist oft compare them to their counterparts at four-year institutions, framed in a way that may come across as deficit (Twombly & Townsend, 2008). Thus, this study aimed to fill the gap on the dearth of literature examining the experiences and pedagogical approaches of community college FYE faculty, highlighting their immense strengths and versatile, enriching teaching experiences that have the potential to profoundly impact the lives and academic trajectories of their students, in addition to their own sense of self and professional identities.

First Year Experience

Since this study focused on faculty working in a First Year Experience (FYE) program, this section offers a deeper dive into the evolution and effectiveness of these programs over time to contextualize the study site and its unique contribution to the literature.

Many FYE Experience programs, including the study site, consist of a learning community, which is essentially at least two academic courses linked to a curriculum that allows students to take the same group of classes together (Barefoot, 2000). The purpose of these learning communities is to modify the fundamental curriculum by encouraging more interaction between students that lead to positive learning outcomes, such as increased retention and higher grade point averages (Barefoot, 2000). Further benefits of learning communities include decreased academic fragmentation for classes that are conceptually linked and increased social connections, which can be particularly beneficial for first-year students navigating many life changes at once and oftentimes at the cusp of adulthood (Barefoot, 2000). Learning community courses are also specifically designed to impart knowledge and experience (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993; Gelb, 2007; Howard & Jones, 2000; VanderStoep & Pintrich, 2008; Wratcher, 1991).

Thus, this hybridization of knowledge and experience seeks to move away from the more rudimentary definition of learning as the mere accumulation of knowledge, which the beginning of this chapter also called for a departure from. Instead, the sense of community and smaller classroom sizes provided by FYE cohorts may allow the act of knowing to elevate student and faculty's sense of self alike and contribute to a more collaborative form of learning.

Results have been mixed to a certain degree on the effectiveness of FYE programs, and more research is recommended, especially considering the subjective and context-specific nature of FYE programs to the needs of the institutions they belong to. However, many studies observed positive academic outcomes for students enrolled in FYE programs. Schnell and Doetkott (2002) found that first year seminar students at a medium-size Midwestern university had significantly higher retention rates over a four-year period. Hotchkiss (2006) also observed small positive effects on retention and GPA for students in first-year learning communities at a large public institution, with an increased effect noted especially for male and female Black students after controlling for selection bias. Fidler and Moore (1996) found that the combination of first-year seminar attendance and on-campus residence resulted in positive effects on retention and lower dropout rates from the years 1986 to 1993.

However, Potts et al. (2003) observed no consistent positive effects on student GPAs or retention after participating in an incoming cohort group, although students labeled as at-risk may have been positively affected. Similarly, Crissman (2001) did not find any positive effects on retention rates for students at a small Northeastern liberal arts college who participated in a linked first year seminar and English composition class. Hendel (2006) also reported no increases in overall student satisfaction or one-year retention for students who participated in a first-year seminar at a large urban research institution.

First Year Experience Faculty

Many studies examining FYE programs have been quantitatively driven and subsequently focused on specific benchmarks, such as student GPA and/or retention rates. Some studies took a closer look at faculty, but mostly in conjunction with how they interact with and affect students and their learning outcomes (Delaney, 2008). Murray and Wolf (2016) also found that 95% of its first-year seminar instructor respondents reported that their experience teaching was positive, with one instructor describing it as one of their most inspired and rewarding undergraduate teaching experiences of their career thus far. One of Murray and Wolf's (2016) respondents went so far as to cite the experiences of facilitating a first-year seminar as almost transformational in the way they and their peers now view themselves and the profession. This experience allowed them to solidify their understanding of the primary mission of their profession and university as teaching, even at a research university (Murray & Wolf, 2016). Their findings suggested that first-year seminars are beneficial not only to students, but also to instructors, encouraging them to feel a greater sense of respect for their students and developing new and personalized ways to relate to them (Murray & Wolf, 2016).

Cox (2003), Stassen (2000), and Wills and Allegretti (2013) found that first-year seminar faculty often form communities of practice, although the defining characteristics of these communities can be far from uniform and are often contingent on factors such as the program structure, campus learning and teaching context, disciplines, and pedagogical perspectives. This definition of communities of practice aligns with that of Lave and Wenger's (1991) as varying across contexts because they are situated and context-specific. While students in FYE programs are placed into learning communities, faculty also form peer communities of teaching and practice that serve to informally strengthen their craft and commitment to serving students (Cox,

2003; Stassen, 2000; Wills & Allegretti, 2013). Faculty recruitment into first-year seminars also varies substantially, from administrators inviting or assigning faculty to faculty volunteering or applying to participate, but studies suggested the latter is the preferred form of recruitment, as these faculty were often more receptive and open to new and unconventional teaching strategies (Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002). First-year seminar faculty also reported that the skills and knowledge they acquired teaching these courses was transferable and positively influenced their other classes (Weimer, 2003). Thus, this study sought to advance the literature by painting a clearer picture of the ways teaching in FYE programs facilitated the formation of communities of practice and teaching and eventually led to a stronger professional identity and pedagogical orientation.

Additionally, Murray and Wolf (2016) found that first-year seminar instructors identified few institutional or administrative barriers to participating in the program despite working at a research university. However, despite having impactful experiences teaching these seminars and feeling like they meaningfully contributed to student learning, many of these same faculty members did not actively seek out opportunities to teach future seminars due to departmental pressures (Murray & Wolf, 2016). Furthermore, faculty participating in first-year seminar programs perceived that their involvement was viewed by others as an impediment to being a team player, calling into question their loyalty to their department and/or discipline (Murray & Wolf, 2016). If participation in these programs does not lead to greater visibility or professional growth for faculty, they will inevitably feel less compelled to participate and seek out these opportunities (Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002). Despite the notable positive impact faculty FYE engagement has on both them and their students, the administrative and disciplinary pressures reviewed earlier in this chapter continually serve as barriers for even willing instructors to seek

out these opportunities to improve their own pedagogy and enact palpable change in the classroom.

Thus, this study sought to contribute to the literature by qualitatively analyzing faculty experiences on a deeper scale, specifically exploring the nuanced ways FYE program participation and engagement with first-year students shape faculty work and sense of self. It also aimed to capture how faculty approaches to teaching vary between FYE and non-FYE classrooms, as well as the relationship between an instructor's departmental and disciplinary culture and the teaching-specific opportunities they have sought out. This study was uniquely poised to investigate how faculty experiences shaped their approaches to working with students, as well as how these interactions then influenced perceptions of the self and their professional identities. While this section reviewed literature on FYE programs at large, Chapter 3 covers statistics provided by the study site's Office of Institutional Research, highlighting quantitative benchmarks and accomplishments specific to the college. This institution-specific data was especially important since FYE program characteristics can vary widely depending on the context.

Faculty Identity

This section will review literature on faculty identity, which is an important precursor to the theoretical framework on transformative learning and further describes barriers to pedagogical change that have become ingrained within the work of faculty. Identity and professional identity are first detailed, before moving on to studies that have applied the concept of teacher identity to university settings.

Many studies hold differing views of what constitutes identity and how they are created, maintained, and held in different contexts, such as identity being a fluctuating entity that is

context-specific (Mead, 1934; Erickson, 1968) or a self-constructed amalgamation of individual history, beliefs, and abilities (Marcia, 1980). Many studies confirmed the epistemological belief that what is known becomes one with identity (Baxter Magola, 1992; Belenky et al., 1986; Goldberger, 1996; Reybold, 2001). Meanwhile, professional identity is defined as “an attitude of personal responsibility” that is formulated “regarding one’s role in the profession, a commitment to behave ethically and morally, and the development of feelings of pride for the profession,” thus linking the concept of professional behavior with that of professional identity (Bruss & Kopala, 1993, p. 686). Essentially, one’s professional identity refers to how one views oneself and one’s work in the context of one’s discipline and accrues professional status among colleagues. Conversely, barriers to the formation of professional identity exist in the form of situational pressures or resource depletion, which can create negative pathways to the development of one’s professional identity (Bandura, 1999).

Before diving into the literature on faculty identity, it is important to first acknowledge studies on teacher identity, which emerged initially and have allowed the concept to firmly establish itself as central to the teaching profession (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Teachers who identify themselves with their teaching role become emotionally attached to it and thus allow it to color their worldview (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). Thus, as teachers develop a stronger emotional investment to their role as a teacher, they begin to internalize this as part of who they are, and it subsequently becomes an organizing element in their lives (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Teacher identity develops as one considers who one is and who one would like to become and continually interpret and reinterpret this understanding of the self (Beijaard et al., 2004). While many theoretical approaches to teacher identity exist, sometimes in conflict with one

another, contemporary interpretations generally gravitate toward it being constructed in a social context and dynamic as opposed to fixed (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). This definition of teacher identity is akin to that of identity and professional identity mentioned in the previous paragraph, which also seek to funnel past experiences, feelings, and forms of knowing into a greater awareness of specific facets of the self. However, certain aspects of teacher identity may differ for college and university instructors who face competing demands to their teaching, such as research and service (Van Lankveld et al., 2017).

Over the past decade, studies applying teacher identity to the university setting increased substantially, yet a systematic synthesis of them is still lacking (Van Lankveld et al., 2017). Faculty tend to maintain their identity in relation to the ‘collective regard’ others may have for their role, as context is incredibly important and ushers in social and cultural factors that inevitably influence identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). After conducting a qualitative synthesis of 59 studies on the teacher identity of university teachers, Van Lankveld et al. (2017) identified five psychological processes in the development and maintenance of a teacher identity, including their relationship to specific contextual factors, which are pictured in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2

Psychological Processes in the Development of a Teacher Identity

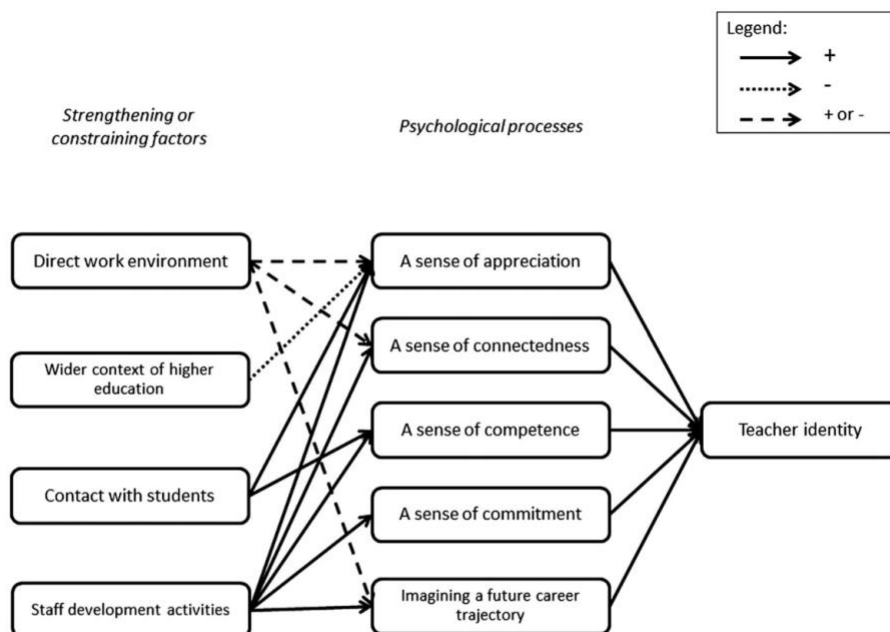


Figure 2. Identity development of university teachers: strengthening and constraining factors and underlying psychological processes.

Note. From Van Lankveld et al., 2017

The psychological processes requisite for the formation of a teacher identity in university teachers include a sense of appreciation, a sense of connectedness, a sense of competence, a sense of commitment, and imagining a future career trajectory (Van Lankveld et al., 2017). Many of these processes overlap with factors that either encourage or discourage first-year seminar faculty from pursuing or avoiding future teaching opportunities in the program, as covered in the previous section. For example, a sense of connectedness can be facilitated through the creation of communities of practice and teaching, while a sense of competence can be built upon through workshops, increased mentorship, and institutional and departmental support in the form of professional development opportunities and incentives such as teaching rewards. As Van Lankveld et al. (2017) found, the wider context of higher education has a constraining effect on

the identity development of university teachers. Within systems and structures that can serve to inherently devalue the advancement of pedagogy, transformational change on the institutional and disciplinary levels is crucial for faculty to engage in transformative learning. As individual actions are indicative of a larger system of social practices (Cobb & Bowers, 1999), it is important to envision ways in which this wider context of higher education can be transformed into a system that propels, not constrains, teacher identity and uplifts instructors in their commitment to serving students.

Faculty Socialization

Faculty socialization, as well as the role of the academic department as the primary unit mediating it, sheds further insight on why pedagogical change may be obstructed by certain organizational structures and norms. The processes of faculty socialization and preparation have been labeled a linear progression from anticipatory socialization to organizational socialization (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Anticipatory socialization refers to non-members adopting the attitudes, actions, and values of a group whom they aspire to, while organizational socialization encompasses the initial entry into and continuation of a faculty position (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993).

Other scholars provided slightly varied nuances to this distinction and definition. Weidman et al. (2001) focused more on student experiences and added formal, informal, and personal stages to professional socialization. These stages sought to acknowledge the multilayered and complex journey a professional newcomer embarks on as they develop a sense of self by internalizing roles and responsibilities associated with the profession. Studies on faculty socialization often focused specifically on one facet of the role, such as teaching or tenure and promotion strategies, at the expense of highlighting the diversity of faculty identity covering

the research university's tripartite mission of research, service, and teaching (Boice, 1991; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). This study sought to fill the gap by acknowledging the complexity of faculty socialization in the context of the study site's institutional type of community college. As mentioned earlier, the improvement of teaching strategies at the community college level is not necessarily a priority despite the notable lack of research responsibilities placed on faculty. Thus, this study sought to unpack the relationship between disciplinary culture and faculty socialization at community colleges, inevitably affecting instructional approaches.

While this study focused specifically on a community college, which, as mentioned earlier, tend to be less concerned with meeting certain research-specific benchmarks, the academic structure of this institutional type lends itself to growth in teaching towards better student outcomes not being incentivized. Thus, the pursuit of innovative teaching strategies turns into an almost cursory and undervalued afterthought. Studies highlighted how academic structures across institutional types are not conducive to promoting a faculty identity that is nuanced and representative of the diverse scope of their work and experiences. This study aimed to further this research while adding its own unique spin, examining the complex interplay between academic structures, faculty identity, and transformative learning at a community college FYE program.

While the literature review thus far has been accompanied by a rather sobering tone on the realities of pedagogical change and why faculty may initially be resistant to it, studies also centered actionable steps that can be taken by institutions and faculty alike to prioritize classroom instructional strategies. Manduca (2017) found that professional development opportunities that are relevant can support faculty in student learning experiences and contributing to broader change on the peer, departmental, and even institutional levels. Although

transformative change is an incremental process requiring buy-in from multiple stakeholders, the studies reviewed in this chapter highlighted the widespread benefits that pedagogical professional development opportunities can have on students and faculty alike, underscoring the need for institutions and disciplines to prioritize and incentivize them more highly.

Conclusion of Literature Review

Much of the literature reviewed thus far highlighted the surprisingly stagnant nature of instructional approaches in higher education, which is in direct contradiction to the need for research to constantly evolve. This mindset has become reproduced by disciplinary and institutional norms. Faculty socialization breeds a cycle of organizational resistance to pedagogical change, even when faculty themselves are eager to improve, as teaching-specific professional development opportunities are lacking, and faculty often receive little structure or guidance in knowing where to begin with modifying their pedagogy. Tagg (2012) suggested that faculty are resistant to change, and although curricular change is vital for bringing in more positive student learning outcomes, this study sought to shift the onus away solely from faculty, instead viewing them as change agents strategically placed at the nexus between campus administrators and students. Thus, a truly transformative framework was needed to enact change and encourage the adoption of innovative strategies by faculty and institutions alike, which is where the following theoretical framework comes in: to offer the lens and language to help make this desire for far-reaching instructional change a tangible reality.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework this study was grounded on is Jack Mezirow's (2003) theory of transformative learning. This theory spawned from the innate human desire to better understand and make meaning of one's own experiences, often crafted through an established

belief system, or a frame of reference, that allows meaning to be constructed (Mezirow, 2003). This study also drew upon Jürgen Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action, which Mezirow applied to the realm of adult education in the form of communicative learning, to shed light on the myriad ways individual experiences can be transformed through the exchange of dialogue. Mezirow's and Habermas's theories are cited for the purposes of this study to highlight the transformative nature of faculty-student, student-student, and faculty-faculty interactions that guide these individuals in reshaping problematic frames of reference (discussed below) and acting based on the construction and deconstruction of their experiences. Learner-centered approaches are discussed at the end to round out the theoretical framework by demonstrating the need for a new culture of learning that prioritizes learners and positions them at the center of their own education. Doing so may lead to more collaborative forms of teaching that strengthen faculty identity by allowing them to ease the reigns and take the time required to reflect on their own frames of reference. Thus, the educator becomes the learner as they embark on their own journey to better understand the self and make sense of their experiences.

Transformative Learning

Mezirow (2003) defined transformative learning as a form of learning that essentially seeks to transform "problematic frames of reference," such as habits of mind, meaning perspectives, and mindsets, into something more "inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (p. 1). These frames of reference are ultimately more desirable due to their ability to generate beliefs and values that align more closely with the truth and subsequently guide action (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (2003) identified common frames of reference as encompassing interpersonal relationships, cultural biases, ideologies, and political orientations. As change is continuous and fixed truths are nonexistent, children enter adulthood

and seek to make decisions on an informed basis by developing more reliable beliefs about the world around them (Mezirow, 2003).

Mezirow (1991) envisioned the goal of transformative learning as guiding learners in evolving past a more rudimentary awareness of their surroundings to an awareness of the reasons behind these experiences, as well as a willingness to act based on these insights. The socially constructed nature of experience also lends itself to action and deconstruction (E. Taylor, 2000). Thus, the learner's experience serves as the primary subject matter and beginning of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1995). Furthermore, Mezirow (1995) proposed certain ideal conditions that must be met for transformative learning to occur, including a safe, open, and trusting environment, the utilization of instructional techniques that encourage a learner-centered approach and promote student autonomy and collaboration, and the integration of activities that promote the exploration of alternative personal perspectives and critical reflection. Transformative learning is cultivated through three interrelated components: the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse, which are expanded upon in the following subsections (Mezirow, 1991; E. Taylor, 1998).

The Centrality of Experience

While E. Taylor (1998) identifies the centrality of experience as one of the key components of transformative learning, it was not explicitly worded that way in Mezirow's works. Nevertheless, the phrase rings true with how integral it is to transformative theory and frequently cited in his research. Mezirow (1991) often alluded to the importance of experience in relation to meaning making, as "to make meaning is to construe experience, to give it coherence" (p. 32). Mezirow (1991) described learning as a larger process of construing a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, and thus, experiences are more likely to be

perceived and remembered if they provide an interpretation that is compatible with, extends, or helps to integrate our meaning perspectives. Meaning perspectives refer to the habitual set of expectations serving as an orienting frame of reference and belief system for assessing the meaning of experience (Mezirow, 1991). Thus, experiences and meaning perspectives go hand in hand in informing one another and ultimately coloring our frames of reference.

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection has commonly been heralded as a hallmark of adult learning, as it calls for the questioning of the integrity of one's assumptions and beliefs based on previous experiences (Mezirow, 1991). Critical reflection is contrasted to reflection, which "does not necessarily imply making an assumption of what is called upon" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 186). Furthermore, critical reflection can either be implicit, such as when an individual implicitly makes a decision based on assimilated values, or explicit, such as when the process of choice is brought into awareness for an individual to examine the reasons behind making that choice (Mezirow, 1998). Meanwhile, critical self-reflection refers to "a critique of a premise upon which the learner has defined a problem" and is typically a precursor to significant social or personal transformations (Mezirow, 1998, p. 186).

Rational Discourse

Rational discourse is the third of the interrelated components Mezirow (1991) proposed, serving as an essential medium for transformation to occur. Rational discourse is contrasted with more casual, daily conversations, as it is utilized as a tool to question the comprehensibility and authenticity of what is being asserted, in addition to the credibility of the person asserting it (Mezirow, 1991). Discourse can serve as a medium for critical reflection to take off and lead to the formulation of new or revised interpretations of experiences (Mezirow, 1991).

Alternatively, the decontextualization of rational discourse and its culturally universal orientation to learning have been identified as a critique of transformative learning, as power has the potential to distort the communication necessary for critical reflection to take place (Clark & Wilson, 1992; E.W. Taylor, 1998). As Mezirow did not explicitly address the power relations evident between educator and student, the ideal conditions laid out for rational discourse may thus become invalidated (E. Taylor, 2000). Due to these criticisms, rational discourse was ultimately not used as a tenet of transformation learning to frame this study. The theory of communicative action, which is elaborated on below, was selected instead as it better reflected how power and privilege can operate within this framework.

This study sought to use the three interrelated components of transformative learning proposed by Mezirow as a framework to better illustrate not only how faculty engage with students in the classroom setting and gravitate toward certain pedagogical approaches, but also how these exchanges provide faculty themselves with invaluable opportunities to critically self-reflect and transform their own problematic frames of reference. Eventually, this study aimed to examine how transformative learning could be used as a tool to solidify and make better sense of one's faculty and professional identities and create avenues to facilitate pedagogical change at the institutional and disciplinary levels.

Communicative Action

Communicative action is the next piece of the theoretical framework that will be explored, as it is closely intertwined with transformative learning and has numerous applications to the field of adult learning. The theory was coined by Jürgen Habermas, who is an influential social and political theorist referred to as “the philosopher of democracy,” and this theory is perhaps what he is most well-known for (Bernstein, 1991, p. 207). When applied to learning, the

framework of communicative action is used to conceptualize reason as complex and multifaceted in the ways it justifies various approaches to learning (Gouthro, 2006). Thus, reason becomes a motivator for educators to carefully think through the implications of a rational or practical perspective (Gouthro, 2006). Habermas' categorizations of rationality can be used to better understand learning in the workplace, as they move away from a rigid notion of objectivity and instead embrace communicative action and its emphasis on "complementarity and mutuality among the participants" (Hart, 1992, p. 142).

Communicative Rationality

Due to the incredibly rich framework of communicative action, it is helpful to first distinguish between facets of the theory that have been applied to the field of adult education. One branch is the communicative rationality espoused by Habermas (1984), which encourages the validity of social norms to be critiqued and underlying value questions to be prioritized over mere profit. Thus, communicative action promotes more critical, participatory, and democratic approaches towards learning. From a critical feminist perspective, Gouthro (2002) addressed the ways in which the marketplace has shaped lifelong learning, as well as the increasing demand for universities to fulfill demands for "customer satisfaction" that leads to repressive systems and the reproduction of educational inequities (Hill, 1997, p. 212). Communicative forms of action are offered as a possible remedy to the pervasive capitalist mindset adopted by places of learning, instead challenging the status quo and questioning the validity of worldviews (Habermas, 1987).

Communicative Discourse and Communicative Learning

Another important component of communicative action is communicative discourse, which is akin to the rational discourse that is an integral core of transformative learning and advocates for more open dialogue surrounding the underlying assumptions of human behavior

(Habermas, 1981). Eventually, communicative discourse is meant to reach a better understanding of the world while resolving conflicts that may arise along the way (Habermas, 1981). Mezirow (1981) famously applied Habermas' theory of communicative action to the realm of adult education. Although he adopted a more psychological approach that has been critiqued for being less of a critical social theory (Plumb, 1995), it introduced a clearer distinction between instrumental and communicative learning, which are addressed in further detail in the following paragraph (Mezirow, 2003). Habermas also influenced Mezirow to examine the role of dialogue in shaping perception and developing an enhanced awareness of how others make meaning of the world (Gouthro, 2006). Thus, individual perspectives can be transformed when these individuals share dialogue that result in new interpretations and meanings of the world (Mezirow, 1991).

As mentioned in the paragraph above, Mezirow has oft been cited for his contribution of the dichotomy of instrumental learning and communicative learning to Habermas' theory of communicative action. To better understand communicative learning, it may be helpful to first define it in relation to instrumental learning. Instrumental learning emphasizes enhanced performance and prediction by assessing the validity of a claim and ultimately controlling and manipulating one's environment (Mezirow, 1981). Conversely, communicative learning refers to understanding what a person means when they communicate with another party, specifically regarding their assumptions, intentions, and qualifications (Mezirow, 2003). Rational discourse is intended to facilitate the process of communicative learning through its promotion of ideal conditions, including a sense of safety, openness, and trust, utilizing student-centered instructional approaches, having access to complete and accurate information, and the exploration of alternate possibilities through critical reflection and problem solving (Mezirow, 1995).

In line with the criticisms laid out regarding transformative learning, communicative action is not without its own share of shortcomings that fail to adequately capture how communication occurs in learning contexts. Again, conversations of power and inclusion were largely absent from Habermas' universalistic traditions and the European modernist tradition that informed his work (Gouthro, 2006). While Habermas' analysis of the system took into careful consideration social class, it did not adequately address other intersectional forms of oppression. Although it is important to critically examine critical theorists (Ellsworth, 1989), communicative action presents an appealing and useful framework for understanding both modern society and "[informing] critical discourses in adult education" (Gouthro, 2006, p. 18). Thus, this study sought to avoid some of those pitfalls by adequately centering the intersubjective space that exists between individuals, while acknowledging how institutions and systems continue to reproduce inequities and oppress marginalized groups. Furthermore, this study aimed to examine how power and privilege can operate on a smaller scale in dialogue exchanged between individuals. This is especially significant as underrepresented social identities made up a large portion of the participant demographics, which will be covered in Chapter 3.

Learner-Centered Theory

The importance of student-centered approaches was mentioned briefly in Chapter 2 and underscored the acquisition of key competencies detailed in the same chapter. Thus, it would be beneficial to briefly describe learner-centered theories and how they can round out the framework of this study and bridge transformative learning together with the research questions. Learner-centered, also referred to as student-centered, theories essentially switch the roles of student and teacher so that teachers view students as seekers to be guided along their journey of intellectual development instead of empty vessels needing to be filled with knowledge (Weimer,

2002). Baxter and Gray (2001) called for a model in which students were actively engaged in the learning process, allowing teachers to become facilitators not expected to be content experts and students no longer expected to be passive absorbers of information (Tärnvik, 2007).

This study sought to examine how learner-centered theories, despite marking a significant departure from the traditional orientation towards teachers, could empower faculty, positively affect the development of their teacher identity, and lead to opportunities to engage transformative learning in the classroom.

Application of Theory to the Present Study

Many of the theories reviewed in this section have been directed toward faculty in the higher education context, providing a framework to inform their instructional approaches while contributing to more positive student learning outcomes along the way. While this study also sought to examine faculty pedagogy and the impact of faculty-student interactions on these outcomes, it aimed to pursue this line of inquiry through the lens of faculty development. Specifically, this study was eager to unpack the reciprocal exchange of ideas between faculty and students, observing how this collaborative, co-constructed form of learning could extend beyond the classroom setting and eventually cascade down to shaping faculty identity. As the literature reviewed alluded to, faculty typically do not actively pursue professional development opportunities centering pedagogical approaches, which is often due to factors related to organizational and disciplinary structures. However, this study sought to illustrate why this disconnect should not be the case, as well as why it was important for faculty to continue their pursuit of knowledge, not just in their content matter or research, but also in how they delivered instruction to their students. Transformative learning provided the requisite framework to encourage faculty and student alike to evolve beyond a more rudimentary awareness of their

surroundings to an awareness of the reasons behind these experiences, as well as a willingness to act based on these insights and cultivate a sense of joy in the fact that change is constant (Mezirow, 1991). This study's goals in applying theory, while ambitious to a certain degree, were backed by the scholarly literature and set it apart in its vision of utilizing transformative learning to further strengthen the professional identity of faculty, providing them with a stronger understanding of and fulfillment in their deeply meaningful work and impact on students.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was structured as a qualitative single-site case study, and this chapter seeks to elucidate the chosen methodology and how it guided this study. First, the research site and participant statistics and demographics are provided to contextualize the study. Next, the data collection procedure, including the site selection process and additional context, are outlined to understand why a qualitative single-site case study was the most appropriate research design to answer this study's research questions. This chapter concludes with a discussion of access to the site, trustworthiness, the positionality of the researcher, and potential limitations to the study and how they were addressed.

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of faculty members teaching in the First Year Experience program of a community college. Specifically, this study sought to unpack faculty pedagogical approaches and identity, perceptions of institutional and disciplinary culture, and prior and current teaching experiences, as well as how the nexus between these three could contribute to greater pedagogical change.

This study was framed by the following research questions:

1. How do First Year Experience program faculty perceive their role as an educator?
 - a. In what ways have the past and current teaching experiences of these faculty helped shape this perspective?
2. What role, if any, has teaching in a First Year Experience program had on faculty approaches to pedagogy and creating and/or sustaining communities of teaching and/or communities of practice?

- a. In what ways can communities of teaching and/or communities of practice created in First Year Experience be sustained outside the program?
3. What do First Year Experience faculty perceive as institutional conditions that shape pedagogical growth?

Qualitative research methods were appropriate to capturing communicative learning, which was a key component of this study's theoretical framework, as its development logic was grounded in analogic-abductive reasoning that takes concrete experiences and molds them into an abstract conceptualization (Mezirow, 2003). Thus, qualitative methodologies were deemed the most appropriate and suitable choice for this study.

Research Site

The site chosen for this study was Bay College, which is a community college located in Southern California. The following section breaks down the demographics of Bay College, first by students and then by faculty.

Bay College Student Demographics

During the 2021-2022 academic year, Bay College enrolled between 28,000 and 30,000 students, which marked a drop in enrollment of over 2,500 students from the previous academic year. Among these enrolled students, Latino students were the largest racial/ethnic group represented and comprised 50.4% of the overall campus population. The remaining racial and ethnic breakdown of students included Asian (15.4%), White (14.4%), Black/African American (13.5%), two or more races (4.7%), unknown (1.1%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (0.2%). Among the 14,000 to 16,000 students surveyed who received financial aid during the 2021-2022 academic year, 12,000 to 14,000 were California Promise Grant recipients, 10,000 to 12,000 students received a grant, 6,000 to 8,000 were Pell Grant recipients, 400 to 600 were

scholarship recipients, 200 to 400 took out at least one loan, and 200 to 400 were work-study students. Meanwhile, regarding completion benchmarks, 3,000 to 5,000 students received at least one associate degree and/or certificate, leading the school to boast a 37% to 42% graduation rate. Bay College's 2020-2023 institutional goals focused on increasing completion, transfer, and student workforce outcomes while decreasing the units earned and student equity gaps.

As the 2021-2022 academic year report did not yet include comprehensive student demographic and enrollment data, previous academic year reports were referenced to paint a clearer picture of the campus population. This data was taken primarily from the Chancellor's Office, in conjunction with the student database for special program membership and the National Student Clearinghouse for transfer destination information.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, 36% of enrolled students were 19 or younger, 34% were between the ages of 20 and 24, 19% were between the ages of 25 and 34, and the remaining 11% were 35 or older. Meanwhile, 52% of students identified as female and 48% identified as male. Regarding course enrollment, 81% of students were enrolled in at least one daytime course, while 13% were enrolled in at least one evening course and 6% reported more irregular course time enrollment. Regarding student residency, 49% of the students enrolled in Bay College lived within its community college district, while 31% resided within 7.5 miles of the institution and another 20% lived beyond this 7.5-mile radius. Finally, in the realm of course completion and final grades, 76% of students received an A, B, C, or Pass as a final course grade, while 89% of students remained enrolled through the end of a course and did not withdraw or drop late.

Bay College Faculty Demographics

It would be remiss not to include the demographic composition of the Bay College workforce considering the participants of this study. From 2019-2020, there were between 1,000 to 2,000 employees, representing a 5% increase over the past five years. Amongst this pool, 43% were temporary (part-time) academic instructors, 23% were academic tenure-track (full-time) instructors, and 31% are classified staff. Regarding the age breakdown, 52% were between 35 and 54, 35% were 55 or older, and 13% were below 34. The Bay College workforce was 54% female and 46% male, while the ethnic breakdown consisted of White (46%), Latino (21%), Asian (16%), African American (12%), Pacific Islander (1%), unknown (1%), American Indian or Alaska Native (<1%), and two or more races (<1%).

Finally, Bay College released an employee campus climate survey in 2021, which was reflective of employee and faculty perceptions of several administrative structures detailed in Chapter 2. Among the faculty surveyed, 55% felt the institution communicates openly at all levels, 79% felt they can talk to their direct supervisor about their concerns, 60% felt the institution disseminates information to them in a timely manner, 61% felt they can talk to management about their concerns, and 79% felt that senior management effectively addresses challenges facing the institution. These statistics shed light on the myriad ways faculty may (or may not) feel supported by the culture, policies, and practices specific to Bay College, as well as how they perceived its organizational structure and culture in relation to their own role and responsibilities.

Context

FYE students typically enroll in two classes each semester of their first year in an assigned cohort, which is also referred to as a learning community, as covered in Chapter 2. While some cohorts are tailored towards students with aspirations of majoring in Science,

Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) or business administration, as well as one specific to students in a transfer pathway with a nearby private university, the majority are more general in structure and consist of classes transferable to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems.

Typically, FYE students take an English or mathematics class each semester, coupled with a general education class in a department such as anthropology, art history, business, communication studies, dance appreciation, ethnic studies, history, humanities, literature, music, political studies, psychology, and sociology. According to the Bay College class schedule, many of these courses have a critical thinking or cultural component and/or are focused on a specific student identity group, such as Native peoples of South America and history of the Chicano in the United States. During the 2023-2024 academic year, there were 21 learning communities and 31 faculty members assigned to teach classes across all cohorts.

The FYE website boasted that the program awards over 650 degrees per academic year, enrolls over 1,000 students a year, and has been in existence for over two decades. Meanwhile, the student area outcomes for FYE centered around a greater understanding and knowledge of the steps required to transfer to a four-year institution, as well as of academic programs and campus resources through a one-day student orientation and accelerated reading and writing classes. Some of the benefits provided to FYE students included priority registration, orientation, receiving support from FYE-specific counselors, advisors, and faculty, participating in learning community courses, field trips to a variety of institutions, and guest speakers.

Prospective FYE students were encouraged to initially complete their application to Bay College, submit an FYE interest form, attend an information session (information about this is emailed after the previous step has been fulfilled), complete an FYE application, and then

schedule an FYE counseling appointment. Once students were accepted into FYE, they were expected to attend a fall registration workshop, summer financial aid and academic student training workshop, and FYE admitted student reception. A parent orientation was also offered closer to the start of the academic year.

Data Collection Procedure

Email addresses of current faculty in the First Year Experience (FYE) program at Bay College were provided by the program coordinator. Subsequently, all 31 FYE faculty were invited via email to participate in the study. Interested faculty members were then asked to complete an interview intake form (see Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews were then scheduled and conducted (see Appendix B). The semi-structured interviews took place in each participant's office or classroom and were audio recorded with each participant's informed consent. They lasted 60 to 120 minutes each. This study recruited 15 participants, who were identified based on their association with the research site. While all 31 faculty working in FYE were invited to participate in the study, 16 faculty completed the interview intake form and 15 faculty were eventually interviewed. More comprehensive participant information will be discussed in Chapter 4. As mentioned above, semi-structured interviews were employed to give the researcher an opportunity to respond to the situation at hand and the emerging worldview of the respondent while allowing structure in the form of the interview protocol in Appendix B (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interview protocol was divided into three domains: (a) pedagogy; (b) professional development; and (c) department, institution, and discipline. Purposeful sampling was chosen as the participants in this sample met the established criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Document analysis of each participant's FYE course syllabus, as well as observations of each participant's FYE class and the FYE faculty meeting of the semester at Bay College, served as additional forms of data that were collected for this study. Document analysis of course syllabi was chosen as a qualitative data method for this study, as most participants noted exchanging course syllabi with their linked FYE instructor. Thus, course syllabi held a symbolic role in illustrating how FYE upheld communities of teaching and communities of practice, in addition to their stability as forms of data that could be considered objective and unobtrusive, without potential to be altered by the presence of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Meanwhile, participant observations of each participant's FYE class and the FYE faculty meeting of the semester were intended to triangulate emerging findings by recording behavior as it was happening, as well as provide some knowledge of the context that could then be asked about or referenced during each interview, specifically with the question about how that class session compared to a typical class for that participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

This study employed a single-site case study methodology. Case studies were ideal when "how" or "why" questions are posed, which correspond to the research question this study seeks to shed light on (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, case studies "[try] to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (Schramm, 1971, as cited in Yin, 2009), which was this study's goal in examining the evolution of faculty pedagogy through a variety of contextual factors. Yin (2009) also identified a case study as an empirical phenomenon examining a real-life situation within its context when the boundaries between context and phenomenon are not immediately visible. As context was central to this study, particularly as it pertained to the culture formed within the institution, department, and discipline, a single-site case study methodology seemed to be the most appropriate and suitable

choice. As the literature review shed light on, FYE program effectiveness can vary based on the specific institution it belongs to and its needs and mission, so taking a deeper dive into the experiences of faculty working within a specific program at a specific institution using this all-encompassing method seemed to make the most sense (Yin, 2009). As mentioned above, this study used purposeful sampling and was thus indicative of a typical case, further justifying the decision to use a single-site case study approach (Yin, 2009).

Furthermore, the less formal comparisons included in the interview protocol (see Appendix B) asking participants about their experiences in other programs and/or institutions assured construct validity and contributed to the interpretability of the results, thus avoiding one of the potential pitfalls of single-site case study methodology (Maxwell, 2013). As instructors in first-year seminars may find greater value in teaching across disciplines through this experience (McClure et al., 2008; Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002; Wills & Allegretti, 2013), this site was selected and deemed to be ideal for examining the role of transformative learning in informing pedagogy.

Access to Site

Signed and written approval was obtained by the faculty coordinator of the FYE program at Bay College to access institutional data and conduct research with the faculty members working in the program.

Data Analysis Plan

I transcribed the interviews and then completed three rounds of coding the interview transcripts. In the first round of coding, I used open-coding to allow patterns and themes to emerge from the data before applying theory. In the second round of coding, I applied codes from the theories guiding the project (see Table 3.1). In the third round of coding, I took these

codes and reorganized them into broader, overarching themes. Table 3.1 provides an outline of how the study's theoretical framework, research questions, potential themes and codes, and hypothetical examples of those themes were interrelated and composed a cohesive whole.

The first cycle of coding used focused, concept, values, and causation coding (Saldaña, 2014). Focused coding seeks to group codes based on thematic similarity, while concept coding takes this a step further by assigning macro or meso levels of meaning through a concept (Saldaña, 2014). Values and causation coding are especially relevant in elucidating participant worldviews, belief systems, and recent histories, as well as the complex interplay of factors influencing them (Saldaña, 2014). The second cycle of coding used pattern coding to identify similarly coded data and organize them into sets, themes, or constructs that eventually shed light on "the formation of theoretical constructs and processes" (Saldaña, 2014, p. 296). NVivo, which is a qualitative data analysis software, was then used to develop a codebook. I re-coded the data using my final codebook from NVivo. An inductive approach, also referred to as a bottom-up analytic strategy, was utilized with the goal of gathering data that built concepts, hypotheses, and theories, eventually combining and ordering this data into larger themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research design was guided by a case study linking data to be collected to the study's research questions (Yin, 2009). The observation data was analyzed based on field notes from the observations that was then coded. Course syllabi were compared to one another and analyzed in the larger context of each participant's response to an interview question asking them to walk me through their syllabus. From there, they were also coded.

Table 3.1*Analytical Plan*

Theoretical framework	Research questions	Themes and codes	Hypothetical examples
Transformative learning	(RQ1) How do First Year Experience program faculty perceive their role as an educator? (RQ1a) In what ways have the past and current teaching experiences of these faculty helped shape this perspective?	• Faculty identity • Institutional context • Frames of reference	• Teaching experiences (and the interview itself as a space to process them) may allow faculty to construe and make new meaning of these experiences, along with their faculty identity and how they internalize this role
Communicative action	(RQ2) What role, if any, has teaching in a First Year Experience program had on faculty approaches to pedagogy and creating and/or sustaining communities of teaching and/or communities of practice? (RQ2a) In what ways can communities of teaching and/or communities of practice created in First Year Experience be sustained outside the program?	• Communities of teaching and/or communities of practice • Reflection processes • Multiple contexts	• Faculty interactions with peers (and students) can result in communicative learning (as opposed to instrumental learning) through the centering of the student and promotion of critical reflection
Learner-centered theory	(RQ3) What do First Year Experience faculty perceive as institutional conditions that shape pedagogical growth?	• Faculty socialization • Institutional and/or discipline deficit model	• Faculty socialization processes may lead to faculty embarking on their professional careers lacking pedagogical training, further compounded by

- Professional development opportunities
 - Culture of learning
- academic institutions, disciplines, and departments neither incentivizing nor rewarding teaching-centered opportunities

Trustworthiness

Several methods were employed to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of this study. Despite being a single-site case study, this study aimed to assure construct validity by drawing upon the experiences of participants with other settings, or with the same setting at an earlier time, to then identify crucial factors and the effect they may have, thus incorporating less formal comparisons that contribute to the interpretability of the results (Maxwell, 2013). Appendix B includes these informal comparisons as an explicit part of its interview protocol, asking participants about their teaching experiences and perceptions of institutional and disciplinary cultures in non-FYE or non-Bay College settings. The researcher also documented the ongoing data collection and analysis processes through a research journal, which provided a space for preliminary codes to be noted and analytic memos to be created and updated as deemed appropriate. This ensured dependability in how the study was conducted and allowed the researcher to return to areas ripe for future exploration.

Positionality of the Researcher

As a counselor and non-instructional faculty member in a community college FYE program for the past nine years, my professional experiences have undoubtedly colored my positionality and motivation for choosing this site. Despite counseling students and placing them into our learning communities, my expertise during our sessions has largely fallen under the umbrella of educational planning and seldom unpacking their experiences within the classroom. Conversely, my two years as an instructor for the University Studies program at the University of

California, Los Angeles (UCLA) sparked within me a passion for teaching that had previously been unexplored. Teaching seminars specific to various identity groups, such as transfers, first and second years, and first-generation students, provided me with invaluable opportunities to self-reflect critically and deeply on my own undergraduate experiences and intersectionality, in addition to the nuanced ways they have shaped my present worldview and approach to my work.

During the first day of class, I ask each student to share what they hope to gain from the seminar. When we go around, I also share how equally eager I am to learn from every student, as I believe they bring their own unique life history, experiences, and perspectives that undoubtedly elevate our curriculum and in-class dialogues. I would say these moments and conversations have been instrumental to sparking my interest in transformational learning. As an educator, I am constantly learning, and I believe that complacency can oftentimes lend itself to ineffective and/or uninspired teaching strategies. I hope this mindset can benefit other instructors who may find themselves trapped in what they perceive to be a rut in their professional growth.

This study served as the ideal platform for me to find common ground between my professional interests in community college FYE programs and the role of faculty within the classroom. I acknowledge that my acquaintance with a community college FYE program comes with its own set of benefits and preconceived notions that I had to learn to manage as I navigated the data collection and analysis processes. The precautionary steps I took to ensure trustworthiness, dependability, and construct validity, as outlined above, in addition to the transparency and rapport I seek to share and build with the participants regarding my positionality, guided me in managing my own frames of reference and drawing upon as wide a range of faculty experiences as possible. Furthermore, I am confident that my experiences

teaching and my familiarity with FYE programs equipped me with an appropriate level of sensitivity to treat this study with the care it deserved.

Limitations

As this study took an in-depth look at one institution and the faculty of its FYE program, its findings may not necessarily be generalizable to faculty at other FYE programs, community colleges, or higher education institutions. This is commonly cited as a limitation of qualitative research; however, as this study sought to prioritize “the development of a theory of the *processes* operating in the case studied” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 138), it also aimed to circumvent this limitation by illustrating that “variations in conditions create variations in results” and highlighting the processes that have taken place to mold faculty pedagogy in these particular conditions (Becker, 1991, p. 240, as cited in Maxwell, 2013). As transformative learning itself promotes the sharing of individual experiences to cultivate new and revised interpretations of experiences, each faculty member’s story was uniquely significant in contributing to the landscape of faculty experiences.

Furthermore, as elaborated on in Chapter 2, the theoretical frameworks grounding this study, particularly those espoused by Mezirow and Habermas, were not without their fair share of shortcomings adequately capturing the nuances of power dynamics and intersectionality applied to learning contexts. This may appear to extend as a limitation of this study as well, further exacerbated by the participant pool being comprised entirely of faculty. However, this study aimed to not only examine the role transformative learning played in pedagogical approaches, but also to provide faculty with a space and opportunity to engage in critical reflection, hopefully reframing and elevating their own work and enhancing student learning outcomes and experiences in the process. As mentioned earlier, the largest group represented in

the sample were temporary (part-time) academic instructors. The literature review noted the unique challenges this contingency of faculty navigated in their academic careers, so it was equally important to uplift their voices and guide them to avenues that would result in greater fulfillment in their work.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

This chapter provides an introduction of all 15 participants, including demographic and biographical information that colored each participant's educational and teaching experiences and trajectories. This chapter also elaborates on other data collected on each participant, including an observation of one of their FYE class meetings, to provide a more holistic illustration of their pedagogy and how they conceived and put into practice their role as an educator. Finally, I attended the FYE faculty meeting of the semester and detail my notes on the overarching topics discussed, which several participants reference in the following chapter. This chapter should not be perceived as standalone and is intended to supplement the findings of the study presented in Chapter 5. This chapter aims to paint a profile around each participant and respect their uniquely individual journeys, while at the same time acknowledging how shared experiences such as economic recessions and the COVID-19 pandemic have shaped their responses.

Participant Overview

A total of 15 participants were enrolled in this study. These participants are listed in Table 4.1, which included basic information on each participant, such as the pseudonym referenced in the study; demographic information such as their gender and racial/ethnic identity; their faculty rank, either tenured and full-time or part-time; their number of years worked at Bay College; their number of years worked in the First Year Experience program; the name of their observed FYE class that semester; and their highest degree completed. Only one participant enrolled in the study was a part-time faculty member, while the remaining 14 participants were tenured full-time faculty members. Two participants received a Ph.D., while the highest degree earned of the remaining 13 participants was a master's (earning more than one, in several cases).

Seven participants taught in English, five taught in the behavioral and social sciences, two taught in mathematics, and one taught in a non-English humanities discipline (art history). One participant identified as non-binary, while half the remaining participants identified as female and the other half identified as male. Eight participants identified as White/Caucasian, two participants identified as Hispanic or Latina/o/x, two participants identified as Asian American, one participant identified as Native American or Alaska Native and White/Caucasian, one participant identified as Hispanic or Latina/o/x and White/Caucasian, and one participant identified as Black/Black American and White/Caucasian. This chapter provides important background information that lays the groundwork for the findings elaborated on in the following chapter. Chapter 5 focuses more extensively on drawing connections and underscoring patterns across the collected data.

Figure 4.1 depicts a timeline illustrating: (a) each participant's years worked at Bay College, (b) each participant's years worked in the First Year Experience program, and (c) the ratio of each participant's years worked at Bay College to their years worked in FYE. The ratio was included to better understand how a participant's time worked in FYE compared to their overall time worked at the college. Two participants in the study worked for less than ten years at Bay College, while six participants worked for over twenty years. The average ratio across all participants was 5.21, which meant their years worked at Bay College were 5.21 times greater than their years worked in FYE. Eight participants had a ratio between one and two, meaning that they had worked in the FYE program for at least half of their time at Bay. Two participants had a ratio of 20 or greater and had worked in FYE for one year or less.

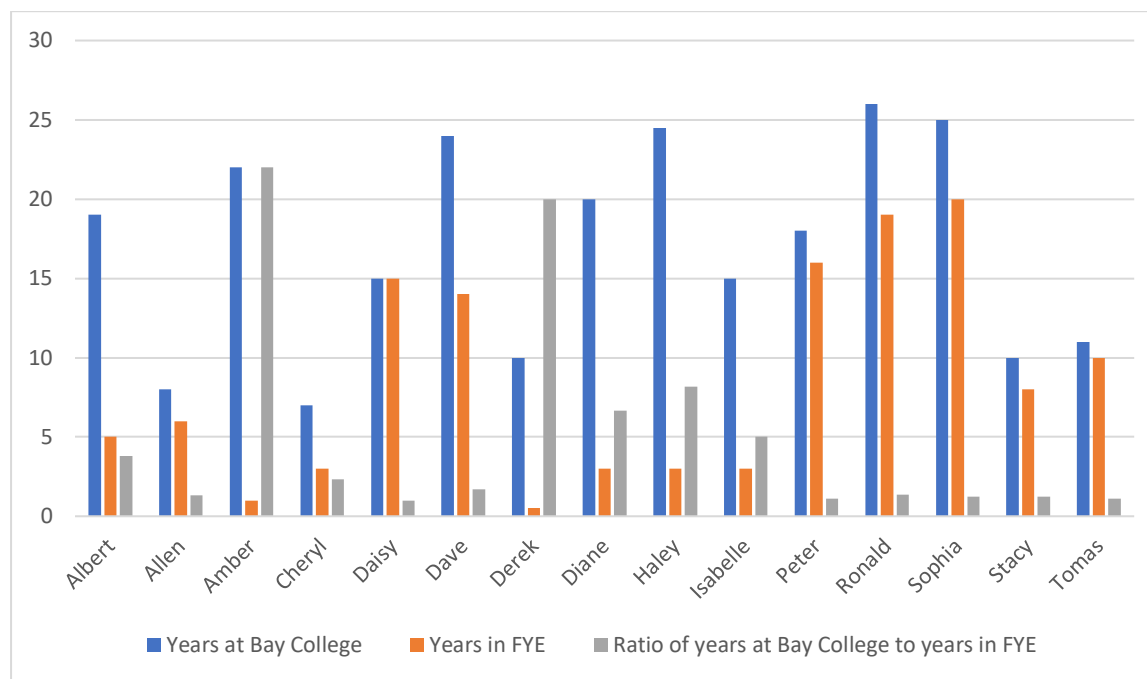
Table 4.1*Participant Demographic Information (n=15)*

Participant Pseudonym	Gender Identity	Race / Ethnicity	Position	Tenured	Yrs at College	Years in FYE	Name of Observed FYE Class	Highest Degree
Albert	M	H, W	FT	Yes	19	5	Introduction to cultural anthropology	Ph.D.
Allen	M	N, W	FT	Yes	7-8.5	About 6	American government and politics	Master's
Amber	F	W	PT	No	22	1	Trigonometry	M.A.
Cheryl	F	B, W	FT	Yes	7	3	Critical thinking	Master's
Daisy	F	W	FT	Yes	15	15	Critical thinking	Master's
Dave	M	W	FT	Yes	24	Over 14	Critical thinking	Master's
Derek	M	W	FT	Yes	10	0.5	Comics and literature	M.A.
Diane	F	W	FT	Yes	20	3	History of western art	M.A.
Haley	F	W	FT	Yes	24.5	3	Introduction to sociology	M.A.
Isabelle	F	H	FT	Yes	15	3	Calculus	M.S.
Peter	M	A	FT	Yes	18	16	Critical thinking	Master's
Ronald	M	W	FT	Yes	26	19	Introduction to humanities	M.A.
Sophia	F	W	FT	Yes	25	About 20	Critical thinking	M.F.A.
Stacy	NB	A	FT	Yes	10	At least 8	General psychology	Ph.D.
Tomas	M	H	FT	Yes	11	10	Introduction to ethnic studies	M.A.

Notes. Gender Identity: F=Female, NB=Non-binary, M=Male. Race/Ethnicity: A=Asian/Asian American, B= Black/Black American, H=Hispanic or Latina/o/x, N=Native American or Alaska Native, W=White/Caucasian. Position: FT=Full-time, PT=Part-time.

Figure 4.1

Participants' Timelines at Bay College and in First Year Experience



Participant Introductions

The previous participant overview served to provide a summary of the participant pool and several key characteristics shared by the 15 participants enrolled in the study. The following section individually introduces each participant and starts by describing one of their FYE classes observed that semester, accounting for my impressions of the classroom, students, and instructor. I also paid close attention to interactions between students and between the instructor and students in the classroom, instructional style and pace, use of technology by the instructor, and strategies utilized by students to learn and understand the content material presented to them. Although some of the classes were hybrid in format, the classes observed were entirely in-person and ranged from a minimum of one hour and 25 minutes to 2.5 hours for the math classes. This section also presents a selection of academic and life events marking each participant's teaching history, which follows the observation of their FYE class. These pieces, the classroom

observation and teaching history, are paired to draw a more comprehensive picture of each participant as an instructor. This section also follows a chronological timeline mirroring that of the data collection process, which started with the first participant enrolled in the study and ended with the last participant enrolled in the study.

Stacy

Stacy taught a fully in-person general psychology class in FYE that met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:45am to 11:10am. During the classroom observation, Stacy greeted students as they came in and thanked them for being there and masked at the start. Stacy had a seating chart, of which 20 students were present and seated at the start of class, with one student arriving nine minutes late.

The classroom observation took place the week before spring break, and Stacy announced they would be out of town then but would still have their phone on them in case students had any questions. Throughout the class session, Stacy made a conscious effort to pace around the room, gesture, and maintain eye contact with their students, occasionally dropping hints such as, “This is the stuff you need for the quiz,” and engaging students through short activities and probing discussion questions that elicited thoughtful discussions about memory. For example, Stacy flashed groupings of letters on the projector for a brief period to see how many students could commit these orderings to memory. Stacy managed to infer past experiences of students who excelled at memorizing these letters, such as participation in theatrical productions, before sharing their own experience memorizing the Gettysburg Address in the eighth grade and providing reassurance to students that “memory takes practice.”

Next, Stacy began illustrating the concept of visuospatial short-term memory by offering a personal example of how they felt they did not truly understand statistics until they started

teaching it. Once Stacy finished reviewing short-term memory and working memory with their students, they asked everyone to briefly stand up before “[switching] gears because [they’ve] gone through a lot of information today” and showed them how to access a beneficial learning worksheet on their course website. Stacy moved on to operant conditioning, asking students if they had any questions and then had them talk to their seat partner to help generate discussion.

Teaching History

Stacy narrated their educational and life experiences, which were also shared in their biography on Canvas. They were born in Shanghai, but their parents moved to Costa Rica for ten years when they were in elementary school to escape communism. Thus, they learned to speak Spanish and attended private school there. Stacy’s mother did not want them to attend higher education in Costa Rica, so they moved to America to seek out more opportunities and attended another community college in Southern California, where they spent three years as a part of the honor’s transfer program before transferring to a University of California campus and earning their bachelor’s degree in psychology. Stacy described their undergraduate GPA as not being very high because they did not test well, which they believed was why they were rejected from their first round of Ph.D. applications. They had “magical thinking at the time” and cried after receiving their admissions decisions.

Afterwards, Stacy applied to and attended a terminal master’s program in general/experimental psychology at a local California State University campus before attending a Ph.D. program in cognitive psychology in Hawaii that covered their tuition. They taught “extensively” to afford rent. While Stacy said it was “not always smooth, that’s the experience for a lot of our [Bay College] students, and it’s good to have a little bit of a different background to be able to relate to them that way.”

Stacy first taught in 2003 at a public university in the Los Angeles County that had a program called the Teaching Internship Program (TIP), which was a “very rare opportunity” because they only had their bachelor’s degree at the time even though a master’s degree was the minimum eligibility requirement. Stacy was heavily supervised and spent their entire summer learning how to prepare and deliver lectures with a senior faculty member, which was a “very solid start” to their teaching career. Stacy taught at many institutions nationwide prior to settling down at Bay College. They sought out community college faculty positions because “research stresses [them] out” while they enjoyed teaching. They found an opening at Bay College in their thirties that aligned with their desire to move towards financial stability, but they also liked the institution after starting to work there because:

The diversity is pretty cool here of the students, not just the racial diversity, but other kinds of diversity, like queer folks and all other kinds. I compare that to when I taught at [another community college] ... which is mostly White kids and it’s just a very different vibe. Most of them don’t have as much going on outside of school as the diverse population at [Bay College], so I feel like I make more of an impact at [Bay College] by teaching them certain stuff that maybe the higher SES kids don’t need because they already have it from their families and things like that.

Sophia

Sophia taught a hybrid critical thinking class in FYE that met once a week on Tuesdays from 8am to 10:05am. During the classroom observation, she helped move around tables and chairs as soon as she entered the room. She also seemed to know most, if not all, of her students by name. Approximately four minutes into class, Sophia said, “Too bad, too sad, they’re late,” in reference to seven students who had not yet arrived. Many students in the class seemed to be friends and were chattering with each other amicably.

An FYE counselor came in at the start of class to make announcements and remind students of upcoming deadlines related to their financial aid, enrollment appointments, and

registration workshops. The course theme as indicated on Sophia's syllabus was love, sex, and morality, and she opened the class by describing the module for that week as a "monstrosity" and "a bit of a beast." She dove into the topic for that class, with readings that centered transcendentalism and civil obedience. Sophia referenced Thoreau, saying, "He basically calls Massachusetts a slut, [which] freaked some people out because they're feminist ... Massachusetts lifting her skirt for money ... so read Thoreau because he's very figurative."

Sophia also provided four articles on happiness for her students to choose from for an upcoming essay, posing the prompt to her students, "Examining one's life is or is not necessary, or YOLO is the answer," citing the latter as a Tufts University admissions question. Sophia recalled responses students shared in past class sessions and asked them to share again, praising them for their articulate, well-worded responses. Sophia paraphrased Thoreau from *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, stating, "If a law is wrong or unjust, it is your job to call attention to it. We have to call attention to it." Sophia provided an example of Walmart and Joe Biden to make this material feel more tangible.

Sophia also explained the homework she had assigned her students on actions and principles, advising them to have their claim, four warrants, and how and why their evidence proved their claim. She said, "If you cut and paste your awesomeness in your homework, as long as you use your words and analyses, I'm cool with you saving your time," encouraging her students to practice scaffolding, which she explicitly mentioned in and supported on her syllabus.

Sophia showed her students a TED talk from a sociologist encouraging viewers to lean into their discomfort, emphasizing the role of connection in giving people comfort and purpose in their lives. Prior to putting up the TED talk, Sophia asked her students to note its thesis,

methods, purpose, and persona on a sheet of paper and share their observations with the class afterwards. Throughout instructor-student exchanges, Sophia responded affirmatively and encouraged students to “examine [their lives]” in their upcoming paper. Sophia encouraged her students to utilize personal anecdotes to make their writing and argument more impactful.

Finally, Sophia divided the class into smaller groups to create a poster taking an assigned stance on their upcoming paper prompt. Students chattered and laughed excitedly in their groups as they brainstormed ideas and began writing on their posters. Throughout the class, students did not have electronic devices turned on and appeared quite attentive to Sophia’s words.

Teaching History

Sophia started teaching high school when she was 22, entering a high school teaching credential program immediately after receiving her bachelor’s degree and serving as a student teacher in a junior high school. This experience made her think she was “going to end [her] life ... junior high teachers are special, so it was really hard and it was in a tough area and just the hormones with kids at 13 and 14.” Sophia’s “first real job” was in a high school in Orange County, where she taught for seven to eight years at two different high schools. While teaching at her second high school, Sophia started thinking about having kids. She received her M.A. in world literature and her M.F.A. in creative writing and wanted to try something different, which led her to teach part-time at Bay College. Sophia was offered full-time employment that same year, but she was pregnant with her son and had three months of sick time at her high school. Her dean at Bay College asked why she was trying to turn this position down, to which she mentioned the lack of a maternity leave policy. They then “rewrote the policy several times because they didn’t have any kind of maternity for if you adopted a kid, or any kind of partnership that required something else.” Sophia chose Bay College:

For freedom first ... they wanted me ... and I met funny people at my other job [in high school] ... the teachers were very old and kind of set in their ways. They were still teaching bibliography. They were like, "What is this works cited thing?" And I was like, "holy Toledo." It was good, because one of the students who I taught is actually the assistant dean here now ... I think the people here were so nice, I got the freedom I wanted, they were very cool about letting me schedule with kids, and what I could do with that. And our third floor, all our floors are nice, but this floor, I had the opportunity to move to some other schools that were closer to my house ... but then these people became second family, and our department, but especially FYE.

Daisy

Daisy taught a fully in-person critical thinking class in FYE that met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:45am to 11:50am. As soon as she arrived to class, she proceeded to ask her students, "How's it going? Any weekend plans?" As she waited for them to arrive and settle in, she continued having casual conversations with them, asking, "Have you been to the student health center before? It's really nice, and they have a chiropractor there you can go to for free." She then asked:

Okay, where is everybody, what are they doing? Are you cold? I think they turned off my ability to turn it off. While we're waiting for more folks to come in, I think some of them are outside. How are we feeling at this point of the semester? Burnt out?

A few students replied they were "burnt out," to which Daisy reassured them by saying, "This is a normal burnt out time, so we need to finish strong and try to stay with it." Daisy's class had a unit that day on love and romance, so she discussed the students' required reading on Kate Chopin, asking them what they knew about women and marriage then. A student responded, "You're your husband's property, so when you're widowed, you're either screwed, or I'm still figuring this out, but she feels free after this." Daisy validated the student's response before discussing how marriage in the 19th century was quite different from how it was now because marriage is a social construct. "And what does this mean?" she asked her students. One of them replied, "It's kind of expected, like a cultural expectation that you get married."

Daisy discussed the differences between romantic and platonic love and asked which of her students had parents who were divorced. She then shared that both her and her parents were divorced, describing herself as a “double whammy, there’s no shame in that.” She proceeded to divide her students into groups of threes and fours to outline on poster paper the strengths and limitations of one of four assumptions they were assigned related to love: (a) love conquers all, (b) “chemistry” = love, (c) my true love will be my soulmate, and (d) true love is forever. During their group activity, Daisy played love songs on Pandora to help the students get in a “romance mood.” As the groups wrapped up their activity, Daisy announced:

While the last group is putting up their poster, the health center has a fun series on relationships. Today, there’s the power of boundaries, but the next couple weeks there’s FOMO and friend breakups. I think it would be fun if we could start class an hour later and start here, how are we feeling? Think about which one you want to attend and we’ll take a vote. I think this is our topic so it’s just really fun. You can say what you were doing here in your text. Let’s decide on Wednesday which one and which day. And if you can’t make it, obviously that’s fine, I won’t assign anything around it, it’ll just be a text option.

Teaching History

Daisy did not start as a teacher, instead working a corporate job for many years before taking time off to raise her children. She started out as a reading specialist and worked for a long time in developmental education, formerly known as remedial education, which no longer exists. At first, Daisy primarily taught remedial and developmental classes focused on reading. However, statewide legislation passed that identified remedial education as a gatekeeper, which aligned with her strong belief system that students did not need to be remediated for so many years. This led Daisy to join and run a faculty program for three years called SITE (Scholarly Inquiry for Teaching Excellence), which consisted of learning communities that helped instructors navigate their new normal of students not remediating. Daisy always felt strongly

about moving students through equitable practices and teaching. She ran two faculty professional learning programs across disciplines on campus focused on their training and development.

Bay College was the only institution Daisy had taught at. She received her master's degree in English in her late 30s and sought out teaching because she had young children and "wanted to be on the schedule." Prior to teaching, Daisy worked in training and development and loved public speaking. She compared training to teaching, stating, "You take difficult and a lot of material and you break it down and you put it in a format that people can understand," which she enjoyed doing. Daisy had a counseling background and felt like teaching combined her biggest strengths in "giving back in counseling and supporting students" and "including [her] training and development background." She knew she only wanted to teach at a community college and did not apply elsewhere, as she felt strongly that "it has always been important for [her] to feel like [she] is giving back to her community." She felt like she could:

Best serve students of this population who maybe didn't necessarily, and it's changed some, but it certainly, when I started too, it was mostly the students who were maybe even not considering college or were first-gen and providing opportunity for this population to ... what I love about community college is that they've made the choice to be here. They are no longer obligated to go to school, and yet some of these kids who haven't been great students, or never really saw themselves as a scholar, or didn't maybe think that they'd go to college, or maybe struggled in school, still made the choice to continue. And so, this is an opportunity for me to give back to a community.

Dave

Dave taught a hybrid critical thinking class in FYE that met once a week on Tuesdays from 10:15am to 12:20pm. He began the class by announcing when summer and fall class registration appointment times would be released on their student portal. He also shared when the class schedule for both seasons would tentatively be released and when priority registration began for FYE students, as this was a privilege they received through their membership in the program. He reminded them that this information was also posted on the course website.

Afterwards, Dave asked his students how their other classes were going and even made a joke about the Bermuda triangle, to which one of his students asked if that meant they were going to fall. He laughed and replied, “This man has got it!”

Dave also took this time to carefully inform his students of upcoming student federal aid application and fee deadlines. He then asked if anyone needed a device and moved on to reviewing class assignments by underscoring the importance of being as unbiased as possible, instead focusing on two or three biases for their upcoming paper and reassuring them that they “can use the fallacies ... it just gives [them] more ammunition as [they] write [their essays].” There were 20 students present in class, most of them dispersed across the room and seated in six rows perpendicular to the front. Five of them arrived late, with the latest showing up nearly half an hour after the start of class.

Dave told the class their meeting would be a shorter session to go over assignments and then group work, ahead of “a pretty easy week.” He asked if anyone had trouble finding a news event for their essay, as he noticed a couple students chose news articles from the same column when they should have been from different columns. He asked who was writing their essay on Trump, to which a couple students rose their hands in agreement. Dave warned them not to quote Trump because there were “a lot of fallacies [there]” and it was a “longer paper ... so [they are] going to be quoting more.” He took a moment to review what was due next week, which included a presentation they were “going to create [their] own rubric” for so they could “think about how [they] should be evaluated” for it.

Dave then took attendance and dismissed the students to an “open lab” for the remainder of class, where they were going to “start analyzing those news articles” while he called up five students one at a time to go over their latest essay. As he called up each student, he began by

providing positive feedback on a specific area or two, such as their introductory paragraph or thesis statement, before moving on to an area of improvement, such as their topic sentences or sources.

One student wanted to talk about his grade, so Dave and this student stepped out in the hallway for a bit. Upon their return, Dave scanned the room and peeked at what some students were doing on their devices. Dave and his students quietly proceeded to work for the rest of the hour. At this point, Dave asked each student to turn to a neighbor and “talk through” what they were working on, including news events, citations, and biases. As the class came to an end, he asked what they learned from this assignment as they went through the news stories, asking, “What’s striking you? Is this easy or hard?” Dave ended the class by wishing everyone a great week and joked with them to “stay out of the Bermuda triangle.”

Teaching History

Dave earned his bachelor’s degree in business management and “did that for less than a year after [he] graduated and didn’t like it.” He also minored in English, so he decided to go back to school for his master’s degree in it. Dave shared that “teaching is second nature” for him and he felt comfortable doing it. He was originally from Connecticut but moved to California in 1997. He started working in the writing center at Bay College and received his first part-time class in 1998, while he was hired full-time in 2000. Prior to joining FYE, he was the faculty coordinator for the Puente Project from about 2007 to 2009.

He also worked at another community college in Los Angeles County in the late 1990s teaching English in PACE (Program for Accelerated College Education), which were eight-week sessions geared towards working adults that met one night a week and on Saturdays, allowing them to complete a full-time load of four classes. He also worked in an ESL lab prior to this in

graduate school in Connecticut. Dave shared that he had “always been involved with technology and online teaching,” teaching his first online class in 1999, which was “prior to Blackboard or any course management system. It was a hodgepodge of websites [they] would use, and it was pretty bad. The success rates were horrendous.”

Haley

Haley taught a hybrid introductory sociology class in FYE that met once a week on Wednesdays from 11:30am to 12:55pm. She began the class by acknowledging Black Student Success Week and wearing a shirt stating her support for Black students went beyond that shirt. Her students were more than halfway through their textbook, so she asked:

Does it feel like a weight off your shoulders? We’re being introduced to this very important concept this week: Social stratification, it’s actually a concept we’ll be using throughout the unit. Social class is about money, that’s why we’ll be playing Monopoly. Groups arranged in a hierarchy.

She stalled waiting for more students to arrive before starting Monopoly but stated she could wait no longer as they were running out of time. She reviewed the agenda for that class and referenced the recent Chancellor’s Office initiative since Black and brown students were not performing at the same rates as their peers, changing the language of “at-risk” to “at-promise,” and instead of focusing on dropouts, looking at the structural issues that may push these students out. She encouraged her students to visit the Black Student Success Center, saying that when students felt valued, they tended to do better and achieve higher rates of success.

There were 28 students present, seated in five to six rows on each side of the room. Haley explained to her students what a hierarchy looked like and asked if Bay College was arranged this way, to which her students nodded. She talked about the board of trustees, deans, faculty, counselors, and then asked where students were on the hierarchy, to which they replied, “at the bottom.” Stacy asked them:

Dang, how does that feel? What does it mean for students to be in a social hierarchy? Do you get to play by your own rules sometimes? When we study deviance in Chapter 6, do we learn that rules are enforced more strongly for those in a social hierarchy? Our focus is on social class today. I want to spend our time playing Monopoly so we can really put to use what we learned in this chapter and spend some time at the end of class reflecting on what we've learned. The goal of this game is to be the wealthiest person at the very end. How many of you have played Monopoly before?

Most of the class raised their hands. She then counted her students into groups of five and asked them to arrange their desks so they touched and the game was located in the middle. She explained how to play the game, passed out two informational sheets with a slight twist to them, and stated the goal was to win and accumulate property, as “the more you own, the more rent you’ll be able to collect from other players.” After each group had some time to play, she instructed them to stop for a moment and asked how they felt about the rules, to which two students replied, “I hate it!” and “It’s unfair!” She asked, “Why? Player 3, how do we feel?” One student replied, “It’s messed up!” Haley said, “Player 3, would you like me to change the rule so it’s more fair? You’ve been spending a lot of time in jail. Okay, let’s switch it up. Same rules, keep your property, but we all play by Player 1’s rules.”

Near the end of class, Haley provided her students with instructions to clean up and calculate their final earnings and properties. She asked her students to answer reflection questions in their blue books before leaving about how much money and wealth was left/accumulated, which player they were, how it felt to be that player in Phase 1 of the game and then again in Phase 2, what comparisons could be made with how they played Monopoly and social inequality as it was experienced in society, and what their greatest takeaway from the activity was.

Teaching History

From a young age, Haley's dream job was to teach elementary school. She was a first-generation community college student, and in her third year of college after transferring, she decided to get a job as a teacher's aide in an elementary school for classroom experience. She realized then this was "not the job for" her, describing it as "eye-opening and sort of devastating" even though it was a great experience. She took a public speaking class at the time, and her instructor was a graduate student she connected with. She described this instructor as "the reason [she] chose to teach college" because she previously thought she was too young and inexperienced to pursue a career as a college professor. After this encounter, she went on to earn her master's degree in sociology from a California State University campus.

Haley taught her first class as a 27-year-old in 1993 at a community college in Orange County. She felt "very self-conscious" of her age at the time and experienced "a whole lot of imposter syndrome" since she was not much older than her students. She also taught a night class her first semester, so many of her students were considerably older than her. She was "very nervous" when she started teaching, but she loved it and knew she had chosen the right profession and just needed to gain more experience to increase her confidence in her teaching. After a couple years of teaching sociology, she reached the chapter on gender, which was one of her favorite topics in college, and realized she wanted to go back to school. It became her goal to one day start a women's studies program at a community college. She went on to enroll in a master's program in women's studies at another California State University campus and was in the first group of graduate students in that program. This school was the first in the country to offer a bachelor's degree in women's studies in the 1970s, so she found it to be a "really cool moment" to be part of this program.

Before finishing her second master's degree, she applied to and received a full-time teaching job at a community college in Northern California, which led her to pause the program. She described herself as "lucky" and "really had no business getting this job, [she] had very little experience." She was hired to teach sociology of history because she had enough units to meet their minimum qualifications, even though she did not think this would "fly" today. However, she was homesick and wanted to return to Southern California. After two years of teaching up north, she applied to Bay College and has been there since 1999. She described her training to become an educator as:

On the job. Certainly, baptism by fire. I mean, as a kid, and like I said, I wanted to be a teacher. So, there were a lot of days my poor neighbors were my students. So, there was some teaching going on, even as a 10-year-old, out of my front yard. I was the teacher, and they were my students.

Amber

Amber taught a fully in-person pre-calculus class in FYE that met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:45am to 12:15pm. Nineteen students were present in class, seated across five pairs of tables. Amber passed out their homework and worksheets before projecting a handout with sample questions, which she reviewed one at a time. She asked her students to attend Supplemental Instruction (SI) for extra credit to prepare for their mock exam, joking that she spent the whole weekend playing World of Warcraft because none of her students had any questions until the previous day. She explained linear and quadratic formulas, asking them to pay attention to the assigned numbers and working on a couple examples together to factor a denominator. She also explained Gaussian elimination to her students. Amber gave her students a 10-minute break at 11am. When they returned, she said:

Alright, let's get going. Case #2. 9:45, there were seven people here and I almost gave you your quiz then. On Wednesday, seven people got zeroes and I got no emails. If you guys are going to be absent, send me an email. I wouldn't have given the quiz on

Wednesday. Your guys' attendance is horrible. On average, I'm missing four people in class. That's huge. I'm lenient. When you move into [calculus], especially if it's not FYE, they're going to say, excuse my language, tough shit. Alright, questions? Any paperwork? No one else is turning anything in. Last call. I have a lot of grading to do.

Amber also told her students not to ask how many questions were on their upcoming quiz because it had multiple parts and this was “a stupid question to ask math and science teachers.” She left a couple examples for them to work through on their own and explained matrix operations, stressing the importance of order and warning them to not be “Do Not Exist (DNE)-happy,” to which a student chuckled. She also reviewed their homework, cautioning her students to check the dimensions first before doing the “complicated things.” She described matrices as systems of equations and a “really nice shortcut.” She reminded her students that SI started that day and hoped they would attend it after class.

Teaching History

Amber taught part-time at Bay College since 2015. However, she worked at the school and mathematics department since 2002 in the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program, which was how she learned about FYE, as SI started due to an FYE grant. Even though the FYE coordinator typically did not work with part-timers, she was willing to work with Amber because she had been at Bay College “forever.” Amber worked with SI for 13 years until she finished her master's degree in 2015, which allowed her to start teaching part-time.

Amber always knew she wanted to be a teacher but was not necessarily sure about the subject and level between high school and college, as she did not want to work with children. She was a full-time college student at a California State University campus and then transferred back home after her grandfather had surgery. She moved in with him to start taking care of him while completing general education classes on a part-time basis at Bay College for 1.5 years with her friends. She was hired by the tutoring center for a part-time job and then referred to SI,

which she “loved.” In 2003, her grandmother passed away and she moved in with her grandfather for the next eight years to take care of him. For the first few years, she was a full-time student working part-time at Bay College. However, when her grandfather’s health started declining, she spent more time with him and worked part-time even when she was no longer enrolled in school.

After Amber received her bachelor’s degree in history, she went through “a massive change” and returned to school to receive a second bachelor’s degree in mathematics and then a master’s degree in mathematics. She experienced an “intervention” when some of the instructors in the mathematics department at Bay College told her she “[needed] to drop this history bullshit and switch to math and come teach with [them].” She described this process as very long and involved, as going back for a second bachelor’s degree was “almost impossible” and she tried The Open University first before she eventually found an online school.

Allen

Allen taught a fully in-person American government class in FYE that met twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30am to 12:55pm. There were 23 students present five minutes into class time, seated in five rows across the room. Allen greeted his students at the start and reminded them to grab three handouts located in the back. He also asked if they were cold. He announced that he finished grading their Unit 2 exam last week and reminded them to meet with an FYE counselor if they had not done so already. He then provided his students with a list of 13 rights, dividing them into five groups to rank these rights from least to most important in 10 minutes and write this on the board in five minutes.

After their time was up, Allen asked everyone to come back together and for each group to explain the first and last couple rights on their list. Once each group presented, he stated,

“Interesting trend, groups with majority women put the right to bear arms at the bottom while groups with majority men tend to put it at the top.” He then began their lecture on civil liberties, telling his students they would “learn that [their] professor is a big court nerd.” He started breaking down the difference between civil liberties and civil rights and wrote them on the board. He then focused on explaining the Bill of Rights and detailing how the *Gitlow v. New York* (1952) Supreme Court decision began the process of selective incorporation. Allen shared his religion as a Mormon while discussing freedom of religion and the differences between strict separationists, accommodationists, and integrationists. He ended the class by saying:

Some of you don’t even f*cking read the syllabus. If you look at it, I don’t have a lot of power over your grades. There could be fear of punitive actions if I asked you to pray and you didn’t, and that’s where the fear is here. Clubs for different faiths are allowed. If you allow one, you need to allow them all. Precedent until 2022. Have a great day you guys, I will see you on Thursday.

Teaching History

Allen attended Bay College as a student himself before he started teaching there as an adjunct faculty member in 2017 upon finishing graduate school the previous year. He occasionally co-taught or guest lectured as a graduate student at the California State University he attended at the time. He also taught part-time at another local community college, which he still taught at occasionally if they asked him to fill in a class. At this school, he taught public administration and an introduction to the political process, which he described as a marriage between public administration and political science. He described political science and comparative politics as his “bread and butter classes.” In 2019, he started working as a full-time, tenure-track faculty member at Bay College.

Allen described his “long history” at Bay College, which started at the age of four when he was enrolled in its child development center while his mother worked at the school. He even

learned how to swim in the center pool and talked about how his mother met his stepfather at the school while his grandfather did the printing for the college until he retired and closed his business. Allen then became involved in FYE and student politics while attending the school. After transferring, he eventually came back and worked in outreach and student services. Thus, he had a “long relationship” with Bay College and has been involved in various aspects at the school.

Allen loved his time as a student at Bay College and wanted to give back and help make the experience a positive one for future generations of students at the school. He was also positively influenced by political science faculty at the school, so he wanted to “move that forward and pass it on.” He described himself as the first FYE alumnus to become faculty in the program. The current faculty coordinator was also his counselor at the time when the program was much smaller. After a semester or two of teaching at Bay College, the coordinator asked if he would teach an FYE class, to which he replied, “Absolutely.” Since then, he told her he was “never a no.”

Peter

Peter taught a fully in-person critical thinking class in FYE that met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8am to 10:05am. Twenty-two students were present in his class, seated across six rows of tables. He greeted his students, “Welcome back, it’s Week 12, countdown begins. Can you believe it?” He proceeded to take attendance while a student commented on his *Fahrenheit 451* shirt. He instructed his students to take out a half sheet of paper and projected the following multiple-choice question:

- Montag comes to you for advice. What do you do? Choose an option and elaborate!
- A. Tell him he’s being crazy and he needs to stop with this nonsense.
 - B. Show him your stack of books and help him start the revolution.
 - C. Call the cops and the firemen on him.

- D. Take him to the forest and introduce him to the “book club.”
- E. Free space – develop your own answer.

Peter played a Florence and the Machine song in the background while his students submitted their half sheets. As the song ended, he told his students, “Alright, thank you, revolutionaries, or not revolutionaries.” He then proceeded to go through each half sheet on the projector, laughing at his students’ witty responses together with them. Afterwards, he stated:

Quick announcements, it’s Week 12, so this is the last month to drop, so if the math is not in your favor, you should pull a Katniss and drop a class. This is AAPI month. [he pulled up a flyer for a read-in that Thursday at 2pm from an AANHPSAA author] If you can read, I’m really willing to throw a lot of extra credit at you, so think about it. I know you all read manga, so bring a manga I guess, if you want.

Peter explained their upcoming homework assignment, which required them to pick one of two options: (a) be alone for 30 minutes with no electronics and write about what happened during that time, or (b) call someone for 30 minutes and describe the conversation. He joked that his students were not allowed to play a video game with each other on Discord or broadcast live on TikTok for the latter, while for the former, “One of my students said he had severe depression and just sat there and let the intrusive thoughts take over, so don’t do that. Go out and do something.” He advised his students to keep their phone on them for safety purposes but not check it if they chose the first option. His students then participated in a Socratic seminar for the remainder of class time, although he told those who had not done it yet to “go back out and do it first ... this is [his] gift to [them],” as he would not grade work if they were unprepared.

Teaching History

Peter had been at Bay College since 2005 and then became full-time two years later. During that time, he also worked at a few other community colleges and California State University schools. He started working as a K-12 tutor in high school and then continued this work in college, where he also served as an undergraduate teaching assistant for an education

class alongside a graduate student. As part of an advising program, he conducted educational outreach to high schools. He also served as a teaching assistant in graduate school while occasionally continuing to tutor at the time.

Peter attributed his time as a student at Bay College to his decision to want to return to the school. He also appreciated the focus community colleges had on teaching rather than conducting research and procuring grant money. He stated, “Community colleges are a teaching institution, so that’s why I like to be here.” At the time, Peter was also working on receiving his single-subject credential, which he dropped out of and joked he was a quitter before he became a professor. He had a lot of experience with K-12 students through tutoring, and while he “didn’t hate it, and it was a viable career option” for him, he wanted and ended up in higher education.

Peter was hired at Bay College on an emergency basis when many instructors in the department were on maternity leave. His mother also worked at Bay College until she retired, while Peter worked in the humanities division as a student worker. The associate dean reached out to his mother to see if Peter was interested in working there since he would be graduating with his master’s degree shortly. Peter declined at the time to focus on his comprehensive exams for school, but he started teaching at Bay College the following semester and joked that the daughter of the faculty member he filled in for was “the same age” as his career. Since this professor also worked in FYE, Peter naturally found himself as a part of the program even if he had not known about it before since it did not exist during his time as a student.

Isabelle

Isabelle taught a fully in-person multivariable calculus class in FYE that met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:25am to 12:55pm. Nineteen students were present, seated in pairs of desks. Isabelle set up the projector and asked her students to take out their

Chapter 4 notes. She discussed how tricky it got talking about whether something was concave up and concave down, positive and negative, or increasing and decreasing, advising her students to be very specific about which function they referred to out of the three. She counted her students into pairs to discuss a sample question. She then moved on to reviewing L'Hôpital's rule and brought the conversation back to limits, asking her students when they could use this rule. She provided another example of first and second derivatives and instructed her students to turn to their seat partner and talk about the ordered pair. She showed her students another way of using derivatives and second derivatives to graph the same function and asked them to share an ordered pair they found.

Teaching History

Isabelle had been working at Bay College since 2007 and was hired after two years of part-time teaching. She felt “very lucky because a lot of part-timers do that work for a while.” Like many other participants, she worked at several community colleges on a part-time basis across Los Angeles and Orange County. When she was hired full-time at Bay College, she was “very happy and very excited” because her family lived nearby and this role aligned with her “idea of coming back to [her] community and where [she] grew up and being able to help and work in that area.” She felt very thankful for this opportunity and has enjoyed working at Bay College. She taught pre-collegial classes, such as pre-algebra and algebra, in addition to statistics and calculus. She was “really interested” in teaching calculus with FYE because she was “really kind of passionate about making sure, they’re younger students and first-year students here in college, and a lot of them need guidance.” After a couple years of teaching, she felt comfortable enough to teach calculus and help these students. She really enjoyed both the subject and working with these types of students, describing FYE as “a really special group of students.”

Isabelle knew she wanted to teach mathematics since high school because of her love for the subject. However, she also knew she did not want to teach high school and thus sought out graduate school. She felt burnt out by her advanced mathematics classes as an undergraduate student and was curious about life outside school. She then worked for a brokerage company for about two years, even though she knew “a month in ... this was not for” her. She knew she wanted to return to school and enrolled in a Ph.D. program, which she described as “tough.” After working with students, she realized she wanted to work in a community college and stopped after receiving her master’s degree.

Isabelle thought back to her time in high school, where it was “really rare to see someone who looked like [her], woman and person of color in math.” She described this representation as “even worse” in college. She discussed the students in her calculus classes as:

Good in math ... and some of them don’t have the foundation, some of them don’t have the right guidance, some of them have to work. So, I think it’s important for them to have someone like me because we’re here at [Bay College]. This is a big Latino/Hispanic-serving community college. I think it’s important for them to see me as a Latina in math teaching them and guiding them.

Isabelle described her teaching training as “on the job.” She served as a teaching assistant at the University of California school she received her master’s degree at, so she had experience being in front of a class, working with students, and exploring different ideas with them. However, these experiences were “not sufficient at all. It was just a taste.” She recalled her first class at a different community college and wondering to herself, “What am I supposed to do?” Thus, her first class involved considerable trial and error and working with her colleagues.

Tomas

Tomas taught a hybrid introductory ethnic studies class in FYE that met once a week on Tuesdays from 11:30am to 12:55pm. Nineteen students were present in class, spread across nine

tables seating one to four students apiece. Tomas asked how everyone was doing at the start of class, to which one student replied they were “doing good” and watched the Met Gala the other day. Tomas asked what that was and the student explained. Tomas then asked if any of his students had been to New York before, describing a time he played his music there and got to share Mexican culture. A student asked him to share one of his songs someday.

Tomas talked about flyers across campus advertising the upcoming ethnic studies conference and reminded the class they would be meeting at the campus recital hall at the start of next week’s class. He described this as a musical event where he would also be playing live and “an assortment of instruments and cultures” would be represented. He then proceeded to share one of his songs on Vimeo to the class as uploaded on Latinopia Music. His students gave him a round of applause afterwards, with one remarking “it’s sweet.” Tomas shared how he did “this in his free time and often goes to play music over the weekend.”

Tomas proceeded to move on to the lecture for that class on the Civil Rights Movement and political activism, focusing first on the reparation act and showing his students two talks: one highlighting how many women became labor union leaders, and the second on activism in Southern California in the 1960s and 1970s. Tomas provided an example of his former officemate, whom he believed tried to “behave differently and receive acceptance from another group.” Tomas sought to send a strong message about being true to oneself, stating, “Don’t sell out or believe that you’re only valid because another group or individual says you matter. Look at your inner self and know your heritage is all that matters.”

Tomas discussed the African American civil rights movement, *Brown v. Board of Education*, Rosa Parks, and the Black Power movement, highlighting self-determination. He asked one of his students, “I’m going to determine what your needs and wants are. Is that fair?”

The student replied, “No, because I have my own needs and wants,” and Tomas remarked, “Folks on campus never consult with Black or Latino faculty and make decisions without having any connections with those groups on campus.” When discussing the Black Panther Movement, Tomas recommended his students watch the movie *Panther*, which was available on Amazon Prime. He used to show this movie in class but was no longer able to due to its length, sharing how he met its director at his birthday dinner and admitted he had a bootleg copy of the movie bought from a swap meet without even knowing it. He talked about how his children attended public schools in Los Angeles County, where:

There’s nothing Mexican celebrated at all even though half of the California population is Latino/a. Invisible minority. Not considered American. You only learn about this through ethnic studies or Chicano studies courses ... the reality of our society is that it does not really care, we are seen as the other.

Teaching History

Tomas taught primarily Chicano studies at various California State University campuses and community colleges in the Los Angeles County. He started as a part-timer at Bay College in 2012 before being brought on as a full-timer the following year in the history department. He taught Chicano history with this department, even though his role there was to establish the ethnic studies department, which he eventually did. Thus, he was now at two departments: ethnic studies and social justice, as well as history. He was the Chicano studies specialist in the ethnic studies department.

While Tomas attended conferences and workshops on teaching, most of his training was on the job. His father was a university professor who taught in the Chicano studies department at a California State University school since 1971. Thus, he “kind of got the idea from him.” Growing up, his father sometimes took him and his siblings to the campus, where “a lot of

activism and a lot of cultural life” took place. Being in a university environment was not foreign to Tomas at all, as he “always knew it.” He described his subject of Chicano studies as:

Very relatable to me and very important, I connect with it. I love it, I love learning more and teaching about my own history and culture. To be honest, when I was much younger, I took a look at public relation and other fields, and I actually did that for a very short time. I was very good at that, but I didn’t really connect with it ... it didn’t fill me ... I wasn’t fulfilled ... but when you teach, it’s you, it’s your heritage, it’s your culture. And so, I’m thinking, God, you can make a living and have a lot of fun, plus the quality of life is much better because you get your summers off. You get your winters off. A lot of benefits. You work a lot, but you don’t really kill yourself. You still have enough time to live.

Tomas’ job also gave him plenty of time to allocate towards his music career when he was not teaching. He described getting involved in the community college as a “big accident, the best thing though.” His first exposure to Bay College was performing at the campus auditorium when he was 16 years old. One of his friends later encouraged him to apply to the school, as they were starting up an ethnic studies program. Thus, he started working part-time before moving into a full-time position just a few weeks later when an opening came up. Even though the drive was long, he described Bay College as “the best school [he’s] ever been to in terms of allowing [him] a lot of freedom to work the program to [his] liking,” even if there were “too many emails, too many committees to serve on, too much paperwork.” He loved his colleagues and described them as “the best. No one gets in your way, and you tend to see eye-to-eye with most people.” While ethnic studies was overlooked at other campuses, he did not find that to be the case at Bay College, where he felt respected and offered dignity as a person of color and Chicano discipline.

Albert

Albert taught a fully in-person cultural anthropology class in FYE that met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:45am to 11:10am. Twenty-one students were present, evenly distributed across five rows on both sides of the room with two chairs each. Albert

adjusted the room temperature and said, “Let’s wait a few more minutes.” As students trickled in, he asked each of them, “Hi, how are you today?” Albert pulled up Canvas announcements on the projector, saying, “Alright, let’s begin. Some will begin late, and that’s fine. We’ll just punish them and reduce their number of points for the session. Let’s begin.” He took attendance while talking into a microphone:

Alright, we’re going to engage in a discussion today. But first of all, I graded the previous discussion. Are you aware of that? If you have any questions about your previous scores, you can let me know in my office or later. But before, we’re going to complete part of the lecture on political organization. We were almost at the end of it. I published Module 11 on religion. If we have time, we’ll get to it today. Incredibly excited because religion is my expertise so hopefully, we will be engaging in great discussions here.

After an extensive lecture on political ideology and political organization spanning time periods and geographic regions, Albert divided the class into five groups for a discussion, asking them to move to sit closer together. He assigned each group a different question based on their reading about political ideology and provided them with 10 minutes to discuss amongst themselves first. Albert walked around the room and asked each group how they were doing. He then had each group share their responses to political ideology questions on the Asante society, culture, and state, examining topics such as levels of social stratification, major material bases, and political symbols. Finally, he asked his students how the political ideology of the Asante state compared with the political ideology of the United States of America, stating, “Keep in mind that power is not only in the office of leadership, like the President, for example, but is manifested through the relative access of resources that some individuals have over others.” Albert stated:

I was a victim of, in a way, I’m not saying myself, but everyone is, the victims of political ideology, more like hegemonic and positions. I told you I was in a rock group for years when I was young, and we were the second largest group in the largest city in Argentina. We were so influenced by The Beatles, Rolling Stones. And you know what? I remember my uncle in Argentina asking why I sang in English. The thing is we really bought the idea that this was the better music rather than Argentinian traditional music.

We buy into these hegemonic ideals. I asked whether Britney Spears or Taylor Swift or classical music like Bach is better? Society would tell us classical music, but why? I may fall asleep with a boring piece of classical music but enjoy a Taylor Swift song. This idea of hegemony and high culture, classical music.

Teaching History

Albert's teaching experience before coming to Bay College centered on him serving extensively as a teaching assistant in anthropology and religious studies departments during his time in graduate school. He received orientations as a teaching assistant and was observed and attended meetings critiquing his teaching and providing pointers. While in graduate school, he also worked "quite a bit" as a substitute teacher for a local public school district, which he described as a "good experience." He was hired at Bay College with only one month of experience at another community college. Thus, he believed his experience as a professor developed during his time at Bay College.

Albert liked teaching from a young age. As a high school student in Argentina, he worked as a home tutor. He was very good at mathematics while attending college in Argentina, as this was also his major, so he frequently tutored other students in it. He cited mathematics as having "[given him] the basic teaching or tutoring skills because the idea is [he] wanted students to understand why they would engage in certain operations, rather than just doing them and memorizing the procedure." He always wanted his students to be able to analyze concepts and processes, which was evident in the class session that was observed.

Albert initially reached out to the coordinator of FYE because one of his classes on the Native people of South America experienced low levels of enrollment. He was told "they always managed to enroll all their classes." However, he really enjoyed "this level of students who come to college just for the first time since high school" and had a chance to help them understand the process of thinking. While he realized the concepts students learned in their classes would be

forgotten, even “quite soon” after they finished a class, “having that capacity to think, which anthropology forces one to do, that’s what [he] enjoyed very much.” He sought to be “at least a motivator” to that kind of thinking.

Ronald

Ronald taught a hybrid introductory humanities class in FYE that met once a week on Tuesdays from 9:45am to 11:10am. Twenty-three students were present, well-distributed across six rows in the room. One student asked, “Where is everyone?” Ronald answered that stamina seemed to be falling and then took attendance. Afterwards, he asked, “All those classmates, they showed up in [Sophia’s]?” One student said they were not sure, while another said this was ridiculous and Ronald agreed. He proceeded to ask if the class had any questions about their upcoming essay assignment. A student asked how they would do a project and paper at the same time, to which Ronald said he was trying to figure out the timing. He asked, “Any questions about the paper, project, or quiz? You guys want to do a project?” Students said no and Ronald laughed and joked, “What the hell?” He told his students they were there for an education to make money and get critical thinking skills for their job, such as nursing.

Ronald told his students they would be starting their last unit that class, to which they cheered. He introduced the three types of poetry: narrative, dramatic, and liturgy, and asked his students to define them. He also talked about the three kinds of narratives: epic, romantic, and ballad, providing examples of *Beowulf*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Romeo and Juliet* to illustrate them. When describing dramatic poetry, Ronald discussed Eminem and the song “Polly” by Nirvana. He also used Shakira’s “Hips Don’t Lie” and “The Star-Spangled Banner” to illustrate lyric poetry, which was the most common and focused on a topic rather than storytelling. He did not “say that to be diminishing” and described the tone of lyric poetry as ranging from “emotional,

celebratory, saddening.” He asked his students, “What else, what did you listen to on your way here? Nobody, you don’t want to share your musical interests?” Some students pulled up their Spotify playlists.

Ronald spent the rest of class time reviewing full texts and excerpts of poetry to identify symbolic language, which he described as “the most important part of poetry.” He referenced and analyzed with his students the works of Kendrick Lamar and Drake, E. E. Cummings, Public Enemy, Rage Against the Machine, Langston Hughes, Shakespeare, and William Wordsworth.

Teaching History

Ronald started teaching at Bay College in 1998 immediately after graduating from his master’s program. He also worked as a substitute teacher at the K-12 level, specifically in middle and high school, while working part-time at Bay College. Through these experiences, he “eventually learned that [he] hated middle school,” which he never taught again. However, he continued teaching K-5 and high school classes once or twice a week. The subsequent semester, he received part-time teaching jobs at two other community colleges. Thus, he taught at three different campuses, which added up to eight or nine English classes some semesters. He was in his late 20s at the time and just had a child, so he described himself as “spread very thin” until he was hired full-time in 2005. He described the recession between 1998 and 2005 as pausing hiring. Even after being hired full-time, he kept one of his evening jobs until 2017 because he was still raising a family and loved it because it was part of a cohort program consisting of entirely working students who were “engaged” and “eager to learn.”

Ronald started teaching in FYE the same year he was hired full-time, as a few other faculty identified him to the coordinator and asked if he could join the program, so she invited him. He liked the atmosphere of FYE and its cohort model, which allowed him to work with

teachers in different disciplines and create assignments or themes that went together, as well as “reimagine [his] curriculum and reinvigorate [his] teaching to prevent [him] from being stale and doing the same thing.” He also described FYE as a strong team and found it “super fulfilling” to be with that population, especially as the program expanded and started a first-gen initiative.

Ronald talked about how he was “transformed by community college, it’s where [he] learned to be a student and get serious.” He described himself as “not always a good student” and attended Bay College for six years. He dropped out during his first year, got a job, came back and tried again, and “did not like that time either.” He described his transcript as “pretty uneven.” Around his fifth year at Bay College, he got a “real adult job” that was full-time and 40 hours a week with benefits, which he got “sick of” and decided to go back to school. He described this as the time he “got serious ... doing work for real,” completing his assignments and readings, and participating and caring about his education. He took a speech and debate class, which made him “super competitive and want to know everything.” Thus, he suddenly became a “voracious reader and read whatever [he] could” at the library. During this time, he also started to realize he was good with words, a good communicator, and his writing was solid. He also started thinking of teaching around this time, as he “liked being in the classroom and having those epiphanies ... those moments of discovery for [him] were really cool” and he loved the idea of giving this to others. He enrolled in an English class and handed in a paper draft to his teacher, who read the first paragraph or two and asked him, “What are you doing here?” His teacher advised him to get his degree at the local California State University campus and return to Bay College to teach. He then proceeded to transfer and receive two bachelor’s degrees in two years and his master’s degree in another two years.

Ronald liked Bay College because it was “the place [he] felt [he] owed [his] debt to” while also being “super diverse” even during his time as a student, which reflected his own high school experience. He believed the best learning happened in class discussions that created a space where students wrestled with their own thoughts and beliefs. He believed racial diversity facilitated these moments of diversity and reflection.

Derek

Derek taught a fully in-person comic books and literature class in FYE that met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:30am to 12:55pm. Twenty students sat across eight rows of tables, slightly clustered towards the back. He told his students, “Good morning, thank you for being here today.” He took attendance and then typed out four questions on a Word document on the projector for his students to answer as “a simple, easy quiz”:

Which superhero character comes out of retirement for today’s reading?
Which former Justice League member appears to side with a known villain?
What character, known for killing, seems to renounce his ways and freedoms?
Does a unified “super team” seem to be the solution to the problems in the world of *Kingdom Come*?

Derek’s students ripped out sheets of paper for each other as he paced around the class with a cup reading the questions out loud. He mentioned that some questions were “pretty easy and straightforward,” looking at conduct or misconduct and thinking if it was something the world needed. Three students were already done as soon as Derek finished reading the questions. He stated, “Hopefully it’s a pretty easy quiz, I’m not trying to trip anyone up, no trick questions.” He asked if a student’s drink was a matcha latte, sharing his wife had started making them lately for the health benefits.

Derek used the quiz as a “jumping off point” for their conversations that day on superhero deconstruction and the spread of the superhero genre across mediums. He asked his

students to describe different hero, antihero, vigilante, and villain characters and wrote the definitions of each archetype on the whiteboard. He and his students discussed which categories characters such as Superman, Hawkman, Power Girl, Green Lantern, Batman, and The Punisher fell under. He described vigilante characters as “attractive as long as they get it right. Right as in they get the right person.” He provided an example:

If you’re the Los Angeles police and find me crossing at Crenshaw without the crosslight, and I’ve done that many times, I just wanted Subway, a Veggie Delight, and you break both my legs. We’re kind of having it as a running joke, no jaywalkers should not have their legs broken. The college would be in a tough spot, many of our students would be permanently disabled, it would not be appropriate. But if there’s a child murderer, someone who goes around murdering children, and they’re not punished by the law.

Derek discussed how police characters often disliked vigilantes such as Batman, who “figures it out before they do.” He talked about how vigilantes did not necessarily abide by the law or possess a superpower, instead taking matters in their own hands, which was “super appealing ... when we see that the other systems of control are failing.” At the end of class, Derek also referenced the trolley problem and discussed how a traditional hero would figure out the most ethically moral solution while a superhero or supervillain would be proactive in changing the status quo. He stated, “And as long as, at least retroactively, we’re happy to see that change, then the known villain becomes a hero.” He provided a real-life example:

The prime minister of Canada was vilified for pushing national healthcare at the time. In Australia, they were talking about this on the *Daily Mail*, politicians carried out political suicide to ban guns. Other countries are like one or two school shootings, we need to change the laws, while we’re like, thoughts and prayers. Change the locks.

Teaching History

Derek started teaching reading and composition in 2003 as a graduate student at a public state university in Ohio. He also taught business and professional communication there, which had a “major influence” on a lot of his pedagogy and approach to teaching. He described

business and professional communication as practical communication, which was different from academic communication. While he did not necessarily value one type of communication over the other, he thought they could both learn from the other, which continued into his career as adjunct faculty at two community colleges in San Diego County teaching those same classes. At the time, they still had developmental, or pre-transfer level English, courses, which he really enjoyed teaching even though he understood how they institutionally held students back. Derek briefly served as a learning community coordinator at one of these colleges until his position was no longer funded. However, he continued teaching in a learning community with linked classes akin to FYE, which he described as a good experience. He met his linked faculty periodically to discuss how students were doing and arrange events and outings for them, in addition to sharing a common theme and assignments.

Derek echoed having similar experiences in FYE at Bay College, which he started working in for the first time that semester. Derek and his colleague talked a couple times a week about how their students were doing and shared a common theme of social justice. In terms of pedagogy, he did not subscribe to the “lecture and listen to [him]” model, which he believed most English faculty felt similarly about. He tried to foster more interactive classroom experiences, as there was “overwhelming research” that the more actively a student engaged with course material, the better they did and the more they learned. He invited discussion and other activities to get students involved.

Derek always felt “really lucky” that he knew he wanted to teach since middle school. He had promising areas of literary research and support for them in graduate school, but he was much more interested in his composition classes. An undergraduate friend of his recommended he consider community colleges due to their emphasis on teaching over research. He was aware

that many universities on the east coast also had this focus, as he wanted to spend more hours and days of his life “helping younger people learn how to communicate more effectively and appreciate a good argument.”

Derek moved from Ohio to San Diego County after finishing his master’s program, where he served as an adjunct faculty at two community colleges for eight years. However, he wanted a full-time, tenure-track job, so he saw an opening at Bay College he applied to and has been working at the institution for ten years. He described the school as “a really great place to work” and “an unassuming giant” because it had a higher unduplicated individual student count compared to the combined graduate and undergraduate student count at his state university in Ohio, which he thought was “really big.” He also liked the character of the population at Bay College, which he described as “fairly diverse” and “very different” from his own upbringing in Ohio. He believed the student population was big enough where programs such as FYE “made sense” and positively impacted students. He was “very, very happy to be involved with FYE” and described the student cohorts as “really wonderful, to see the group cohesion is really good.” He believed FYE did a good job of recreating the community typically found on residential campuses, as there were “intellectual benefits” of having this setup.

Diane

Diane taught a hybrid history of western art from proto-Renaissance to 19th century class in FYE that met once a week on Tuesdays from 11:30am to 12:55pm. Seventeen students were seated across five rows of tables on both sides of the room and clustered closer to the front. Students had an FYE linked class earlier, which may have accounted for why no students showed up after Diane took attendance. She wrote “Rococo” on one whiteboard and “Academy” on the other. She then asked, “Alright, how are you guys doing? I’m kind of like, whoa, we’re

close to the end.” Diane reminded the class of their upcoming research paper, mentioning she had responded to all proposals, and they should maximize points and finetune their thesis. She asked, “What do we call those good articles?” A student answered, “Scholarly.” She asked, “What makes something scholarly again?” Another student replied, “Peer-reviewed.” Diane emphasized the importance of seeking out texts with plenty of footnotes and endnotes showing where the information came from. She shared:

Did I tell you about my internship in college? When you major in art history, your parents are nervous for a reason. Teaching, editor experience. There was an online publication that shared mostly professor articles. My first assignment right out the gate is source checking. I didn’t know this was a thing. I had to find the exact page the source was on and check it. Guys, this is the very beginning of the interwebs. It also taught me to look at footnotes correctly and taught me to find whether sources are garbage. There is so much awesome stuff in the footnotes. Go to their footnotes, endnotes, whatever.

Most students used JSTOR, which was Diane’s most recommended source, while none checked EBSCOHost and a couple checked Google Scholar. Diane then asked:

Have I shown you the essay question yet? I feel like I may have alluded to it somewhere. You know what else is coming? Besides the end of the semester, but along with it, the required tutor visit. Has anyone been to visit [the tutor] yet?

One student raised their hand while two students silently clapped. Diane asked this student if the posted hours were correct, to which they confirmed they were. Diane said she would also verify these hours later and send her students a message about this. She shared their upcoming essay question, which was to talk about two examples from the 18th and 19th centuries of artwork that dealt with gender roles. She told her students, “We’re not getting to the 19th century, but there’s lots to pull from in the 18th century.” She spent most of the remainder of the class session defining the Rococo and Neoclassical, which she described as the two main styles of art at the time, although she may be “oversimplifying.” She projected several paintings and walked through their brushstrokes and usages of color together with her students. She spent considerable

time on Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing*, stating, "Rococo art is very much about escapism for the very wealthy into idealized nature and a place of love and sexuality." At the end of class, Diane told students they would talk about male gender roles next week.

Teaching History

Diane taught in graduate school and then part-time afterwards at two smaller for-profit schools she was "not a fan of" that do not exist anymore, which she does "not cry about." Although she did not support "their sales of themselves ... [she] just didn't like that," they had a lot of good mandatory professional development opportunities that got her to think outside of being "a sage on the stage," which she believed was still sometimes a part of art history. In 2003, she started teaching part-time at Bay College before moving on to a full-time role in 2005. As part-time faculty, she was at three different campuses, including two for-profits, which she described as "plenty." She felt for adjunct faculty "moving around so much, it's very stressful." She taught the same three classes for the past 15 years and tried out different areas of study her first five years. She mentioned that any of the three full-time art history instructors could teach any of the western survey classes, but they typically divided these classes and took their own "for the easiness of it."

Diane cited the COVID-19 pandemic as an interesting opportunity for her to "radically revise," even though she believed faculty were "always rethinking assignments and approaches to the material." She turned some of her classes "upside down" and still had "no idea" what students wanted even after the pandemic. She experimented with hybrid teaching, which has "generally worked" for her. She told her students her approach in that class was to save her favorite stories and bits of history to talk about in class while using their time to make sure they were on track for some of their bigger projects, papers, and assignments. She observed a trend

where her students did not understand the process of research, looking for things carefully, and judging sources. She sought to help her students realize there were different ways of writing depending on what they were doing.

Diane realized she “quite liked” teaching in graduate school. Her mom heard her teach once and told her she was “such a natural” and was “super supportive,” which Diane found helpful. Her mom also taught and served in administration at a local community college for 40 years, which was how Diane became acquainted with community colleges. Diane also took a class there herself one summer. She tried out other positions she did not like, such as at galleries “run by tyrants” who were “narcissistic” and very demanding and paid “almost nothing.” On the other hand, she really liked working with students, the ideas they brought, and their responses to learning new things. She described it as “very satisfying.” Diane also took an interim administrative position for a semester, which she “super hated” because of the work and paper pushing entailed. Even though she liked the people she worked with, she missed her students. She described her students as keeping her young, as she felt she “never left college.”

Diane taught her first FYE class in 2009 or 2010 and described it as a “disaster” because they accidentally gave her two cohorts in one, which was a “fire hazard.” She described these students as “a little gang of misfits” and “really toxic,” which surprised her and gave her a bad evaluation of the whole FYE program. However, she decided to give it another try many years later after seeing her colleague participate in it. She has since enjoyed working in the program and described her first time teaching in FYE as a “one-off fluke” and “bad timing.”

Cheryl

Cheryl taught a hybrid critical thinking class in FYE that met once a week on Tuesdays from 9:45am to 11:50am. Twenty-six students were seated throughout five rows in the

classroom. She asked her students, “How are we all doing? One to five, one is I’m the most stressed I’ve been in my life, five is just chilling.” Most students said two or three, to which Cheryl replied, “So fairly stressed, but not too bad? We still have a week, so we can still assess the situation and see what’s going on.”

The class discussed the end of *12 Angry Men*, and Cheryl assigned juror roles to her students, who read aloud and reenacted certain lines in front of the class. While her students did this, Cheryl told them:

I want you to think about what reasonable doubt means to you. We want to think about our own personal biases, some we may be more or less aware of. How juries are selected. The importance of having diversity on a jury. Could there be some jurors that come in with some kind of bias? We need a balance.

She asked if any of her students received a jury summons, to which no one raised their hand, so she provided a real-life example:

My friend just served on a case that involves medical malpractice. They awarded the defendant \$10,000, and she’s losing sleep over it. It’s 9-3. It doesn’t have to be unanimous, just majority. She’s one of the three that doesn’t agree and wants to reach out to the judge and I’m just like there’s nothing you can do about it. How well am I to be the one to speak out in a room?

Cheryl encouraged her students to consider the impact of peer pressure. After the reading concluded, she asked if her students liked the play, to which many of them replied, “Yes.”

Cheryl said the play was one of her favorites and reviewed some of its key themes, including being open to understanding and recognizing biases in oneself and others. She encouraged her students to watch the stage play if they had a chance to. She then gave her students a stretch break to print out their paper for free at the library if they forgot to. After the break, she divided the class into groups of three to peer edit each other’s papers. She also asked them to create an annotated bibliography of a citation for one of their readings or TED talks that semester. She

brought in a stack of Chromebooks for any students that needed one. This class was the last of the semester, so she joked at the end:

Don't forget your final assignment, *12 Angry Men*, how your life has been changed this semester by meeting me. Just kidding. Next week is finals week. I will be here if you need me. If you want to do this solely on your own, that is fine too. But if you want support, I'm here. Alright, when you are done with this, we're good. Thank you, guys. Thanks to all the readers. Thanks for a fantastic semester.

Students thanked Cheryl as they made their way out of class.

Teaching History

Cheryl said she “never wanted to be a teacher.” Her father was a retired community college professor who taught music and she believed she “partly just wanted to do something different,” in addition to seeing how hard her father worked all the time. She always loved and studied English, which was “always [her] thing,” and felt that people automatically assumed she would go into teaching because of it. She thought of teaching as specifically K-12 and described herself as not being “much of a visual, creative person,” which she associated K-12 teachers with because they decorated their classrooms. She felt resistant to this and did not necessarily think about college teaching. She described a period in her life when she felt everyone she ran into was somehow involved in education. These people encouraged her to teach, “seeing something in [her] just in having conversations.” Cheryl wanted to work in publishing and was pursuing that, which she described as “tough” and not “really finding a path forward.” Both her parents got her interviews through their gym: her father with the president of a private for-profit college and her mother with the chair of the English department at a community college.

Cheryl worked at the private school for eight years, which she “loved” because it was a small college with about 700 students. She “got to know everybody” and taught “everything,” even getting to substitute teach math and computer classes. She believed she received many

opportunities she would not have at a larger institution. However, this school closed and she became “very jaded” about education. She decided she was done with education and instead tried to pursue a career in sales. However, she found an opening at Bay College, which was “always on [her] list but felt out of [her] reach.” She applied to the now obsolete academic strategies department, which was housed under humanities and consisted of one- or two-unit classes designed to help students succeed. She received an interview and realized “this is where [she] was meant to be” as soon as she stepped on to campus:

I love [Bay College] so much. Every time I walk on this campus, I feel so blessed. I feel so at home here. I love the community. I love the diversity. Our campus is so gorgeous. It’s so well-taken care of. I just love everything about it.

Cheryl was immediately placed into developmental English classes and then moved on to transfer-level English classes after a curriculum overhaul. She loved how everyone in her department was so friendly, supportive, and helpful. One of her colleagues taught in FYE and recommended it to Cheryl too, who was hesitant because it was “such a special thing to teach in FYE.” She was unsure if her colleague put in a word for her, but the coordinator of FYE reached out to her, which felt like “such an honor” and she has “felt so grateful every semester since.”

First Year Experience Spring Faculty Meeting

The spring 2024 FYE faculty meeting served as another form of collected data and took place on Tuesday, April 30th via Zoom from 1:15pm to 2:15pm. There were 27 participants, including both faculty coordinators and one full-time counselor. Several study participants were also present. Furthermore, several participants referenced this meeting and others like it in Chapter 5. Meeting topics are recounted below to capture the breadth and depth of topics covered during FYE faculty exchanges, such as concerns specific to students and faculty that are

schoolwide and even on a national scale, as well as a running joke about lunches that showcased lighthearted faculty banter.

The agenda was sent to all participants prior to the meeting time and began with a discussion on budget-related updates. While faculty stipends were safe, lunches distributed during faculty lunches would be cut out of compliance. A few faculty members proceeded to banter about faculty lunches being cut in the chat. The coordinator also shared that recruitment for the incoming FYE class was “going well,” even though only 700 students had been recruited that academic year as opposed to 1000 in previous years.

Summer admitted student orientation dates were also shared, and faculty would be invited to participate on a panel during it. A separate orientation for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) students was also scheduled to be held in the MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement) Center. The coordinator was unsure if funding would be provided for lunch, but she informed faculty they would be exposed to a breadth of policies and personalities if they were able to attend.

A few participants described “a serious problem” where their division had recently started showing their Canvas shells as “hidden,” which made it difficult for faculty to work on them over the summer. Faculty were also being “inundated” by requests from students wanting to add their classes. The full-time counselor present at the meeting shared that FYE students were being recommended to enroll in the campuswide math academy during their counseling appointments. FYE students who had withdrawn from their classes were also being reached out to about retaking these classes over the summer. The final list of FYE students receiving priority registration was forwarded to the registrar, with these dates finalized for the summer and fall: May 13th and May 20th, respectively.

The faculty coordinator observed a rise in Russian immigrant students at Bay College who were often placed into English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, which FYE did not offer. There was also a rise in students who did not want to take an ESL exam. The faculty coordinator described FYE as a “microcosm of the wider community.”

The meeting left time for conversations on hybrid courses and attendance policies, which many participants seemed invested in. One participant discussed how hybrid teaching at high schools was so different and some students were dropped for non-attendance. Another participant said they primarily took attendance based on who was physically present in class, but they also checked to see if these students were logging onto Canvas and submitting their assignments. Haley, who attended this meeting, described how a student who missed 10% of a class also missed 10% of their interactions in that class. She had a student with missing work who was not responding to her attempts to reach out and check in. Haley provided the analogy of cake baking and described attendance as the “icing.”

The meeting concluded with updates on charter schools that closed due to attendance issues. The coordinator also described the new FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) rollout as a “disaster” that resulted in them being summoned to Capitol Hill. FYE was prepared to host a “ton” of financial aid workshops to compensate for confusion caused by these substantial delays and technical errors.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the 15 participants enrolled in this study, each participant’s journey to Bay College and its First Year Experience program, and observations of each participant in one of their FYE classes. Thus, Chapter 4 should be viewed through the lens of the findings offered in Chapter 5. The goal of sharing each participant’s story as an educator

in conjunction with their classroom observations in this chapter was to highlight the uniquely nuanced combination of personal, educational, and professional experiences that shaped their paths and approach to pedagogy and working with students. Furthermore, the ramifications of shared experiences such as economic recessions and the COVID-19 pandemic were brought to light and shared by multiple participants. Many participants narrated similar yet uniquely personalized experiences, ranging from attending Bay College themselves as students, having a parent who also worked at the institution or in education at large, varying mindsets and perspectives towards their education and the purpose of it, and seeking employment in and outside the field of education. For many of these participants, their multilayered teaching histories illustrated moments of vulnerability that mirrored their compassionate and transformative approaches towards their teaching and students, as observed throughout their FYE classes.

As the study's methodology heavily centers the teaching histories of each participant, this chapter sought to honor and respect their personalized journeys to teaching, as well as the academic and non-academic experiences alike that helped color these trajectories. Furthermore, each participant's FYE class was observed to highlight how their nuanced educational and professional trajectories have shaped their pedagogy and practice of it in the classroom. Chapter 5 refers back to many of the details shared in this chapter, as the main findings are laid out in three overarching themes aligning with each of the study's research questions.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

This chapter provides the findings of this study on how faculty pedagogy and identity have been shaped by participation in First Year Experience programs and the formation of both formal and informal communities of teaching and communities of practice.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do First Year Experience program faculty perceive their role as an educator?
 - a. In what ways have the past and current teaching experiences of these faculty helped shape this perspective?
2. What role, if any, has teaching in a First Year Experience program had on faculty approaches to pedagogy and creating and/or sustaining communities of teaching and/or communities of practice?
 - a. In what ways can communities of teaching and/or communities of practice created in First Year Experience be sustained outside the program?
3. What do First Year Experience faculty perceive as institutional conditions that shape pedagogical growth?

This chapter is divided into three sections aligning with each research question and framed from the theoretical underpinnings of transformative learning, examining how faculty conceptualize their role as an educator, as well as how this perspective has been shaped by their teaching experiences, interactions with peers, and institutional dynamics and opportunities. The first section examines self-perceptions of faculty identity and how they have been colored by a commitment to supporting students on an individualized basis, stepping away from content mastery and instead focusing on co-constructing knowledge together with students, and turning students into critical thinkers. The second section investigates how communities of teaching and

communities of practice have been fostered by involvement in First Year Experience, which facilitated the exchange of syllabi and best practices, as well as professional development and both formal and informal mentoring opportunities at Bay College. The third and final section looks at the institutional and organizational facilitation of pedagogical practices, especially how administrative perceptions of faculty have led to inequitable allocations of work, occasionally tense departmental dynamics, and a misalignment of faculty and administrator values and approaches to work.

Self-Perceptions of Faculty Identity

This section focuses on answering the first research question centered on how FYE faculty perceive their role as an educator, as well as the ways past and current teaching experiences helped shape this perspective. Thus, this section examines how self-perceptions of faculty identity have been colored in three different ways that participants identified as salient: (a) supporting students on a more personalized basis, as faculty life experiences and personal relationships influenced how they related and engaged with their students; (b) evolution from content mastery to collaborative learning, detailing how faculty showed more patience and understanding over their teaching careers towards both themselves and their students in demonstrating an expertise of the subject matter; and (c) dispensing lifelong skills and facilitating learning beyond the classroom, as many participants hoped to instill within their students critical thinking skills that could be applicable to other classes and beyond, allowing them to better understand and make sense of their place in the world.

Supporting Students on a More Personalized Basis

Several participants noted both a willingness and a desire to nurture students, particularly on a more individualized basis, while detailing how their own personal relationships and life

experiences have shaped the way they relate to and engage with their students. Stacy's experiences teaching in both psychology and human development led them to appreciate the value of checking in with students, connecting with them on an individualized basis, and helping them feel seen and heard. Stacy felt comfortable working one-on-one with students and calling them up in class to hold them accountable for their goals and plans. They believed they came across very well in this format because they were "not as scary" compared to a group classroom setting. They have been told this frequently, even being anonymously nominated most semesters by a student as one of their favorite instructors for that academic term or year. Stacy thought this was because these students felt seen and cared for, which was very important for them as a person and not just as a student. Even for students Stacy never saw in-person, they sent a quick email checking in, which they believed was impactful and a practice not many instructors engaged in. They cited this balance of caring and investing as being ongoing since they have a "codependent mom" and their natural tendencies tended to move in this direction.

Stacy believed they were at Bay College to facilitate the learning of content, as well as the human development aspect of it, focusing on building soft skills and asking many questions to understand how students were outside the classroom. Stacy's division "provided the space, the resources, the support to make [how they view their role as an educator and the work they do as faculty] aligned. [They're] very happy about this job because they align." They also believed teaching in human development for eight years played a hand in shaping how they viewed their role as an educator, as well as causing their syllabus to become as long as it ended up, including elements such as a safe space that affected how students felt inside the classroom, or "the vibe," so they felt seen and supported, which "[freed] them up to learn a little bit more."

Stacy mentioned that the smaller class sizes in FYE were beneficial since faculty were typically limited to one or two sections, which allowed them to get to know their students better and led their students to believe their instructors also cared more about them. They stated:

The balance of caring and not being codependent is a tricky balance for some instructors. Because you can care a lot, and you want to keep it positive, but sometimes we invest a lot in someone, you want to definitely make sure you don't have any codependent communication or tendencies there. For example, a student who you've been working with and they've been doing well and then all of a sudden they drop off or disappear or whatever. It's important not to be codependent in the sense that you get mad at them even if you know what's happening, right? So you don't want to get mad at them, honestly, because that doesn't help anyone. You don't want to make them feel bad about it even if they're not trying. Don't feel bad. I don't think that's the right way to get them to do better. So I think, for me, over the two decades I've been teaching, I've tried to learn the balance of caring to a certain degree and making sure you don't get too invested because you could come off as codependent and that's not good. That's been ongoing.

Stacy cited the ongoing balance between caring for and investing in students and being careful not to project biases from personal relationships onto academic settings. This balancing act called upon faculty to view students beyond the role of scholars and instead as people, while being mindful not to place expectations on them that may be unwanted, unwarranted, or unasked for. While Stacy prided themselves on their ability to support students during their over 20 years in the field, they made conscious efforts to avoid becoming codependent and instead allocated that time and energy to students' personal journeys towards growth and self-realization.

Sophia experienced similar influences from her personal life and relationships on how she perceived herself as an educator in relation to her students, noting how this changed over time along with her own fluctuating role and responsibilities as a mother:

And I think a lot of them come to me because I'm in a place where, before, when I started at [Bay College], my kids were really young. And it was, as soon as, you know, I had to go pick them up from daycare and then I had to go get them from school and I had to go help them with their homework ... I was in a different life stage, and I was like, yeah, I don't care now. My kids are all out of the house. I've grown, if I see your email before 10, and I'm not asleep, I will answer it. If not, I get up butt early and look for it at five in the morning, you know? So, I think, and I want to also be the person that will look

out for them and help them. I want to be the person in their corner. You know, I feel like, and everyone's different, for sure, but I want them to know that someone's got their back and will give them the benefit of the doubt.

Sophia was always student-centered and focused on her students' well-being, but she became even more responsive to their needs and concerns as she transitioned into a different life stage herself and her own children matured. While Sophia and Stacy's dedication to providing personalized support to their students remained unchanged throughout their academic careers, their personal relationships shaped the ways and degrees to which they engaged with and related to their students.

Daisy shared similar experiences and believed she elevated the level and extent of support she could provide to her students by being transparent about her own personal hardships. As her students possessed "a lot of voices that share and feel," she sought to create a safe environment for them to express themselves. Daisy disclosed many of her life experiences in class, such as being divorced, because she felt that "especially this generation is interesting, they want to know everything about [her]." Thus, she became comfortable sharing despite not having done so in the past. On the contrary, when she began teaching, she "very much kept [her] personal life very, very private," which she still did to a certain degree by making sure not to friend any of her students on Facebook. However, she tried to support her students whenever possible, telling them, "This is our class and our journey and we're all in this together." Daisy said that when her students realized their instructor was "not very different" from them, this helped alleviate some of their imposter syndrome.

While Tomas taught content and instilled knowledge, he also provided plenty of support to anyone who needed it. He viewed himself as providing a sense of connection so students felt

welcomed in his class. As Latina/o students comprised over 50% of the population at Bay College, he stated:

If they don't have anyone to connect to or connect with, they're not going to want to come to class, and then 56-57% of the population is going to fail. If I create a cultural connection with them, they're going to feel at home and they're going to pass the class and keep on passing their classes and wanting to come to school and do something. That's what I offer. Cultural connection leads to a sense of belonging that leads to a sense of empowerment that leads to a sense of success with all the students, but the bulk of my students tend to be Latino because I teach Chicano studies courses. Most of those who enroll are Mexican or other Latinos. Beyond passing down knowledge, it's creating a sense of community in the classroom where they feel connected, they feel heard, they feel accepted. It's a place for them, and that gives them the power, the strength to move on and do what they have to do, which is complete the course, succeed in the course, and take all that to transfer. Transfer to a four-year, get the B.A., get the M.A., and so on.

Tomas added another layer to how personal relationships interacted with the nuanced ways faculty engaged with their own students, focusing on a sense of belonging and cultural connection. As Tomas described the trajectory from a cultural connection fostering a sense of belonging, eventually blossoming into a sense of empowerment that contributed to student success, he highlighted the "power" and "strength" of faculty role models that students could both look up to and relate to as facilitating their own scholarly growth and retention.

Dave appreciated students coming back to visit after transferring and graduating, which he believed every instructor had at least a story or two about. He described being involved in study abroad programs in the past and befriending those students on social media afterwards. He described seeing these students go on with their lives and even starting their own families, cherishing opportunities to reconnect with them occasionally. He stated:

It's been a great career. I love [Bay College]. I love the diversity in all meanings of that word. I've been very fortunate and have a positive outlook. We're going to be around for a while and we're going to help students. The vast majority who work at [Bay College] wants to help students.

This quote highlighted Dave's desire to support students that often drove the work of faculty, as well as the longevity of his rapport with many students, which was echoed by several participants in the study. This quote also shed light on the ways faculty and students grew individually while sustaining connections across various life stages. As faculty sought to support students, the nuanced and multilayered ways they have done so could not be disentangled from their own personal experiences and relationships. Instead, participants used these qualities to elevate how they engaged with students. Just as faculty cared about the whole student, the whole faculty was being nurtured in a similar way, along the way.

Evolution from Content Mastery to Collaborative Learning

When describing their roles as educators, many participants noted how this definition evolved over time to adapt to a greater flexibility of content mastery on both their own behalf and that of their students. Stacy described their role as an educator earlier in their career as focused on dispensing information, as they felt more concerned initially with the content itself that was being taught. They recalled an earlier class where they had "10 pages single spaced of everything [they] would say verbatim." They believed that once an instructor had the content down, this allowed them to shift their focus to students' individual needs and change how they taught based on this. Stacy used to be more concerned with covering all the material, which they found to be par for the course for instructors. However, they switched to recording Zoom lectures during the pandemic and sharing these with students who were absent or wanted to review certain material again. This approach offered Stacy some leeway when they were unable to cover a topic in class. They tried ensuring their students understood the most important parts in class, while the rest of the material could be found in study guides or recorded lectures. In other words, the focus of Stacy's instruction shifted from breadth to depth over the span of their

teaching career. This was corroborated by Stacy's words during the classroom observation, where they encouraged students to go back and watch certain parts because the entire chapter on memory could not be covered.

Similarly to Stacy, Sophia expressed a comparable trajectory of her own evolution as an educator over time, which led to her showing more openness to both herself and her students:

I feel like I've changed some. When I first started teaching, I knew I knew my stuff, but I didn't really know what I was doing, you know? Everything was like, hey that worked today. But you have to keep it fresh. You can't do the same thing all the time, you know? So, I think I'm more confident, I'm more accepting of other people and myself ... before, I would be like, "Ugh, that didn't work," but now I'm like, "Eh, it worked enough."

When Sophia started her teaching career at the age of 22, she was the youngest teacher in her high school and only four years older than some of her students, which she described as "weird." As the age gap between Sophia and her average student widened, she discovered more leeway in viewing both her and her students' academic careers as journeys and becoming increasingly receptive to co-constructing learning along the way.

Cheryl viewed education and learning as a collaborative effort, where she walked side by side with her students. She occasionally found herself asking herself what she was doing, why she was doing that, and what she had learnt herself in college. She described this thought process as resembling a "machine," as she went to college herself and then came back to teach college. Her teaching focused on general skills as opposed to skills that were more specific to their respective fields, except for the few English majors she taught. Cheryl defined her role as helping students become stronger communicators that could think for themselves, ask questions, and articulate how they felt and why they felt that way. She felt a sense of success if her students could do this and express themselves clearly in a way where others could understand what they meant just by reading their work. Cheryl gave the analogy and example of the memoir *Educated*,

which she had her students read, about a girl who grew up in a fundamentalist Mormon household and decided to go to college and ultimately call into question everything she had been taught.

Isabelle believed her role as an educator evolved just as her students had. She viewed herself as a facilitator, and if she had “all the time in the world,” she would lecture less and have her students work together more often. By working together, she clarified that she would not just “sit back and read her newspaper or book,” but instead take on a different role by guiding these conversations. Isabelle believed these dialogues could not be lectured on but were “just something that you do.” While lecturing and answering questions on the homework were still part of how she defined her job, Isabelle stated there was now “less of that” compared to her first couple years of teaching, when there was “only that.” Isabelle recognized time constraints that did not always facilitate or allow for these guided conversations, but she emphasized the importance of hands-on learning and collaborating with students to make this learning happen in the classroom.

Daisy described a lot of initial fear and hesitancy upon first stepping into the classroom, as she learned how to teach “totally on the job,” although she borrowed syllabi and best practices from colleagues. She believed that:

Teaching is one of those things that you evolve, and as you become more confident in your own strengths, that you learn to be okay with what you’re good at compared to other people, and not really necessarily trying to emulate someone else. It takes time. We do not have teacher training, that is just not a thing. And I don’t think any college professors, you don’t learn it in grad school, so it is a very interesting thing in that being a content specialist is much different from being a teaching specialist, I guess, is that the right word? Or being a specialist in instruction. And yet, there is this expectation that when you come in after grad school and put into a college classroom, that you have those skills. And you don’t.

Daisy compared this lack of training to K-12 teachers, who were credentialed and formally learned how to teach and lesson plan. She stated that she had “no idea what to do” when she first wrote a syllabus and closely read and followed the textbook. However, “it’s so different” now, as she became more tenured and comfortable with her own strengths and recognizing that she could not accomplish everything. Instead, she focused on finding where she excelled and advised her students to “never take [her] twice” because she had her own way of teaching and emphasizing material that another instructor may convey differently.

Daisy shared an experience teaching her first class as an adjunct instructor. Two weeks before the semester started, she described herself as being terrified and unsure of what to put on her syllabus. She started asking around and realized there was a lot of self-advocacy involved in learning how and what to do in the classroom. She asked friends she was comfortable with, who coordinated roundtable mentoring programs in the past that were typically not sustainable because “people are busy and schedules change, not because people don’t like the idea of it.” While she thought these programs were necessary and a “fabulous idea,” she agreed they were difficult to maintain. Daisy also believed having a faculty mentor was “hard” due to burnout and a busy schedule, in addition to the time and labor of working with somebody and “not being paid for that extra time but you’re just doing it out of the goodness of [your] heart.” She described her teaching style as distinct from that of many other instructors, further complicating matters, as there needed to be “an understanding of here’s your toolbox and you can take and see what works for you and try it on.” While Daisy quickly learned to self-advocate for guidance as a budding instructor, her experiences pointed to a need for more structured support and a wider distribution of resources to accommodate various teaching styles.

Similarly to the other participants, Diane's approach to teaching also changed over time, as she tried to move away from pure lecturing where students were only expected to take notes. Instead, she lectured and then moved on to a group activity or in-class discussion. She tried to find a balance between lecturing and group work in her hybrid classes, which could include reading in preparation for a writing assignment. These faculty all demonstrated a shift in their own roles as educators, entering the work with a more stagnant pedagogical approach that evolved to become more open-minded and receptive over time, facilitating greater in-class engagement and inevitably encouraging faculty themselves to become greater self-advocates.

Dispensing Lifelong Skills and Facilitating Learning Beyond the Classroom

Part of the shifting and evolving ways faculty perceived their role as an educator involved seeking to instill within their students a desire to continue learning outside a more formal academic context, in addition to stepping away from content mastery and instead highlighting collaborative and co-constructed ways of learning. This shift was exemplified by the ways Daisy viewed herself and her students, as well as her role in relation to her students, as she described herself as:

A coach or guide ... it's not just about the knowledge, but it's also about helping them to see themselves differently, to see themselves as scholars, to change their ideas about school and lifelong learning, to help them understand that their voice is important, to really have an open mind and think more critically about the world and I tell them, "Up to high school, you have an environment. You have choices within your environment, but you don't have a lot of choices. You don't choose what city you were born in or what high school you went to or how many siblings you have or what your parents do or if they're divorced. But when you come to college, now you have a life. And within that life, you have choices." And I want them to see that there's opportunity. Teaching, I'm student-centered, I guess, lots of activity, lots of scaffolding and helping them come to the answers on their own, and no shaming. I want them to fall in love with learning. I feel like if I can get them to get to that point, then that's really the most important thing, right? Is to help them to fall in love with learning and see it as a really fun and exciting and positive thing that they want to do for the rest of their lives.

Daisy did not think this definition had changed throughout her faculty career. She conceptualized college as the first time many of her students had the opportunity and freedom to make choices unconstrained by environment. Thus, she viewed herself as a “coach” or “guide” rather than a professional simply relaying content and knowledge to her students. While she acknowledged how this freedom came with a need to adapt and develop newer skills related to critical thinking, she affirmed her student-centered approach to supporting and scaffolding her students to come up with their own answers while fostering a love for learning. She sought to empower her students to find their voice and recognize its importance.

Similarly, Sophia aspired to both model and instill within her students how to become a “free thinker,” helping them perceive multiple perspectives of an issue to eventually come to their own decisions. She believed her role as an educator involved being:

A smart, weird aunt. A smart aunt that you can go to, you know, I’m the weird lady that makes the meditation room, I’m the weird lady that has pictures and quotes up, and if you get sad, you can come and go look at my quote board. So, I think some of that they can go to, role model as much as possible, but role model of a free thinker ... so looking at all angles, I want to be the person they can count on for sure, that they can go to, and that’s going to help them see all sides of everything so they can figure out how to make decisions. Yeah, weird aunt that maybe knows some stuff. So, I’m not their parent, but I’m their weird aunt that will look out for them and, you know, make sure they’re okay, but also, that they’re responsible for learning stuff in my class and it’s not easy ... I think that’s the kind of educator I want to be, you know, I’m giving you the building blocks to do whatever you want.

Echoing Daisy and the words of many participants in the previous subsection, Sophia sought to provide her students with guidance and “the building blocks” to succeed in the avenues they decided for themselves. By embodying a “smart, weird aunt” as her role in relation to her students, Sophia hoped her own life and academic experiences could be used to expand her students’ worldviews rather than pigeonhole them into very specific subsets of knowledge or ways of thinking.

Diane expressed similar sentiments by describing herself as a facilitator to her students. She sought to inspire them to try and be the best versions of themselves academically and as human beings, which remained constant throughout her career. However, she was more focused on academics when she began teaching, while in the present she “maybe wants them to be good humans.” She described her academic standards as looking at the world critically and helping her students feel as if they could understand it and find their place in it, aligning with how Daisy and Sophia conceptualized their own roles in expanding and transforming their students’ ways of thinking.

While Amber taught in mathematics unlike Daisy, Sophia, and Diane, who were all housed in the humanities, she still tried instilling within her students lifelong skills with wider applicability, even if her pedagogy was more structured by sequential topics she was required to teach to scaffold student success. Her role as an educator varied depending on the class she taught, such as a sequential class necessitating a certain knowledge base to succeed in the next class. On the flip side, while teaching a class she described as most likely the last math class most of those students would ever take, she believed “they’re never going to use it.” Thus, in those kinds of classes, Amber focused on teaching material that would be useful in her students’ future lives and education. She aimed to make those classes heavily project-based, incorporating Microsoft Excel, Access, and PowerPoint, Canvas, presentations, posters, boards, and computations. She lectured for 10 minutes and then allocated the next hour to an activity, hoping to make it “as fun as possible.” Similarly, she found teaching these kinds of classes to be so much fun herself, aiming to make the material as practical and applicable as possible to her students’ other classes. This approach aligned with Amber’s perspective on the purpose of a college education, believing a degree signaled having received a well-rounded education. She

told her students, “I’m not a mathematician. I’m a teacher.” As an educator, she asked herself what her students needed out of her class and where they were headed next.

Similarly to Amber, Peter believed his role as an educator varied depending on the class he taught, although he taught English like Daisy and Sophia instead of mathematics like Amber. In his observed critical thinking class, he wanted his students to see the world a little more and understand why they reacted the way they did to certain things. For example:

At least see when they’re looking at a commercial advertisement or a politician speaking, I want them to be able to say, “Oh, this person is trying to appeal to this, appeal to my sense of blank, or appeal to our sense of this as a country. These are rhetorical things or strategies this person is trying to do to convince me of stuff.” And they can buy it or not buy it. And if they buy it, I want them to be able to say, “Oh yeah, I dig this because of blank, because of the way that I see the world.” And then other times I just want them to think about the world, not necessarily differently, but just to think about it and think about things they don’t always think about and figure out what they’re supposed to do with themselves.

Peter described his job as making his students more responsible, independent learners. Similarly to other participants, he sought to help his students become more critically aware and minded, developing the tools to view the world with a more intentional lens. He cited having a strict due date as one way of accomplishing this, joking that faculty had varying late policies that came to light as being too lenient during their equity trainings. He encouraged other teachers to find comfort in setting boundaries lest they get taken advantage of. He provided an example of many K-12 districts allowing students to still receive 50% of a grade for work that was not submitted, much to the dissatisfaction of some teachers. Peter believed this has now become practice, so some students entered college with this mindset. He told parents at the FYE orientation, “We don’t do that,” joking that when his mortgage company gave him 50% credit for not paying his mortgage, he would do the same for his students.

Allen described his role in a similar way to other participants, seeking to not only impart within them a greater receptivity to critical thinking, but also to use this newfound toolkit to jumpstart growth as an individual and do good for society. He believed his role as an educator was:

To help them learn and grow as people. I am successful in my job if a student has grown as an individual, but that growth isn't the same for each person, the amount of growth isn't the same for each person, the type of growth isn't the same for each person. But if I help them grow, and at the very least, become more civically minded, I have succeeded. So my job is to help them learn about the society they're in and give them the tools they need to be active members of that society, whether or not they want more or not, that is their prerogative. But my goal, my job is to help them gain the basic understanding of those tools and know how to utilize those tools. And that's kind of my role as an educator, is to help impart that knowledge to them and guide them towards being more active in whatever way they're trying to be active.

Allen described one of his most positive moments as a teacher as when one of his students, who was in his 30s and older than his average student, decided he wanted to vote for the first time because of Allen's class. This increase in civic engagement aligned with the discipline Allen taught in, political science, and shed light on how faculty participants integrated their subject matter in creative ways that extended beyond its theoretical underpinnings to find greater applicability to society and students' personal lives.

Haley described her role in a similar way as focused on growth rather than rote and prescriptive instruction, as she aspired to "spark their curiosity in learning and [she] really, genuinely [wants her] class to be transformational, and not transactional. [She's] not up, sage on the stage, here's the information." She felt as if the hybrid, flipped classroom model adequately equipped her with this opportunity, allowing her to step away from a more traditional, face-to-face, two days a week classroom setting. Although she always engaged in active learning activities, she felt that it had become "primarily what [she is] doing" and allowed her students to put into action what they learned. She believed that coming to class elevated them to "that next

step of learning” if they did their work, module reflections, and readings ahead of time. She stated:

I don’t want to feel like I’m the gatekeeper of knowledge and information. Granted, because of my education and experience, I have more knowledge and information on the subject matter, but my job is to spark curiosity for them to learn it. And so, I come in with ways that I think will do that, inspire them, and to have it be transformational and that they see the world differently when they leave. One of my teaching philosophies [is] that they leave wanting to be an agent of change. I don’t mean to imply that they don’t already feel that way about themselves, but I hope that they leave my class feeling more confident to do that and that they have more tools to do that. And then I also obviously want them to feel more confident in their ability as a student.

Haley mentioned that the birth of AI encouraged her to stress to her students she did not expect perfection, instead having a goal of “progress and effort.” She found this much more useful to her students than “feeling like every comma has to be in the right [place].” She wanted her students to understand the content or at least try to. She explained:

Ideally, I’m trying to instill the need to advocate for themselves and to reach out and to tap into the resources so that when they do need help, they go out and find it. And I try to really emphasize from Day 1 that we have this myth in our society that somebody who needs help is somehow at fault, or we see that in such a negative light, when, in fact, somebody who reaches out for help has a great deal of self-awareness and desire to want to do something well. And so, when they’re reaching out for help, they’re only benefiting themselves by going to somebody who may have resources that can help them or the tools.

These quotes aligned with Sophia’s description of herself as a “smart, weird aunt” to her students. While Haley acknowledged that through her own formal education and decades of lived experiences, she inevitably had more expertise on certain topics compared to her students, she never flaunted this in a way that would make her students feel inferior or lacking. Instead, she emphasized the “transformational” role she hoped her education served, readily equipping her students with tools and knowledge they may not have been privy to previously. Thus, she sought to empower her students with the curiosity to seek out knowledge and the self-awareness

to recognize when they needed help and request it when appropriate, thus becoming “agents of change” for themselves and society at large.

Similarly to Diane, Derek believed that many instructors viewed themselves as facilitators who helped students engage with the material or at least gave them opportunities to do so, which in his case related to tasks of literature and composition. He wanted to help his students put together an argument as opposed to simply lecturing and presenting the material, although he believed this must also be done to a certain extent. He conceived his role as getting his students to “do stuff with the material.” His students needed to actively write, figure out what they wanted to write about, and find relevant support, while his job was to understand what they tried to convey and work on making this more effective through feedback. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Derek sought to especially address students who felt confused or desperate. He aimed to investigate their troubles and how he could best support them, particularly in matters related to academic plagiarism, either traditionally or with the use of AI. He saw hundreds of cases of plagiarism throughout his over 20 years of teaching, citing only one of these as being malicious, with a student who was “going to try to see what they can get away with.”

Derek’s teaching philosophy was to be honest about the work of his course and where the student was in life to try and make sure those two things were compatible. He described academic integrity policies as being punitive and alluded to the justice system to provide examples of punishment not always meaning rehabilitation. He described it as being “just a lot more fun to engage with students.” He found that the more freedom and slack he provided to students even in his current class to approach the material in their own way, the more “they can do really wonderful things. They can feel like the course is more theirs. They can see themselves

in it, and [he liked] it.” Thus, Derek viewed his role as an educator as twofold: first to put together an academic argument in a way that did not feel punitive and respected academic integrity, and then to provide his students with enough freedom to approach the course material in their own way and to view themselves in it.

Ronald believed his role as an educator had evolved over time. When he started teaching, he chose English because he was good at it and the subject allowed him to cover any topic he wanted to talk about in class due to its broadness as a discipline. He described himself as a dilettante with many interests, saying:

When I first went into [teaching], I was like, I’m going to change the world and we’re going to end racism, and it’s going to be like this great place in my room where everyone will want to participate. And then it got really practical really fast. Students don’t care about my things, so I started getting more into like, I’m going to teach how to be a really good writer and teach you how to write for the institution. I want you to go write in all your other classes and do well in your midterms and finals ... so I went from super idealistic to very practical. I still do kind of the heavy social stuff, I like that material. But I don’t believe I’m affecting great change, at least not on a macro level. A student here, a student there, but like I said, if they’re not attending and they don’t do the reading, their impact can’t be too fantastic.

Ronald aimed to get his students to care about what they submitted and to invest in it. Similarly, his discipline of English quenched his own curiosity for exploring various topics, which he extended to his students by fostering their own academic interests. However, at the same time, he tempered the expectations he entered the teaching profession with, recognizing that sweeping, macro-level change realistically could not and should not be expected from each classroom moment. Instead, he recognized the importance of teaching his students more technical and practical skills that could be applicable and beneficial to their scholarly careers, such as learning to write for the institution.

Sophia recalled starting teaching with a similar mindset, initially thinking, “Oh, everyone’s going to do their homework, I want to make it so much fun and so cool and be so

positive. They will just all do their homework.” She soon realized this vision did not reflect reality, as many of her students had more pressing matters to attend to in life, such as “helping their mom pay rent,” in which homework may not have been a priority. She described some of her students as being very open about personal affairs when asked why they were not submitting their homework, such as being “hungry. They need food before they can make their brain work ... [she] thought [she] could create this perfect thing. And you do the best you can, but they sometimes just need someone to ask them if they’re alright.” Thus, her approach changed over time to helping her students see other people’s perspectives to agree, disagree, or figure out how to initiate change, especially for her younger students who may be figuring out their own political beliefs for the first time. Sophia believed that standards and connection were both important and compatible with one another. These quotes reflected the shift in Sophia’s own mindset and how she conceptualized her role as an educator, seeking to view her students as whole people with concerns and matters to attend to outside the classroom.

Daisy similarly sought to not only inspire and encourage growth within her students, but also to dismantle preconceived notions they had of school as a space they were forced to attend against their own will or greater interests. She aimed to do this by shifting her students’ perspectives on their education. She identified one of her goals of teaching as to “take this stigma that school is this place of punishment and it’s a have-to.” At the beginning of each semester, she talked about the importance of language and encouraged her students to use the word “get” in lieu of “have,” for example, “You don’t ‘have’ to do homework, you ‘get’ to do homework.” She stated:

You have an opportunity to learn and grow, and these are things that you want. Because I told them, “You don’t have to go to school anymore, you get to go to school.” You get to read and have diversity. You get to go to class. If I shut the door and said you can never go to college and you’re stuck out there, you would be banging it down to get here, right?

So, let's just make it so this is an environment about the learning and not about the grades, and it's about the process and the growth. Seeing yourself as a scholar.

While this growth and shift in perspective did not necessarily always happen in her classes, she told her colleagues they should still always aim to instill these traits within their students. Even if it did not happen in the classroom, she believed it would happen at “the right time for the student,” even if she did not know when that would be. She explained, “If it wasn't for all the people before you who helped prepare them for that ah-ha moment, it's the person who they have the ah-ha moment that gets all the credit, but it's really everybody before.” Daisy played music in her classes to change preconceived ideas of school as “draconian and archaic” and crafted a more welcoming environment that would make her students want to go to school. She tried her best to celebrate all voices and perspectives as integral for personal growth and stated:

I want them to feel like it's their class, not my class. Letting them know, look, I know you're going to have challenges, communicate with me. You saw today. My student came in and was like, “Hey, can I still turn in that paper?” And, you know, it's okay, there are days I'm late with my grading. Why do I expect? You know, because something happened, and so I mean there's a balance, right? I usually say, you can't do all the work in the last two weeks of the semester, no, that's not going to fly because then you haven't had the growth process. Let's talk. Talk to me. Don't be afraid to talk to me and come to my office hours.

Daisy loved her students using her as a resource both in and outside the classroom, especially in her FYE class last semester. She cited mental health issues she found prevalent in the current generation of college students that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. She mentioned that her students “have a lot of anxiety,” sharing that she also has a 20-year-old son with anxiety and depression. When Daisy's son went off to college, she worried about him “all the time” until:

Someone said to me, and this really resonated with me because I always help my students all the time and, “Oh, you're struggling here, let me walk you to the [Bay College mascot name] Pantry,” “Oh, how's your arm?” “Oh, can I help you write this essay?” And somebody said, “Why do you not trust that there are people for your son like you in the

world? And that who you are for these kids, and not all of them, obviously, but that you at some point or whatever and their needs are, you can be that voice for them or that little extra push or help that that is your calling and your gift?" And I have to then trust that there will be people in the world that aren't his mom that are helping him in moments or saying just the right thing or making them feel seen or heard. Those moments when I can just touch that person or say the right thing at that time or make them have, I've had students tell me before, even just the changing of the language, "I've never thought of school that way before. No one's ever told me that I'm smart before." Those are the moments where I can see that something clicked within them and it'll change the trajectory. Again, I'll say that I don't think that's just me. I think all the people before me that helped set up the person to be ready for that moment, and I do it even if it doesn't click for them in that moment, so that when it does, the next person ... but the times when you do get the glory, it feels really good.

Just as many of Daisy's students navigated personal hardships that affected their academics, she allowed her own personal relationships and experiences to color how she engaged as an educator to her students. Having a college-aged son helped her better empathize with her students while recognizing the palpable impact she could have just by checking in with them and trying to support them. Daisy concluded that a teacher was:

... a different role, and it's an important role, and it's a resource for them and just being able to be that for so many kids so hopefully they feel seen and heard and supported. That's the beauty of it, right? That's the lucky part, I guess.

Daisy framed her role as an educator akin to other participants, as important and as a resource to help students feel seen, heard, and supported. She also used the words "beauty" and "lucky" to highlight the reciprocity of this exchange, perhaps influenced by her own experiences with her college-aged son. Just as she hoped to positively touch the lives of her students, Daisy maintained that same open-mindedness to her role as an educator being shaped by and transformed through each student encounter. Faculty in this study underscored their hope that some of their students found their experiences in the classroom to be transformative and liberating in some capacity, allowing them to develop critical thinking capabilities and practical skills that could benefit them in their other classes. At the same time, this impact did not have to

be momentous to be felt. By viewing their education through a slightly different lens and learning to be better self-advocates for themselves, students could carry the toolkit handed to them by their FYE instructors to their later college classes and even find transferability in their post-college life.

Communities of Teaching and Communities of Practice

This section aligns with the second research question and examines how participants fostered formal and informal communities of teaching and communities of practice through their membership in the FYE program and beyond. This section is divided into four sections: (a) FYE as the exchange of best practices and knowledge between linked faculty pairs, from the program coordinator, and as a broader campus community; (b) sharing syllabi as repositories of information and tools for advancing equity, striking a balance between best practices and highly personalized pedagogical approaches and values; (c) mentorships and collaborations as springboards for ideas and growth, in addition to offering support navigating the campus and its constituents; and (d) professional development opportunities at the institutional level that further facilitated growth for participants as faculty members and educators.

FYE as the Exchange of Best Practices and Knowledge

Participants extensively shared past and current experiences working in FYE and being paired with a linked faculty partner in their cohort. While they detailed overwhelming positive experiences collaborating with their linked faculty, some participants also described semesters where these collaborations were nearly nonexistent, prompted by a combination of factors such as cross-disciplinary differences, a lack of proximity of office space, competing obligations on campus, and varying pedagogical approaches. Participants praised the coordination and cohort

model of FYE, pointing to it as a community of learners for students and faculty alike that facilitated strong bonds outside the classroom.

Some participants also observed differences between their FYE and non-FYE classes that led them to center different bodies of knowledge when engaging with both. Dave addressed differences between his FYE and non-FYE students related to technology and college knowledge. He talked about the fact that FYE students were often the same age, as they had recently graduated from high school, while there was more diversity in age amongst his non-FYE students. He believed there was “a lack of knowledge” within his non-FYE classes about scholarships, financial aid, class registration, educational plans, and transfer, which he considered important and tried to “fill in some of those gaps” during class time. His older, non-traditionally aged students struggled more with technology on average and lacked certain skills, specifically related to Google Workspace. While he believed this had improved since the COVID-19 pandemic, he still perceived a gap, as his younger students seemed more acquainted with online learning since they “grew up with Chromebooks.” Thus, the varying needs, skills, and demographics of Dave’s FYE classes necessitated different approaches to pedagogy and teaching them.

Sharing Syllabi and Common Themes and Assignments Amongst FYE Linked Partners

Participants described both similar and dissimilar experiences exchanging syllabi, themes, and assignments between FYE linked partners. Dave met the faculty member his FYE class was linked to prior to the start of the semester to try and find commonalities. The year prior, he and Daisy tried creating a common theme and materials about social media rather than a common book or movie. While he believed many faculty did this, he acknowledged the work it entailed and how the FYE coordinator compensated them using grant money. He mentioned

English faculty being close in terms of both proximity and their relationships, and that it was nice to share dialogue about how students were doing across their classes. Dave and other faculty also shared assignments or themes, as he recalled attending an FYE conference in Seattle and meeting the author of a book titled *First Gen*, which he and other faculty members planned to use the following fall semester as a common text. He mentioned that many counselors in the program also read this book and the program coordinator bought several copies of it.

Daisy confirmed a sense of camaraderie that existed among FYE faculty, while acknowledging that cross-disciplinary partnerships sometimes made it more challenging for faculty to find enough time and opportunities to truly connect. She mentioned that:

We all lean on each other for sure. It's really important, that camaraderie. I will say, one of the interesting things about FYE is because there's cross-disciplinary partners, so right now my cohort is with an art history class, that is much harder. There's a lot of FYE faculty that are English teachers, which is nice. It's an incredible group of instructors. Cross-disciplinary, it's a little bit harder because I don't see my partner on a daily basis, so you definitely need to make that time to connect. It's also a little bit harder because my curriculum is done and I teach [critical thinking] in and out of FYE, and I don't want to have to teach two different classes. So creating a true cohort learning experience can be challenging, because my class is done and their class is done, so it's really just trying to find places to cross over. And so, I feel like the benefit is less about the intersectional learning and more about the cohort.

Daisy had her partner's Canvas shell to try and make connections when they emerged organically, but she cited this as being "challenging" even when adding an assignment since her curriculum was already complete. Similarly to Dave, she believed the English department had more camaraderie compared to others in the program because of the sheer number of English faculty who worked in FYE. Thus, proximity of office space played a role in strengthening or distancing these bonds. Almost every cohort paired English with another subject, while she did not think her partner who taught art history was in communication with other FYE instructors. Thus, she believed it was "easier" for English faculty.

Daisy constantly leaned on her colleagues for best practices, questions, and feedback, believing “it’s so important ... having each other.” She interacted mostly with FYE faculty but did not know if she “seeks it out, it just happens,” describing FYE faculty as “the types of instructors that are more likeminded and have the same sort of commitments and styles.” While FYE fostered a certain degree of intentionality that better fostered faculty bonds, an element of self-selection may also have existed where faculty who believed in the value of FYE actively sought it out and thus connected faster and better.

Sophia expressed a similar belief in FYE and what it stood for, even hoping her own children would join the program. She stated:

If you go down this row ... it’s FYE row ... because I really believed in [FYE] and I wanted my kids to be in a program that would help them navigate college and help them, I love the cohort idea, I feel like, one, you learn more, two, you have people around you that have at least two classes together, they end up staying more, they end up hanging out together, then they also end up helping each other in a way that’s like, “Hey, did you end up doing your homework?” Not in a cheating way per se, but they help each other stay motivated, which I like.

Sophia mentioned that she “kind of snuck into [the] spot” of a previous FYE professor who considered leaving and became an assistant dean. She described the program, stating, “It’s really [being] a first year experience because I’m their person, they come to me, I do so many scholarship requests, job things, because I’ve seen them more than 16 weeks.” As she was an English instructor, her description of “FYE row” highlighted the row of offices near each other and the tightknit partnerships between the English department and FYE, as well as the strong representation of English faculty within the program itself, which was echoed by Dave and Daisy. Sophia shared:

I think FYE bonds them, but I think it also bonds them to their professor and they know they can go to them and their counselors and there will always be something that’s going to have their back. And they don’t really realize how good it is until they get mushed out and they’re in gen pop trying to get a counselor with 28,000 other people, and then

they're like, "What? I have to schedule an appointment two weeks in advance to see a counselor?" So, I'm like, you guys don't even know how good you have it. So, I think that whole program, [the program coordinator] is just masterful, I respect what she does and how she does it and everyone's just so down to earth. I like that, and I think the students like it too, like they know.

Sophia also talked about how many FYE students came back and said they learned so much more at Bay College than they did at their transfer institution. She often wrote her students letters of recommendation for graduate school because they did not get to know any of their instructors after transferring. Thus, the bonds formed between students and between students and staff and faculty members in FYE played a key role in how "masterful" the program and its coordinator were in creating a multilayered community. She went on to state that:

With FYE, I keep them, they stay with me for the year, they know they can always come back, they can talk to [the program coordinator], and she'll bring students that we've had back and they'll come and talk and be the student talking people.

Despite being called "first year" experience, many participants such as Sophia cited a major strength of the program as sustaining bonds throughout a student's time at Bay College and beyond. Furthermore, Sophia believed FYE was good because they could be "choosey." She stated it was:

A special program. If someone's not working out, you don't have to have that person back. And if you hear really good things about somebody, maybe they're new and we have a spot, like, "Hey, would you like to try FYE? It's this crew." And there's the other thing, your class is big, because FYE works their butt off to fill your classes. It has counselors. They have their selling points, so FYE helps make us a more respectable faculty because we know our schedule, we know it's going to happen, we're not up in the air having to change classes two weeks out.

Sophia mentioned that students got to know their FYE faculty and "it's much easier when connecting with people close." She previously worked with psychology and social sciences instructors and always tried coordinating themes or ideas. Sophia coordinated more assignments in the past, which proved to be difficult when newer people came on board who had "already

done all their stuff.” She clarified that linked classes still exchanged syllabi and often tried to share an overarching theme, such as power and all the different kind of ramifications of power in her cohort. Sophia’s class covered the themes of love, sex, and morality, which she believed were “easy to fit power into.” Sophia stated that FYE instructors often checked in with each other about how certain students were doing in their classes, sometimes on a weekly basis.

Stacy also connected with FYE faculty a couple times a semester, typically after meetings, and had recently met one at a nearby bakery. They believed the FYE faculty coordinator “picks the ones that really care” and that FYE faculty “probably, on average, [did] more” than their non-FYE peers, including chasing down students, which required time and care. They did not believe it was easy to chase down students who got lost in their division because of their higher classroom cap at 45 to 50 students. Similarly to Stacy, Cheryl talked about the two to three FYE meetings that took place each semester: one at the beginning checking in, another one occasionally mid-semester, and a final one preparing for the next semester and introducing their new cohort and partner. During these meetings, they discussed general FYE-related topics, and afterwards, “it was up to each of [them] to meet with [their] partner.”

Cheryl also partnered with an anthropology professor that semester, and they met to brainstorm ideas. However, they did not come up with a shared assignment, instead discussing themes, readings, and class topics. She liked occasionally asking her partner what he did in his class. Her previous reading and composition class was linked with political science, whose instructor was “really into it,” coming up with a shared assignment she used for a research paper. Their students researched a topic in the field of political science, writing a paper for her class and presenting it in her partner’s class. She stated, “It just kind of depends on who you’re partnered with, and how they want to link up on things. But I like the flexibility of it. It’s really

up to us to decide how we want to collaborate.” Although Cheryl had not seen another FYE faculty member’s syllabus besides her partner’s, she was “sure [she] could ask” if she wanted to.

While Stacy and Cheryl consistently collaborated with their FYE partners over the years, Diane had slightly different and less consistent experiences interacting, or barely interacting at all, with her FYE partner. She talked about how:

Some people don’t want to collaborate quite as much, or they’re open to it, but they don’t initiate ... so it kind of depends on other people, [who] have been very open and wanting to make it happen and put some ideas out there ... it’s definitely a mixed bag, and that’s totally fine. That’s okay. But of course, I don’t get to work with them very much unless we collaborate more ... so when I go to the FYE meetings sometimes, I’m like, “Who are all these [people]?” because I haven’t been linked with them, right? So, I don’t know them very well sometimes.

Diane shared that exchanging syllabi and running through a few ideas that may be parallel was the norm for FYE faculty. Sometimes her linked professor acted as an observer in her Canvas shell so they could see what was going on in the class, as well as vice versa. She described this as an extra step, stating, “It was a little bit of a pain, I wish it was easier to make happen, in some ways I kind of wish they just did it for us ... but you have to have everybody on board with that.” Diane also stated that this partnership depended on how she or the other faculty picked up on certain ideas and took it from there. She believed her collaborations were a bit more involved this semester than before. Earlier, Daisy had mentioned being unsure if her linked art history professor was in communication with any other FYE faculty. While some FYE links occurred organically and spanned common themes or assignments, other partnerships across disciplines or physical buildings on campus were not always as successful, requiring extra effort on behalf of both linked faculty members to sustain.

Haley also described her first few semesters in FYE as “a little disappointing,” as she did not feel very connected to her partner. As a new faculty member in the program, she expected

her partner to “show [her] the ropes,” which she felt did not happen. She admitted that some of her feelings may have stemmed from expecting her partner to assign her book while not changing much about how she ran her own class. She did not find much of an exchange of ideas that took place and felt these students just had two classes together, which was “not good.”

However, Haley had much better experiences since then. She loved the professor she was paired with in the previous spring semester. While they wanted to do more cross-collaboration on assignments and that ultimately did not happen, she felt they did their best and she finally had a faculty member she truly connected with. She mentioned that English classes covered “anything” and a wide range of topics, so her linked faculty could incorporate some of her topics into their class. Haley felt she had not changed much about her teaching, instead sharing what she taught with her linked partner and having them incorporate it in some ways. She found this collaboration to be “really fun” and told the FYE coordinators she would love a chance to work together again. While they were not paired again the following semester to Haley’s disappointment, they did get paired together the semester afterwards.

Haley’s partner that semester, who taught dance appreciation, was the most involved linked professor she had. His assignment required students to choreograph a dance and perform it at the school auditorium as part of a larger dance performance. Haley said the students worked in groups to choreograph a dance inspired by her assigned textbook, *Street Life*. She stated, “He’s really taking my curriculum and making it a part of his. It’s really cool.” The author of the book wrote about learning Aztec dancing, which became an integral part of his identity and life. Her linked partner took this opportunity to learn Aztec dancing as part of the performance. One of their students spoke up, voicing discomfort because they were not Aztec and had concerns regarding cultural appropriation and cultural insensitivity. Haley respected this student for

expressing their lack of comfort to a person in a position of authority, drawing from what they learned in sociology to make an informed point. She felt so proud and made sure to acknowledge this in class.

Similarly to other participants, Amber shared syllabi with her linked professor the previous semester, in addition to discussing students who struggled in their classes. She tried integrating the reading in their English class with what they covered mathematically in her class. She read several of the many short stories they were assigned. If they had a novel instead, she would have turned all the activities and word problems into stories from it. While she typically related all their word problems back to English stories, she was unable to that semester because there was no assigned book. She also said this approach was only possible in precalculus and not in trigonometry, which lacked word problems. When she taught statistics or even algebra, she tried grabbing real-life stories, which modern textbooks incorporated more of into their own word problems. While forming cross-disciplinary connections was not always an organic process for Amber, she tried fostering them whenever possible.

Allen shared navigating similar difficulties in establishing links across disciplines, as he also typically exchanged syllabi with the faculty member he was linked with each semester. He had only been linked with one faculty more than once, whom he “loves working with ... and [they] work great together.” They brainstormed areas they could link their classes together, which led him to realize he was most successful linking English and political science classes together. On the other hand, he had the least success linking with statistics classes, which he found ironic because of his love of statistics. His issue was that “if students are struggling in that class, it is hard for [him] to give them a linked assignment that makes them use the skills they may not have gained yet to do well in [his] class.” He tried talking about data in his lectures and

helping his students read some charts. He also had “nothing against the stats faculty [he] worked with,” as he adored some of them. However, if students were not passing their statistics class, not because of the instructor but because “stats is hard for students,” he did not want them to then “suffer” in his class because of a project requiring them to understand statistics to do well in it. He stated that working with English classes was:

Fantastic, in part because they’re so fluid. They have everything they have to get through, but they have a lot more flexibility in what they bring in, have them read, discuss, and the assignments they do to meet that curriculum, that they can link it with poli sci pretty easily. We’ve worked together to create linked projects, so this semester I work with [Dave] and we’re doing media literacy. I’m also working with [another critical thinking professor] and we’re doing political conspiracy theories and debunking them and all that. I actually need to reach out to them and ask if I can see the prompts for their assignments because I would have them present their research for their final research paper in my class and I need to figure out how to link it better.

Allen shared other assignments he worked on together with his linked professor, such as picking a fictional villain and running them as a presidential candidate, which entailed making campaign signs, slogans, speeches, and commercials. He mentioned students really enjoying this assignment and getting to vote to see which villain became president. He usually displayed the poster voted by the class as the best. He also linked with his partner as soon as a student struggled or stopped attending. However, he discussed less with his linked faculty how to teach or discuss certain topics, as he typically talked to his own departmental faculty about these issues due to content area knowledge. He focused instead on discussing how to link assignments to make the class a more robust experience for the students.

Peter filled in for an FYE faculty member early on his career, which allowed him to join the program and continue staying in it. His partner at the time explained to him how FYE worked, sparing him from having to figure everything out on his own. This partner also asked FYE to give her more classes with him because she enjoyed working with him, which was

important to him as an adjunct faculty because FYE classes were always filled. Thus, he had a reliable source of income by working well with another faculty member.

Peter talked about his current link, Derek, who taught a graphic novel class with an assigned reading of George Takei's graphic novel *They Called Us Enemy*, which was about his time in a concentration camp as a child during World War II. Peter and Derek took their students on a field trip to the Japanese American National Museum, which featured an art exhibit the students loved. He described himself and Derek as friends who were both passionate about comic books, as his own sabbatical was on them. He found linking with professors to be a "very cool way to learn what other people are doing." He admitted not all FYE links were "super strong ... sometimes it's hard to make the material kind of touch." However, he appreciated the accountability aspect of having a cohort, as he could reach out to his partner if a student was absent from his class. Peter and Sophia also collaborated on themes in the past, which coincidentally worked out very well even though they did not assign the same readings.

Mirroring many other participants, Ronald typically exchanged syllabi with his linked partner on the first day of the semester for every cohort he had been a part of. He tried reaching out to his partner in the middle of the off-semester, such as sometime in August at the latest if they taught in the fall, to get together and plan ideas out. Depending on the faculty and their availability and content, they strategized at least twice that semester and twice the semester before. He met some faculty twice or thrice a semester, while he met others only once at the beginning of the semester and then continued the rest of their correspondence via email. He made sure to check in with FYE faculty about students "bombing" in his class. However, he was buildings apart from his previous linked faculty due to their disciplines, which "makes it a little

bit difficult, but not impossible.” His partner at the time was next door, so they talked every week and would pop into each other’s door. Ronald stated:

The proximity has made it really easy for us to keep track of everybody and create shared content. I teach a play and then she happened to teach the second play by the same person. We were able to really keep our theme tied. The essays were about things happening in her class, but they had to find artistic forms that represent that thing in my class and write about it. So, for us, it’s been a super tight connection with a lot of interaction.

Ronald met with his other link twice and exchanged half a dozen emails. Both instructors covered similar content, as he somewhat knew the structure of their class and slightly flipped his class around for it. The other day, one of his students told him the content they learned reminded them of their linked anthropology class. He mentioned this cross-pollination, which should have occurred, had occurred even without being shoehorned in. Participants cited physical distance between linked faculty as a potential barrier to their collaboration frequency, although they still tried to correspond via email and sustain more covert exchanging of materials, such as their syllabi and Canvas shells.

Tomas connected with many English faculty, some of whom he described as “really good and on top of their game.” He specifically pointed out Dave, who was “a big guy on campus, a pretty tough demeanor, but most accessible, hardworking instructor you would come across.” He described all other FYE faculty he worked with the same way. At the same time, he acknowledged how these faculty could only do so much at the college, which did not always allow them to come together and realize their “grandiose plans” because of their time-consuming nature. However, anytime he came across Ronald, Dave, or the faculty coordinator of the FYE program, there was:

A good connection, a good understanding, and we do enough, I would say. We could do more, but they stretch us in so many different directions at this campus. My hat’s off to those FYE instructors who beyond FYE are very, very reactive. You become one of these

stretchy dolls, and they stretch you out all over the place and they spread you out thinly, right? And you can't cover all bases for whatever you do.

While Tomas believed that FYE faculty did enough and sustained strong connections, he acknowledged the time and labor this work entailed. Many FYE faculty seemed to possess a strong work ethic and student-centered approach due to their participation in the program, but this same level of commitment was difficult to maintain due to competing obligations across campus. Most participants described positive experiences and active collaborations with their FYE peers, although several, namely Sophia, Diane, and Haley, described semesters or years where this connection had not quite developed. Rather than attributing this lack of a connection to minimal effort on behalf of faculty or a weakness in program coordination, it seemed to stem from a combination of factors, including cross-disciplinary and/or physical distance, competing institutional responsibilities, and differing pedagogical approaches.

FYE as Cultivating Communities of Scholars and Educators

Many participants praised the community aspect of FYE and suggested ways it could be further strengthened and built upon, some of which were even immediately implemented. For example, Haley also taught for a program called MyPATH, where she received an embedded counselor and peer-assisted student support mentor. While many of her students did not take as much advantage of this service as she thought they should, she still believed it was a valuable component of her class. She considered the embedded mentor to be a piece that was missing for FYE. At the end of the previous semester, she told the FYE coordinators about a student she recruited to be her mentor for her online classes. While very few of her online students sought out this mentor, she believed some of her FYE students could have benefited. However, she could not refer her students to this mentor because she was paid by MyPATH. She described this as “wrong” and questioned how to get a tutor for her FYE students. The FYE coordinators told

her they had the funding to make this happen and got an embedded tutor in the class by working together with the library. While she understood that access to this resource may become more difficult with budget cuts looming on the horizon, she would have loved to see embedded tutors be a piece of each FYE class.

Diane would also have liked to see different ideas for improved collaborations in FYE, such as how honors instructors adapt the content for their own classes. Due to her extensive participation in the program, she “knows how to, [she] just wants to know how other people do it so that [she] can get new ideas.” She described faculty as “idea people,” as she would start to question if a certain approach was for the best and emphasized the importance of being open to change. She believed even just having faculty share what they did in a successful collaboration was helpful.

Daisy sought out FYE because “community is critical to success in college” and she loved the idea of cohort and community teaching, especially for community college students who did not live in dorms or on campus and oftentimes went home and had jobs. To Daisy, FYE was a program that “champions community” and provided opportunities for students to make connections and get to know each other, which in turn created more success. She appreciated how FYE students were often transfer-focused and aspired to “help students see that they are scholars and academics even if they did not view themselves that way in the beginning.” She aimed to create this messaging and provide opportunities for community and strong support systems, as she believed this was a “model that really highlights all of the things that go into creating student success.” She wished she could give this to all her classes. Even in her non-FYE classes:

I really strongly try to create a sense of community, try to do things outside the class, really do a lot of group work because I know that makes such a difference and is one of

the parts of community college that students just don't have, that on-campus living. It's just harder. So yes, intentionally, right away, I wanted to be a part of FYE. I think it's great. Cohort teaching is an awesome opportunity, too.

Daisy found the community aspect of FYE to be an invaluable piece of the program's appeal to faculty, while praising how this community also filled a gap that led many community college students to feel disconnected to their campus. She cited multiple benefits for students seeking to join FYE, including forming connections, receiving a strong support system, and a focus on viewing oneself as a scholar. She described herself and fellow faculty in the program as equally supported in building this sense of community and deriving benefits from it.

Stacy talked to fellow FYE faculty more prior to the start of the pandemic and thought it was "really nice to have a community." They also believed the community aspect was not easily replicated outside of FYE, finding it interesting how much seemingly disparate disciplines and fields had in common. Likewise, Derek would like to see "the proliferation, the speed of FYE and programs like it because of what it offers students in terms of a more coherent college experience." He thought of his own six-year-old daughter eventually attending a higher education institution, as she was proud of him for being a teacher and wanted to attend his school someday and even enroll in his class. While he joked this would not happen because it was "weird," conversations like this encouraged Derek to reflect on the kind of experience a student would have at Bay College versus a four-year institution. He stated:

The social and intellectual bonds I made in undergraduate were so valuable to me. I married someone who I met in that program. I would want my own daughter to have the same kind of opportunity for connection, not just to find a spouse, but to find some great intellectual, social connections that can really help gel and solidify and support an academic experience. Programs like FYE, honors transfer, and Puente, the various iterations that we always try, it's good to bring that kind of opportunity for connection to community college students.

Derek believed programs such as FYE could serve as communities and opportunities for intellectual and social connections, citing his own undergraduate experience as an example. His willingness to promote programs such as FYE to students stemmed from his own belief in their value and effectiveness, as well as his desire to sustain similar programs across college campuses for future generations of college students and scholars, including his own daughter.

FYE Leadership as a Guiding Anchor Amidst Times of Uncertainty

Several participants praised the faculty coordinator of FYE as a strong reason why they experienced such positive feelings towards the program and their own participation in it. Sophia said she “literally would not go anywhere else” because of FYE and its program coordinator, the deans, and the people in general at Bay College. She discussed how many of them had been there together at the college for a while and even had children who had already grown up into teenagers. Despite qualms Sophia expressed with how administration at Bay College viewed and treated faculty, she cited the FYE coordinator as a strong motivation for her wanting to stay at the school.

Stacy also liked the faculty coordinator of FYE because she was “no bullshit” and defied traditional gender roles. They stated:

In the sense that she’s not like happy face, this is okay, she just says I have no time for this, this is how it is, her replies are always like a sentence or one sentence. I appreciate that in general because it’s efficient and I especially admire that in a woman because there are so many societal pressures that we be soft and whatever. She just gets it done and I appreciate efficiency. She’s very efficient.

Stacy cited the faculty coordinator as a big reason why they enjoyed working in FYE, believing they would not be a part of the program if they had to work with someone whose work style they did not agree with. They described FYE students as being at a higher level compared to the general population because they were prescreened and required to attend several summer

orientations prior to the start of the academic year. They praised FYE's support systems for doing a great job at wraparound services for students, which flagged issues in the centralized online system for students, instructors, counselors, and other support staff that did not "simply go out into the ether" since "actual people" worked to resolve them.

Derek also chimed in on the positive impact FYE could have not just on students, but also on the faculty housed within it. He wished programs such as FYE could be expanded because of their benefits for students and faculty alike:

If there was a way to have programs like FYE and the honors transfer program be available to more students and faculty. I know that these programs aren't for everybody. Some people do really just want to swoop in, get their classes, and dip. But I think, even if more people knew about these programs, more students would want to be part of it.

Derek wondered if the onus was on him and other FYE faculty to share the benefits of the program to their colleagues, as "providing a more cohesive educational experience is nothing but good. [He's] not sure that [he would] need more time or money, which is an odd thing to say, but maybe just more opportunities to share out." He generally felt well-supported by the college and considered FYE a great program not just for students to feel supported, but also for faculty interested in "this kind of teaching." He also appreciated how FYE faculty received an additional stipend for their coordination hours with their counterparts. While Derek believed the amount of additional work entailed by joining a support program such as FYE may deter some faculty, he considered the stipend they received to be a generous compensation for this extra time and labor. He also considered the community of learning that faculty cultivated and engaged in through FYE to be a worthwhile benefit capable of enhancing each faculty member's experience at Bay College.

The Syllabus as a Repository of Information and Tool for Advancing Equity

Many participants described their course syllabi as living, breathing documents that evolved over time just as they had as educators, accommodating for substantial changes in course modalities due to the COVID-19 pandemic while aiming to become clearer and more equity-minded. As most participants exchanged syllabi with their linked partners in FYE, these documents also symbolized the exchange of information and best practices as crafted and polished across various life stages and career milestones. Stacy cited teaching in human development for eight years prior to transferring to psychology as heavily influential on their focus on highlighting food and housing resources in their course syllabus. Stacy described the section of their syllabus on the required text being free as important for equity purposes and enjoyed keeping their language “real simple” for grading purposes. Before and at the start of class, Stacy provided masks for their students and had a section in their course syllabus dedicated to their masking policy and equity, stating that:

Equity in the community is important. Refusing to mask indoors is a manifestation of ableism and racism, an exercise of individual privilege that tells the most vulnerable that their health does not matter. In this class, we will not do that.

This section aligned with the code of conduct for the class listed in Stacy’s course syllabus that highlighted the importance of professionalism in the classroom as practiced through preparation, civility, and integrity.

Dave had strict late policies he believed were necessary for keeping his students accountable and motivated while maintaining clear expectations. His syllabus stated:

Late penalties motivate all of us to do things we normally don’t want to do (paying taxes, renewing our driver’s license, etc).

We have a limited amount of time to get through the course material. As soon as you fall behind, the course work “snowballs” and can quickly become an avalanche.

Use any late penalties to alter your behavior.

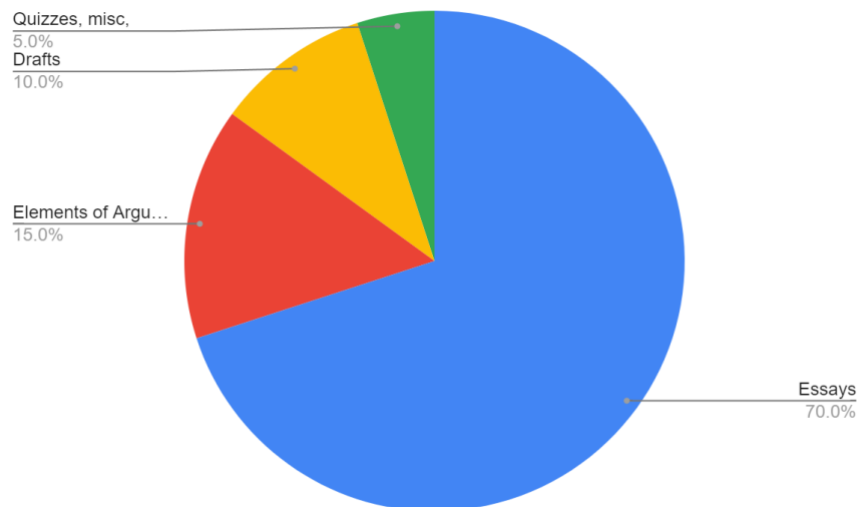
Success Tip: My successful students usually complete work well before the due date.

When Dave asked his students at the start of the semester how many of them would want to take a class with no due dates, most of them did not raise their hands because they would “never get the work done.” Thus, they came to “some sort of agreement” that due dates were important. He believed that due dates came with consequences, which he ended up being “pretty strict” about, unless a tragedy occurred, which he would “obviously be compassionate” about. He said this was meant to teach his students to be good at time management. He also asked his better students how they got their work done, to which most of them answered with doing their work “way before the due date.”

Dave listed resources at the end that were recommended by the Academic Senate to be included in syllabi, while he displayed a picture of his office when listing his office hours. A lot of the material in his syllabus came from best practices, especially for online classes. Dave also listed course policies on a separate document that talked a little more about attendance and plagiarism. He assigned his students a quiz on Canvas during the first week of class asking about specific items in the syllabus he would like them to pay attention to, typically about his office hours. Dave pointed out a graphic he took inspiration from a part-time instructor while evaluating her. The following graphic was displayed in his section on course evaluation:

Figure 5.1

Breakdown of Course Evaluation



Dave believed that “students tend to focus on the small, easy stuff.” Thus, he felt drawn to this pie chart because it “visually tells them [they] need to spend [their] time on the essays” because it was most of what their final grade in the class was based on. Another reason Dave provided this graphic was to deter his students from allocating too much time to their quizzes, setting clearer expectations that would better set them up for success.

The top of Daisy’s course syllabus read, “Welcome! I’m so glad you’re here” in colored cursive text accompanied by three hearts in corresponding colors. Immediately below the text was a picture of herself wrapped around a paragraph welcoming her students to the class and congratulating them on choosing to attend Bay College and FYE. She said she felt privileged to be a part of their journey at “a special time in [their lives] that will encourage personal growth, discovery, and change as [they] continue [their] journey to adulthood.” She mentioned FYE being a “really special opportunity” that most college students, even those attending four-year

institutions, did not receive. She encouraged her students to set up study groups and group chats “right away” to take advantage of the linked community format of FYE.

Right below Daisy’s listed office hours, she wrote, “I encourage you to visit! My goal is to help you succeed! I am here for you, so never be afraid to ask for help.” In her section outlining her participation policy, Daisy also stated, “Participation is important for a mastery of the course material. More importantly, participation fosters a rich and inclusive learning environment. All voices and perspectives are celebrated here; all voices and perspectives are necessary for personal and academic growth.” In this same section, she underscored the importance of communication to serve her students equitably as they ran into challenges throughout the semester, allowing her to “work with [them] on a case-by-case basis should a need arise.” Daisy also had a section on academic honesty and plagiarism detailing how cheating ran counter to the goal of the class, which was “to grow as a critical thinker and a writer,” particularly regarding the use of AI.

Daisy shared how her syllabus “definitely evolved,” and while she believed it still needed to further evolve, she tried making it more “conversational.” Her syllabus also helped her transition some of her classes into a completely online format. Daisy shared how most of her syllabi when she started college were in “that time period” and employed “fear and scare tactics,” saying something to the effect of “look on both sides of you and half of you aren’t going to make it through this semester.” These experiences led her to wonder, “Isn’t learning supposed to be this thing that people enjoy?” She felt sad how some of her students began hating school in kindergarten, as:

We set up a culture that school is not supposed to be a place of joy and fun and learning and discovery and exploration. It’s a place where you have to sit and follow the rules and turn in things and be graded. I just think we have it all wrong. I think we have to do an overhaul of the system. Change the world.

At the same time, Daisy wanted her students to know “it doesn’t have to be this scary, terrible document that feels punitive.” Daisy’s syllabus came off as welcoming and centered on student success and growth, even with the addition of colors, pictures, and font types that made the document appear visually varied and stimulating. By implying that both she and the students alike could benefit from being at Bay College and in FYE, Daisy aimed to subtly dismantle power dynamics and foster a co-collaborative space.

Sophia’s description of the course in the syllabus advised that “an open mind will benefit you when trying to retain material.” This student-centered approach aligned with what she shared in her syllabus about aiming to respond “as quickly as possible” and get back to students within the same day if they reached out to her by 10pm. Further reaffirming her accessibility to students, Sophia provided her Instagram handle in her syllabus and encouraged students to Direct Message her there with quick questions or to schedule a video conference. She also included a large equity statement at the top of her syllabus reiterating the Bay College English department’s commitment to fostering an “inclusive, anti-racist, culturally responsive environment,” as well as acknowledging her own role in contributing to this environment and understanding how an individual’s lived experiences and systemic structures affected their approaches to their own education.

Aiming to be flexible and accommodating with her students, Sophia included a section at the end of her syllabus explicitly detailing her policy for accepting late work, directly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. She wrote in bold that she knew “life happens” and late work would still be accepted if it was submitted before seven days elapsed from the assignment deadline, except for finals. Sophia also took this opportunity to emphasize the importance of completing coursework in a timely manner to succeed, as the assignments utilized scaffolding.

She tried including “as many free links” as she could get to align with her equity statement, along with:

Buying the cheapest books and all of Thoreau’s essays for a dollar ... I’m all about free. I’m like the Marshalls of education ... I have four kids. I was paying five or six hundred dollars in books ... so, free stuff. I’ll all about free stuff. It’s access too. It has to be accessible. I like the services. I do a lot of services, because, one, I want them to be able to come to me, or come to you, or come to [the program coordinator], but if they can’t, I want them to have, again, access to everything we have here at [Bay College] ... the syllabus is a one-stop shop. If you don’t know the answer to a question, ask me or go there. If you’re like, “I don’t want to tell my English teacher I’m having suicidal thoughts,” then they know they can go to the syllabus and go, “I remember she had that thing there.” You know?

While Sophia did not necessarily intend for her syllabus to serve as her proxy to students, she wanted it to serve as a haven of resources and support that students could seek out if they hesitated to reach out to her directly. Sophia hoped her students would not only have greater access to her personalized support by providing her Instagram handle, but she also focused on increasing their access to other avenues, such as textbooks and mental health resources.

Haley’s syllabus began with the following bell hooks quote from *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*: “As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence” (hooks, 1994, p. 8). She loved this quote and made sure to talk about it with her students prior to diving into the rest of her course syllabus. Occasionally, Haley asked her students to take out the syllabus again to review if she felt they were not engaged fully or closely enough. She would like her students to get know each other, including on a name basis, so she provided everyone with name tents. She also encouraged her students to invite a classmate to their group if they were alone, trying to “create a community where they look out for each other and honor each other.”

Haley's course syllabus changed significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Her teaching philosophy, which had "not always been" on her syllabus, stated:

As a professor of sociology and women's studies, I am dedicated to student-centered pedagogy. To me, this means making your success my top priority by creating a learning environment that is **supportive, engaging, inclusive, and equity-minded**. It is imperative to me that students are able to connect their lived experiences to class material. To support this endeavor, it is my mission that together, we will work to enhance your research, writing, and critical thinking skills. Ultimately, I hope that this student-centered approach encourages a strong sense of personal responsibility in my students and inspires you to be a compassionate and confident agent of social change. ☺

Haley was nominated thrice for a distinguished faculty award, which she received the third time. As part of the nomination, Haley was required to submit information about herself, which she found "awkward" and "self-promoting." One of the requested items was a teaching philosophy, which she previously never put on paper. After crafting her teaching philosophy, Haley believed it should be shared with students, as she always "took it seriously" even if she had not previously articulated it.

Haley also changed the heading "class policies" to "class norms" to create a more equity-minded syllabus, adopting language that could be modified to sound more inclusive and less punitive and authoritarian. Likewise, she changed the wording of the heading "class policies" to "classroom etiquette" to highlight her class being a community of learners. Her section on academic integrity used to be at the bottom of her course syllabus, but she moved it closer to the top after AI changed the academic landscape. She provided the analogy of "baking a cake," comparing active learning classes to "icing on the cake" that accommodated the flipped classroom model and encouraged her students to do the work prior to coming to class. Haley's syllabus evolved from a combination of hybrid teaching, equity training, and being nominated as a distinguished faculty, which provided her with opportunities to articulate pedagogy that had guided her teaching throughout her faculty career. Participants noted a similar evolution in their

own syllabi reflecting their professional development and response to changing circumstances in and outside the classroom, while underscoring their care for student growth and success and fostering a community of learners in the classroom.

Mentorship and Collaborations as Springboards for Ideas and Growth

Many participants, including Dave, Daisy, and Cheryl, described what they perceived to be a plethora of both formal and informal mentorship opportunities on campus, encompassing topics such as diversity, pedagogy, and administrative affairs. While some of these experiences were structured through academies crafted for the purpose of supporting faculty, many of these opportunities also emerged through happenstance, such as proximity of office space. Participants cited these mentorship encounters as key to them better conceptualizing themselves and their roles as educators, potentially diffusing tough situations with the school and coloring what they described as largely positive and fulfilling experiences working at Bay College.

Dave received mentorship on a variety of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) topics and listed a handful of individuals across campus doing “good stuff,” such as running regular brown bags and demonstrating and sharing their work in meetings. He loved evaluating other teachers, as he found this to be a source of inspiration and an opportunity for himself when viewing another faculty member’s syllabus, outline, or Canvas shell.

Most of Daisy’s mentoring at Bay College centered on best practices shared through faculty learning communities, as she had been involved in a couple in the past. She mentioned a new faculty learning academy on campus that needed to be reevaluated but generally felt as if she had done a lot and partaken in many opportunities throughout her time at the institution.

Cheryl also described formal mentorship assigned by her department during her time as a part-time faculty member. She received an email identifying a specific full-time faculty member

as her mentor, encouraging her to reach out with any questions. Cheryl's mentor reached out to her every few weeks. She did not recall reaching out very often to this person, but she connected with her dean regarding any questions she had, whom she found to be "very approachable" immediately upon being hired. As a full-time professor, she was assigned a mentor whose office was two doors down from hers. While this mentor texted Cheryl occasionally to ask how was doing, Cheryl still found she "could ask anybody" a question she had and felt comfortable doing so. Her first week in the office was "overwhelming" with everyone coming to her office, writing notes and cards to her, and expressing their happiness at having her on board. Two other faculty members were hired at the same time at her, which she appreciated because they could support, mentor, and encourage each other. However, there was no shortage of help available, "even just passing somebody in the hall if there was a question."

Cheryl's current dean was an assistant professor during her stint as a part-time instructor, which helped him feel "incredibly approachable" to her. She described her assistant dean the same way and felt that she always had both formal and informal mentoring available to her in the department. She wondered if she "still sees things through rose-colored glasses," however, as she frequently heard stories of other departments being competitive, backstabbing one another, or generally being unfriendly. To Cheryl, everyone in her division was "so nice" and:

I'm just trying to show up and do my job. I'm the head down, do my work kind of person. I'm not hustling and bustling, trying to get ahead. I just try to stay in my lane. I just feel incredibly supported and encouraged and blessed to be here, truly. It's a great place to work. I would recommend it to anybody.

Cheryl found veteran colleagues in her department to be approachable, which may have facilitated her in both identifying and pursuing formal and informal avenues of mentoring. However, she attributed this in part to her possessing a certain degree of idealism, as well as gratitude for her institution and the work it facilitated. When coupled with the friendly work

environment fostered within her department, Cheryl's desire to "stay in [her] lane" guided her towards support that further propelled her work and experience at Bay College, reinforcing a cycle of continual mentorship.

Tomas also received mentoring on campus, identifying his biggest connection as a professor in the history department who worked at Bay College for around twenty years. Tomas reached out to this professor with questions about administration and teaching effectiveness, describing them as having a good friendship and working relationship. Similarly to Cheryl, Tomas also visited the office of his former dean, who he wished still worked at the college, to "pick her brain." He mentored part-time faculty, full-time faculty, and recently hired faculty, who he described as "excellent in the classroom but don't quite know how the college functions yet, so [he steers them] in that direction." Some of them argued amongst themselves, leading him to "calm the waters." Tomas called himself the voice of reason, as he worked at the institution longer than many faculty members and encouraged them to look at the big picture and avoid creating conflict. This work took a "big toll" on him, as he sought to ensure the collegial experience was a good one for all parties involved. He stated that if faculty were not okay with their colleagues, they would not be okay with their students either. Tomas said: "You got to tighten all the screws, all the parts, otherwise, things are going to break on you. You don't want that."

While Tomas both received and provided mentorship that led to less tenuous experiences navigating institutional norms and culture, this work did not come at the expense of fatigue and greater opportunities for burnout resulting from unpaid labor. This informal mentorship was not listed in his job description but seemed to loom as an unspoken expectation to prevent the system from "breaking" and failing many of its constituents.

When asked about mentoring opportunities at Bay College, Isabelle took a slightly different approach from other participants by describing informal mentorship she was involved in through the Puente Project for a couple semesters, which highlighted faculty-student mentorship rather than peer faculty or dean-faculty mentorship. She also described similar opportunities for mentorship in the classroom, “If a student comes in, they confide in me and they ask me questions. I always see that as a way of mentoring.” She talked about a student she kept in touch with who was in her statistics class early on in her career:

She was a very good student, and I just threw it at her, “You should really think about doing math or stats.” And she said, “You know what, I thought about it, I just didn’t know I could do it.” We went back and forth, and after she took other classes, she decided to go into math and statistics. She did both. Really bright student. Did great. Went to UCI and then went to another college after that and then she became an actuary. She actually is doing something with statistics, and that’s basically what we talked about. I told her about this field, and she looked into it and it’s something that she really wanted to do. So, it’s great. The last time I spoke to her was during the pandemic, I think she was applying to get a position at one of those big risk management companies. She needed someone to give her a letter of recommendation. It’s great to see that she really listened and it worked out for her.

This experience mirrored those of many other participants from the first finding who offered more personalized support to their students. While mentorship in this study was initially framed from the lens of peer support that was either given or received, Isabelle’s excerpt highlighted the importance of informal faculty-student mentoring in shaping the nuanced ways faculty defined their role as educators and related to their campus and its broader community.

Professional Development Opportunities at the Institutional Level

Faculty cited various professional development opportunities offered at Bay College, particularly in the realms of distance education and pedagogy. However, many participants called for more structured faculty mentorship programs and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration on campus, as well as training in diversity, equity, and inclusion based on the lived

experiences of faculty and staff belonging to these groups. Participants appreciated the stipend they received from the college for their participation in FYE but believed this was for work they were already putting in. Many faculty also felt the onus was on them to seek out or even initiate their own professional development opportunities.

Derek believed the college did a very good job of supporting professional development, both on campus and for attending conferences, except for the 2020-2023 academic years due to the pandemic. Cheryl agreed that Bay College faculty had an abundance of professional development opportunities, sharing a technology conference she found fascinating and attended that semester with an AI theme. She talked about the conference's guest speaker and breakout sessions that facilitated opportunities for collaboration and hearing from other faculty about their AI usage. She also attended an equity conference the previous semester, which was "fantastic" with a memorable keynote speaker. She was first inspired to change her grading system at this conference, and to her surprise, she was also able to connect with mathematics faculty on grading at the equity conference. Both conferences took place at Bay College. Within her department, Cheryl described brown bags where faculty members shared what they did in their class that may differ from their peers. She also attended a documentary screening featuring a Q&A with the filmmaker for an equity event and volunteered her time at the Writing Studio, where she waited for students to come and ask for help to share best practices. Cheryl talked about the professional development credit faculty received for reading or even watching a TED talk if it was for their class, which allowed her to receive credit for attending a lecture by the author of one of the books she assigned in her class.

Cheryl also participated in the AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) read-in at the Social Justice Center, where faculty, students, and staff could bring a selection from an AAPI

author. This event inspired her to incorporate these readings in her literature class to ensure representation across all groups. The final piece of assigned reading in the class was a play by an Iranian American author, as well as poetry from authors of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. She identified her own need and desire to seek this out. Cheryl said the students responded “big time” to her efforts, as she allowed them to pick from a list of ten poems, and most of them selected an author they could identify with. She cited this as a direct consequence of the professional development opportunities she received, stating, “You just never know when you participate in these kinds of things, what they will spark, which is the goal. That’s the hope.”

Cheryl felt intimidated when she first became full-time faculty and learned the number of professional development hours required, but for her, this passed by before she even got to seek out all the opportunities she was interested in.

Isabelle attended the same technology conference as Cheryl, as she taught online classes. At the time, she also attended a conference on making online classes more accessible and available to all Californians. Similarly, most of the professional development opportunities she sought out revolved around technology. She believed the department provided training relevant to mathematics and pedagogy. However, she did not necessarily think other faculty were “open to [formally] sharing” how and what they did in their classrooms, as she stated, “If I ask, then I think they will share, but not to the level where they feel comfortable enough to be in a classroom and talk to people about it.” She wondered why this was the case and typically sought out professional development related to STEM, women in STEM, and providing more opportunities to students of color.

While the department did a good job of this, Isabelle highlighted pedagogy and mathematics as two areas she would like to see Bay College as a whole offer more professional

development opportunities for, specifically regarding teaching in STEM. She thought there was sufficient training provided for distance education and online classes, but she would like to see classes on math education and “how to teach math.” Although she was not entirely sure what this would look like, she spoke to other math teachers and math specialists and was forced to research this information on other platforms, such as on TikTok.

Sophia acknowledged the professional development opportunities organized by Bay College while questioning whether these resources and this funding was being used and allocated appropriately. She mentioned:

A better use of my time would be ... and we do this sometimes, sometimes we didn't have time, but when one of our staff development hours, we can just meet with our FYE partner. Let us use that time for something that's actually going to be useful. And it's also money. People are paying, we had to pay this speaker \$11,000 to come talk to us for blah blah blah. Like, really? [groans] So I think, we have a lot of people here that know a lot of stuff, like use your people. And we did a lot more of that, and I know we're all exhausted, we don't want another staff development thing, I get that. But also, I don't feel the need to hire somebody for \$10,000 to come in to talk to us for an hour and a half and do a workshop that no one's gonna go to after the fact to have them talk about more stuff they're doing in the Bay Area that doesn't really concern us.

Sophia identified her professional development wants as being both useful and connective, such as connecting with another faculty member. If she had never worked with her linked FYE partner before, she would have appreciated an hour of staff development allocated to meeting this instructor and exchanging syllabi and conversations. She believed faculty should be paid for their time and stated that:

It's not extra things that we're doing to be good humans on the outside. And FYE has the little 10-hour stipend, which is awesome, and very kind. But of course, we all do 10 hours of extra stuff. And at this point, I think most of us have been here for a long time, and a lot of the stuff is just recycled. It's not new ideas. It's just having a new acronym for an old idea.

Sophia found a lot of professional development opportunities offered at Bay College to be recycled ideas that faculty had already partaken in, rather than truly facilitating their growth and

promoting new ideas. She also wished this funding could be allocated towards more tangible areas directly benefiting faculty and students.

Dave also wished for more meaningful training in terms of pedagogy, which he believed was “really important and really helpful.” He described himself as amazed that more faculty did not attend more conferences. In the past year, he attended the FYE National Conference and InstructureCon, which was run by the same company that owned Canvas. To him, this was a “tremendous” conference that provided its attendees with a glimpse into upcoming changes to Canvas while incorporating pedagogy, diversity, and equity. Dave also planned to attend a statewide online teaching conference for the first time that summer. He mentioned Bay College’s technology conference offered every spring, which he thought was great and one of the most attended faculty development opportunities aside from flex day. This conference gathered a hundred faculty to learn about up-and-coming technology and digital pedagogy. Dave did not believe Bay College supported its technology conference as much as they should, as its organizers “really struggle” to raise money for lunches and guest speakers. He also mentioned a need for more professional development opportunities related to AI, which he believed would have a “profound impact on education.” While he thought colleges should get ahead of AI, he also stated the “technology is so new” that colleges were in the same boat and had not grasped its potential implications yet. Despite finding professional development opportunities related to technology abundant at Bay College, Dave found it disheartening how the funding allocated to them did not seem to reflect their importance and impact across campus.

Daisy called for more professional development opportunities at Bay College that were faculty-driven and involved learning from and observing fellow faculty, as well as allowing for traveling to conferences. She highlighted wanting to volunteer, which “should be a part of [their]

development” and could include observing other teachers and just generally learning from one another. She had a strong belief that faculty “need to be paid for all of [their] work,” which she thought FYE did, stating, “They do pay us for the additional work that we do for FYE. I think that that’s really important, and not because I’m money hungry, but why should I work for free? Nobody works for free. Nobody.” She would also like more time, support, and encouragement for professional learning and believed instructors should be attending more conferences and traveling. She thought every conference she attended was “valuable” and helped her stay current in her field. Daisy also called for more faculty-driven programs and talked about one she coordinated recently that struggled because “nobody really knew who we were supposed to be answering to, and so there was always a lot of runaround around funding.” She expressed a belief that administration did not like “the fact that it was a faculty-led program” but believed these programs were necessary because “faculty know what faculty need.” She asked for the college to listen to faculty and what their needs were.

Daisy attended many professional development opportunities at Bay College, although she also “created and ran” a lot of these. She attended a recent conference at the beginning of the semester through FYE, which was a program she described as being “good about that.” She also participated in a program over winter break called the Teaching Academy for Continuous Learning, which she thought was great and described as a five-day summit about equitable teaching practices where she got to observe someone in their classroom and revisit her own syllabus. She also got to attend the national FYE conference. She believed she was able to do “quite a bit, although [she] seeks it out.” Other participants in this study, such as Cheryl, who perceived the campus as providing adequate professional development, also possessed a strong interest and investment in seeking out this growth in the first place. Less inclined faculty may

eventually, even if unintentionally, perpetuate the “recycled” ideas Sophia described and find themselves more resistant to change or adapting to technological, pedagogical, and modal shifts.

Albert would have liked to see more opportunities that led to interdisciplinary collaboration, as he described the departments on campus as “isolated groups working, each one on their discipline, and [he thinks they] need to encourage interdisciplinary participation.” While he believed FYE did this to a certain extent, he thought there should be more events and panel discussions encouraging these partnerships. He perceived many overlaps between disciplines that he thought should be shown to students. Albert mentioned that over 60% of classes were online as demand skyrocketed after the pandemic, compared to 30-35% prior to it. He believed if faculty only taught four classes and dedicated 20% of their eight hours to interdisciplinary events, this would be “tremendous” and “help everything, the students, the college [he thinks] would be much, much stronger.”

Echoing other participants, Stacy believed the school provided an array of professional development opportunities, especially related to technology, and called the distance education team “solid” and “competent.” They also thought the equity training was “okay” and focused on racial and ethnic equity, such as “supporting Black men, who have the lowest support rates, and Latinx students.” While Stacy thought this was important, they also believed there should be additional equity trainings addressing queer topics. While the institution recently hired “someone to be in charge of queer stuff,” Stacy thought more workshops for faculty and staff on these topics were needed. They did not see “enough people” go through safe zone training during mandatory professional development days and “do not believe most faculty, unless they are queer themselves or part of that community, understand how difficult it is for queer folks” and

they “have no idea how hard it is for a trans person.” They believed many faculty were confused since there were:

A lot of new terms ... and a lot of them just kind of give up, like maybe more so the older faculty who don't understand why we have pronouns and what's the deal with trans people and what's this non-binary thing? And they have no idea and they're staying out of it.

Stacy believed queer education should be mandatory the same way racial education was. Stacy also called for more information provided to faculty and staff regarding socioeconomic status (SES), as they thought faculty or staff who came from “middle class or above” did not understand what low SES students went through. Sophia also mentioned other faculty who were susceptible to using new acronyms to describe old ideas, especially faculty who served at the institution for longer tenures. Thus, finding ways to more closely integrate or infuse newer ideas and language into the campus lexicon may organically facilitate conversations furthering equity and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Tomas thought that Bay College offered many professional development opportunities, although he would have liked to see greater inclusion of faculty and staff of color who took on the problems of students of color. He said:

There are these self-appointed experts on students of color, but they're not people of color. I don't say that what they all say is bad. But I was asked to give a presentation one time online. They picked the topic for me: men of color in the community college. I'm thinking, well, I'm a man of color and I went to a community college and I teach, I think I know a thing or two, and they were not liking what I was saying, not because I was wrong, but because I wasn't supposed to speak, right? They knew it all.

Tomas told some other faculty of color at Bay College that the school relied too heavily on a small handful of instructors that were “all over the place ... [they] get along, but a lot of what they say is nonsense.” He recalled attending a workshop led by one of these instructors, who

advised ringing a bell to grab students' attention. Tomas told the instructor he would not do this because most of his students were Latino and Black and stated:

Imagine ringing a bell to a Black person. Come on, can you guys understand the history? You know, I'm a pet lover, but you do that when you have animals. It's kind of demeaning. If I can get students to relate to me, they're not going to trust me because I ring a bell. It doesn't go well culturally. You're not seeing the big picture of things. If I have 40 students, by mid-semester, I'm going to have 10.

Tomas told some of the faculty of color they should get together to determine what was needed, stating, "Some of these professors come out of the sciences. We're the ones who deal in humanities and the social sciences, and all of a sudden, our opinions don't matter." Tomas would like to see greater unity among faculty of color to address students of color more effectively. More interdisciplinary collaborations, as suggested by Albert, could lead to stronger bonds across previously siloed units on campus and provide a stronger foundation that sensitive conversations about race, gender, and equity could be built upon.

Institutional Conditions Shaping Pedagogical Growth and Collaboration

This section aligns with the third research question and examines how participants described institutional and departmental conditions that affected their ability to experiment with and sustain pedagogical practices, extending beyond the role FYE played in shaping faculty teaching. This section is divided into three sections: (a) institutional support and perceptions of faculty, which sheds light on the ways faculty messaging from administration does not align with the ways they and their work are treated; (b) departmental dynamics and (in)equitable allocations of work, where many participants noted unequal distributions of labor in their respective divisions; and (c) contractual disagreements as observed in the misalignment between faculty and administrator approaches to their work.

Institutional Support and Perceptions of Faculty

Many participants received messaging that they were respected by administrators at Bay College, but they did not find this language to be consistent with how they were treated, especially regarding contract negotiations. They acknowledged this may stem from a lack of teaching experience on the behalf of administrators that led to unreasonable expectations of their work, as well as financial constraints institutionally and statewide. However, these potential justifications did not alleviate feelings of burnout described by many faculty in the study. Participants, especially Sophia and Daisy, received comments from others who believed they should be satisfied by the intrinsic value of their work alone, but they did not believe their working conditions and job responsibilities were commensurate with campuswide messaging related to faculty respect and support.

Stacy believed institutions supporting faculty was a Catch-22. While they stated that institutions should ask and listen to faculty, they also explained that many things implemented at the highest or administrative level “doesn’t make any sense. And it’s coming from... some people get Ed.D.’s and things like that and they go straight into administration, and they’ve hardly taught or not taught at all.” Stacy believed these people implemented or suggested things that did not make sense because they lacked an understanding of how things were taught. They also believed that Bay College did not pay its faculty fair wages, especially if faculty must get into committees to figure out what worked, what they wanted, and how to implement this, which would be extra work for them. However, Stacy believed this was “necessary ... a lot of it comes down to money.” They stated that if faculty received a stipend, they may be more willing to spend extra time in focus groups making sure new policies and practices made sense before being released to all faculty and staff campuswide. They emphasized:

The financial part is a big deal. Colleges, universities, it’s still a business, it still has to do with money, everyone has to do with money. And so, I get that, you know, but faculty

and staff, we just don't understand where that money is going. They denied COLA, which is the cost-of-living adjustment. And that's supposed to go up because, you know, inflation ... and they haven't given us COLA in a long time, not to mention like no raises either, and so it's just very demoralizing ... and I think that to get faculty to then want to be involved in what the college needs to implement to help the students succeed, or the equivalent to money, release time.

Stacy further explained that they taught a 100% load, which in their discipline was equivalent to five sections. Thus, if administration did not want to award faculty stipends, they should instead try to "even it out" by taking away one or half a class from a faculty's workload. Stacy said, "They can't just be like, 'Just do more,' and give us more and more to do and not compensate us," pointing to the importance of faculty involvement and buy-in when it came to implementing change on campus. Stacy continued with another example of how inequitable conditions were reflected elsewhere, in faculty hiring practices:

The equity of hiring faculty and staff is very important. [Bay College] is working, or at least they say they're working towards hiring faculty and staff that reflects our student population, like more Black and brown faculty to reflect it. We're mostly white, and some Asian and some brown and Black, but it's not the same proportion. I think that part is very important to do. I think we're having a hard time doing that. I was in a hiring committee and we did a bunch of interviews on Friday, and we sent two white folks up to the presidential round, and I wanted this one woman who, I think she was Indian, but she made a lot of mistakes when she was lecturing on the physics, so I understand why the physics department didn't want her to send her up and have her be a part of it. And so, I don't know what to do about that. We're not going to hire her. We're going to hire one white male, because there are only two going up. And I understand, yes, objectively, they are the better ones in terms of how they were teaching, and they knew their stuff and everything. And I don't know why her and any other brown folks or whatever. I don't know how to fix it, right? It was a fair hiring, but how are we going to get our brown and Black faculty in here, right? We hire one white male.

While Stacy did not have the solution to this systemic issue, they believed "it would be nice to have faculty that have some shared experiences with the students ... [they] all have stories. Lived experiences makes faculty very different." Stacy's responses highlighted a need for more faculty and staff that represented the student demographics at Bay College, although they acknowledged that finding a solution to this was systemic and could not occur overnight.

However, they believed the first step was having a greater alignment between administrative words and actions, as they espoused supporting faculty while proposing and implementing institutional policies and changes that hurt faculty or exemplified a lack of understanding for faculty work.

Dave had a mixed bag of experiences with management and believed that Bay College's view of faculty changed depending on the administration. He shared a previous administrator who he did not think respected faculty, while another one who came later had a strong respect of faculty and a current one was "kind of ambivalent." Dave stated that these administrators "set tones," particularly when it came to contract negotiations, while acknowledging how these situations could be "always tough." While shifts in deans required acclimating to their styles, this was "not a challenge, but you know, it's just a reality." He described the current dean as being very hands-off in a good way, and thought the department was currently in "a good place." Dave expressed the importance of administration being open to especially younger faculty, encouraging their ideas, and finding a way to say "yes" instead of "no" due to the budget. He praised FYE for having a proven success rate in "supporting those things that do work." While a receptive dean or support program such as FYE could facilitate better departmental dynamics and support ideas that improved working conditions and outcomes alike, a less respectful administrator could have the adverse effect by setting a division- or institution-wide tone that discouraged the exchange and facilitation of ideas.

Daisy also discussed recent contract negotiations that led faculty to believe they were neither appreciated nor respected at Bay College. She shared:

We just went through that huge contract negotiation, it was terrible, so it's tough. I think that faculty probably aren't as appreciated as they could be. I don't love the sentiment that we should be so grateful and lucky to have these jobs. I feel like there's a lot of that that comes, and that feels very strange in our profession, that we should be grateful and

lucky and so we don't deserve to be treated, and there's an interesting dynamic there of that sort of like, "You're so lucky, you're so grateful," and I think, "Well, no I'm not lucky. I worked my butt off to get this position, and I take it very seriously and I work very, very hard. I work every weekend." I mean, yes, I need my summers off, well I teach summer school too, but because I work seven days a week, I probably worked five hours yesterday and four on Saturday. Grading is so, there's just so much. So yes, I'm lucky, but am I lucky? I'm lucky because I worked hard and because I take my job seriously.

Daisy believed there was a misconception that when faculty demanded something, they were "hurting the students, and that makes you a bad person." She stated that she loved the students, "Of course, our entire reason for being here is for the students. I'm here because I want to give back. I love this population. That doesn't mean that I should not also be treated as a professional." She clarified that she felt appreciated by her dean and this messaging did not come from every administrator on campus. However, she explained that in her field, there was an overriding sense that faculty were fortunate and should not have any demands, even though they were in a profession they worked hard for. She saw this also reflected in the way adjuncts were treated with many expectations to "work for free," which she disagreed with.

Despite possessing two master's degrees, Daisy had friends who brought up her pension and reinforced the idea that "[she] should be so grateful and [faculty are] so lucky." She described this as an interesting thought process prevalent among faculty at large, even at the University of California and California State University schools. However, she addressed the common saying that "teachers are underpaid and overworked," as well as the huge burnout rate in the teaching profession. She also discussed the "overwhelming" amount of work teachers put in during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although she got paid for this, it was not nearly enough to account for all the extra labor she put in.

Sophia described hearing similar sentiments from others about how Bay College faculty should not picket or protest for better working conditions and should instead express gratitude

for having a job in the first place, which she did not find to be understanding of the reality of faculty work. She talked about how:

We have our union, and I believe in unions, so that's another perspective. And then you have how people in [the city] see [Bay College]. When we were picketing and protesting, people were like, "Ugh. What are you complaining about? You have a job. Blah blah blah." You're like, yeah, that's one perspective, but we have to feed our family. This person teaching at [another California community college] is making ten thousand dollars more than we are for doing the exact same job. Here's [yet another California community college]. If they teach online, they only come in two days a week, not three. So, it's just the perspective thing. They're so many. I value them. I know how hard it is. I also have seen my students get grad assistants and full professors and part-time, people with tenure and without ... we're like teacher nerds.

Sophia believed that if she surrounded herself with others who did well in their job, it "keeps the idealism that you need to keep going." She saw professors at other institutions claiming that Bay College was "kicking people's butts" because they cared and closely followed student learning outcomes and transfer and class completion rates. Sophia appreciated not feeling trapped in a work culture of "publish or perish," as she published a "little poetry chat book" and ran a slam poetry competition that she felt like were "enough." Sophia underscored the importance of decent wages to make faculty at Bay College want to stay and do a good job, in addition to receiving more respect. She did not think community college professors received enough respect, even if they personally knew "how hard" it was and what they did. Sophia stated that "quality is quality, no matter where you are," referring to people who thought professors at other institutions, such as at research universities, knew more when this was not necessarily the case.

In addition to respect, Sophia called for more understanding at the institutional level:

They get this new president, and everyone's like oh, she's so great, everything's going to be different. It wasn't different. The negotiations were still the same, they still weren't transparent. And yeah, she's only one person, you know? And I think, so many of us, we've been through different presidents, different people in those positions of power. And I think you just gotta find good people and keep 'em. I think that's important. I think if you can't pay people, you need to find another way to value them. And if you don't, they're gonna leave, and they're gonna go take the money. And that's sad because you're

going to lose good people who ... need to feed their families. I have four kids. If this job didn't have benefits, I wouldn't be here. I would be in a job that paid benefits for my four kids. You know?

Sophia felt supported by FYE giving her classes and schedules but called for more “money, respect, care, understanding at an institutional level.” She shared a time when administration brought in goats for goat yoga during a professional development day, which was unexpected but preferred by her over listening to PowerPoint presentations for three hours:

Give us a better use of our time. We're talking about educating the whole person, like our staff development team did a good job. Yeah, it was a liability nightmare to bring in goats. But something different. They had a salsa dancing class. They had a sound bath gong area. So, I think that made professional development not super lame. So, I think that's a way institutions can show that they value, like if you want us to teach the whole person, value the whole teacher, too. And also value our time.

Sophia described a committee meeting she was asked to run earlier that day, which she would have preferred to correspond over via email instead. This led to her highlighting the importance of valuing people's time at an institutional level. She discussed commuting an hour to campus and another hour back home for two hours of sparsely attended office hours on a day she did not teach. She wondered:

Is that the best use of everyone's time, for me to pollute the Earth for one hour, back and forth, for one student? [The student] could've emailed me. But [another California community college] is down to two days a week. Do I also understand institutionally that you want your professors to be on campus? Yes. I get that too, you know. I see it, but I think also, if we're going to be more online, and we're going to be more hybrid, let's just acknowledge it and not make people come in on random days to just sit here for two hours.

Sophia emphasized the importance of institutionally valuing time, place, and environment, as “everyone has kids, everyone has a whole life. One thing COVID did teach [them] is that [they] can get a lot of stuff done without driving places. Let's figure it out.” She stated:

I think for us, staff development needs to be actually useful and stop spending money we don't have on some random Joe Schmoe so that you can be like, “Community alert, we got so-and-so to speak at our school, and they told all our teachers this.” Like, that's

awesome. So one, staff development can be great, but it's like anything else ... if we needed \$11,000, find a better use for that. If there are people that are hungry, put \$11,000 into the [Bay College] food pantry or to the clothing thing so that we can offer people 20 items of clothing instead of 15 ... and maybe it's the mom thing too, but sometimes I just think the budgeting is just bad. And then everyone's complaining, like, "We have to pay you so much after COVID." Yeah. Because you kept our COLA in your bank account and then now you have to pay us all this money and we're being the horrible people because we want the money you've been holding on to and earning interest on for all these years. So, I'm like, "Look, stop." But they're controlling the narrative.

Sophia wished administration would reference Emerson and Thoreau, whom she taught in her classes, since "if everyone just did the right thing and had principles, then it would save so much time." However, she stated that it was "tough" when faculty were unable to depend on others to have principles or do what they say they would.

Isabelle cited connection as an important factor in how Bay College viewed its faculty, believing the college at an administrative level lost sight of what it meant to be in the classroom. Thus, it would be easier for them to be more supportive and provide further guidance if they were more connected to the classroom. Isabelle stated that the college viewed faculty as "the people in the classroom, the frontlines, the soldiers and [they're] the ones working with the students directly." She mentioned that she and many of her peers did not take this role lightly. She believed the college also expected faculty to "move" their students, whether towards transferring or earning a degree or certificate. Essentially, she perceived the institution as placing the onus on faculty to singlehandedly figure out how to get students to their academic goals, further streamlined by the passing of statewide legislation mandating what faculty must teach in the classroom.

Amber, who also worked in the mathematics department, expressed a slightly different perspective from other participants about faculty support and funding in pursuing ideas, specifically regarding full-time faculty. She perceived full-time faculty, especially in the

mathematics department, as being encouraged to implement their ideas and provided the means and funding to do so. She even received an email the week prior about extra budget money and was asked what faculty would like to do with it. She cited the new data science program and associate degree that were launched amidst growing popularity of the field as offering potentially lucrative jobs. Thus, she believed there was “a lot of support” at Bay College for full-time faculty to pursue their interests and ideas on campus. However, she believed this support was specific to full-time faculty and provided by the department rather than the institution.

Peter believed Bay College gave faculty “lip service” about students coming to faculty for mentorship or guidance. He stated that students “like to trauma dump” on their English instructors. He wondered if certain divisions encountered more of this than others, although he heard similar accounts from faculty in other divisions. He explained that this work was neither factored into his pay nor listed in his job description and shared that a group of four or five students from his old FYE cohort came to his office every Thursday after their current FYE class ended:

They take over my office, and they just chill here for a while, and they talk to me. Then after a while, they’re not talking to me, they’re talking to each other, in my room. They’re playing Minecraft or something, and I’m like, “You guys can go.” But I know that it’s not forever, and these kids are gonna break up after this year, and it’s okay, and it doesn’t happen to me all the time, every semester. But throughout my career, that’s happened where kids come in and they just hang out, and it’s sweet and it’s nice. But it’s really time-consuming. [The instructor across the hallway who is on sabbatical] has a student who will come in everyday to talk to her about whatever’s going on in his life. I don’t know if the admin understands what it’s like ... stuff like this happens, and it’s part of what we do, and it’s part of the meaningful work of this job, but it’s also a lot sometimes, especially if you’ve got a kid that you’re working with for a long time.

Peter showed a picture of himself eating lunch with this same group of students. His example illustrated the disconnect some participants, such as Stacy and Isabelle, identified when they described administrators as losing sight of faculty’s meaningful work with students both in and

outside the classroom. Although participants found intrinsic and innate value in this work, they did not find it equitable how administration often chose to overlook it.

Tomas talked about how faculty were expected to wear different hats, which was “kind of impossible.” He mentioned that Bay College asked for adaptability while some faculty did not adapt at all, instead choosing to teach their classes and go home. He contrasted this with faculty who “understand their entire role” and tended to go above and beyond, attending Zoom meetings from home and serving on various committees and programs. Tomas explained:

You understand that for you to be effective in the classroom, you've got to work all those avenues on the outside, right? To create a better environment here. So, it's like when you're cooking at home, and you're cooking a steak, you're focusing on that one steak, but the side dishes have to be right on target for them to pair up with the steak and make that a better experience, right? So, you got to do everything. You've got to connect with students, they have to know who they are, you've got to connect with faculty, and so on and so forth to make your program stronger and to make it better for the students.

Tomas detailed the unrealistic expectations administration had of faculty, not fully understanding the extent of their nuanced and multifaceted work.

Ronald hoped that administration expected faculty to be good instructors, as this was also his goal and he hoped it was a shared one. He described these expectations as sometimes being “contentious, and there's always fights about pay.” He also believed that administrators had, on face value, respected and “say the right things” about the importance of faculty. However, he also stated that:

Faculty, in general, often feel like that is not demonstrated in the pay. It's kind of a problem with teaching in general. When negotiations come, it often seems like that the belief in our value is not measured by what they pay us. It's not commensurate with what they say ... again, it depends on which regime we're under ... I went into teaching because I want autonomy, I like making my own decisions and being a grown up and getting to control what I do with my job. And sometimes there are things that seem like that's not always shared. I don't know if an administrator has ever taught and knows what it's like to be in my classroom, and that decisions are often made that affect teaching from there. This could be above the institution, even statewide, but it's still people that make decisions.

Ronald referenced contract negotiations that continually affirmed to faculty that their pay was not commensurate with how administration spoke about respecting them and their work, even using the word “regime” to describe the administration at the time. He questioned if this disconnect was due to a lack of administrative teaching experience and acknowledged the possible statewide roots of this issue. However, he believed his own desire to be autonomous and independent in his role was not a sentiment shared by administration.

Haley believed faculty at Bay College were respected and understood to have a role that extended beyond the material they taught. She expressed excitement over her new office overlooking the Student Activities Center, the Black Student Success Center, the Pride Center, and the Social Justice Center, which aligned with how there was “so much more to being a student ... it’s an entire experience,” which the college tried to highlight. During the observed class, Haley wore a T-shirt that said “Black Success” on it, which she also made sure to acknowledge. She wondered how many of her colleagues did this, and while she did not know the number, she hoped it was high. She stated:

The role of faculty, I think, not only the role in the classroom and to be good at teaching and to inspire students to want to learn, but to keep them here. To keep them motivated. To retain them, yes, for the numbers, but to help them get to the next step, whatever that step is. To help them achieve their goals. Getting them to achieve their goals is not just about getting a grade in my class. There’s so much more to it. It’s instilling in them the desire to want to continue and to want to learn.

Similarly to Haley, Derek felt “pretty respected” on campus as a faculty member and described his role as that of instructional faculty. He discussed how community colleges relied on adjuncts, and although he believed Bay College could do a better job, he appreciated how the college valued adjunct faculty, especially in times of declining enrollment and funding. He wondered why more full-time faculty could not just be hired if there was a need for those courses. He cited

the present as a tough time, describing the fiscal cliff of the last few years that would result in Bay College and many other institutions having substantial decreases in annual funding due to declining enrollment statewide. He partially attributed these cuts to the new student-centered funding formula, which accounted for the diversity of students served and the number of students successfully completing degree or transfer requirements within a certain timeframe. He believed the college did “pretty good” on the metrics of the student-centered funding formula except for the enrollment piece. Derek described the college’s consistent messaging of what could be cut, rather than what could be added or maintained, as unfortunate. He wondered what the next few years would look like for programs such as FYE and Puente, as “supporting faculty usually means keeping them employed. [He’d] just like to see that.”

While many participants felt respected on campus and by administration, they perceived a mismatch or disconnect between this messaging and how they were treated, as evidenced through contentious contract negotiations. These participants acknowledged the oftentimes tenuous work of administrators who were forced to make difficult budgetary decisions and lacked classroom experience themselves. However, participants found their own workloads increased to an almost exponential degree without receiving adequate financial compensation that signaled true respect and appreciation for their work.

Departmental Dynamics and (In)equitable Allocations of Work

Many participants noted generally positive departmental dynamics while addressing unfair or nonsensical allocations of work that led them to feel burnt out, fatigued, or lacking guidance from the institution entirely. Dave noted a slight generational shift in his department that was still defined by a tone of respect, contrasted with other departments with more opposing viewpoints and substantial challenges navigating them. However, he believed the tone of the

school was good with a positive work environment, and he took a step back in picking which committees he participated in.

Stacy had a slightly more frayed perspective on her division compared to Dave. Stacy praised their colleagues at Bay College for being “very good,” particularly their division and its two deans. However, they also shared:

The division is fine. The department is fine. One thing I will say, though, is there are people in psychology who do not pull their weight. Lots of examples. One example would be they’re not on as many committees as other faculty are, and there are certain things we have to be on because it has to be fulfilled by someone in the department in that role in the same way. I wish the dean would be harder on them and keep them a little more accountable, and they don’t, and it’s just not fair. I would definitely blame the faculty first.

While Stacy believed their dean could more closely monitor and hold accountable faculty who did not “pull their weight,” they placed the onus on these faculty for not participating in as many committees as their peers and inequitably offloading this work onto others. Even though these work practices were not reflected by most of the division and their peers, it nevertheless created unbalanced departmental dynamics, further exacerbating feelings of burnout shared by many participants in the previous subsection.

Tomas talked about how reassigned time would be helpful in alleviating faculty workloads. He discussed how most instructors taught five classes a semester and were very involved in certain activities, which administrators could take into consideration by allowing them to teach one less class for the same pay. He thought this class could then be given to a part-time faculty member instead. Tomas was on a hiring committee he described as taking its toll, as there were 85 applicants for the position that required reading through significant job application materials. He also served as an organizer for a big ethnic studies conference that took place on campus the following week and required a whole year to put together. Furthermore, he planned a

celebration of Chicano culture on his own, in addition to coordinating the college's study abroad program.

Tomas was unable to sleep sometimes due to his heavy workload, so he believed a lighter load could lead to "better focus, more energy, and greater effectiveness." He recalled the dean allowing this to happen one semester, when one of his classes was given to another faculty member. He used that time to make important calls in his office, which he found very helpful. Tomas would also like more opportunities for sabbatical to rest while working from home and "come back and hit it with a bang." He discussed how the previously required five office hours a week was reduced to four. However, he mentioned that in his division, students oftentimes emailed their instructors or talked after class rather than attend their office hours. While this time allowed faculty to catch up on work in their office, it could be shortened from four hours to three so faculty could use that extra time to commute, be at home, or teach another class instead.

Tomas knew many part-time faculty with advanced degrees that did very well in the classroom but refused to apply for full-time positions because "they know it's going to be some extra work you've got to put in, and they don't want to do it. They don't want the responsibility." He compared faculty to businessmen negotiating to make their role as an instructor more effective. Tomas called for administrators to more closely observe and understand the multilayered and nuanced work of faculty and to brainstorm ways this work could be better and more effectively allocated to alleviate unnecessary burdens and expectations placed on them.

Ronald expressed similar doubts that administrators at Bay College did not fully understand or listen to faculty needs and concerns. He got along with administrators on a personal level, although he clashed with a few for various reasons in the past. He mostly always

felt “at least directionally supported,” and while he believed they appreciated the work of faculty as teachers, he was unsure if this was enough for them. He stated:

I just remember there being a time when it seemed like, even with the office hours, they want us here three days a week, a certain number of days, a certain number of hours. So, if I don't even have classes on this particular day, I don't have this problem, but faculty do where they have to come in on days that they're not teaching just to sit in their office when they could do Zoom. There's no pushes and pulls like that. I understand that we want the school to be populated with faculty, but it seems anachronistic to require someone to come in for a quick hour when their students, I'm assuming, almost never come into their office hours at those times and days, because the students' hours are probably closer to the teachers' class time too, right?

Ronald talked about how there was no extra pay for teaching in FYE when he started working in the program. When he became part of the coordination team, they petitioned administration to be paid extra for doing extra. He believed that if he read his cohort partner's book and built assignments together that he would not normally build in his own class, they should receive compensation for this additional labor. Thus, they were able to secure a certain amount of funding each semester. However, \$40 million was going to be slashed from the college budget, which would at least partially include the funding for FYE faculty. Ronald submitted a budget that would keep it intact, but he did not know if administration would ask them to make further budget cuts. He explained:

I think it's cool that we were paid to do that work. It shows some investment and some respect for doing that extra work, right? It's not that much, it's less than a thousand dollars. So, if it's cut, that's the dispiriting part of trying to be a good teacher. It's because there's always been the notion that teachers get all this intrinsic value. They don't say that about doctors. Their doctors still get paid. Nobody says, “They should do it because they love it. It's their calling. Therefore, they shouldn't get paid.” That's only something that gets said about teachers.

Ronald believed the teaching profession was dishearteningly viewed by society as possessing enough innate value to override appropriate or proportionate workload or financial

compensation. Budget cuts and unreasonable expectations from administration to faculty signaled disrespect for their work.

One of the participants, who asked not to be identifiable by department for this excerpt, talked about the hiring process and how their department recently hired someone, which led them to realize there seemed to be a “disconnect” when the job posting was released. They explained:

What HR puts in our job description, and what we actually do, there seems to be a disconnect ... and then, when it came time to select a candidate ... [the President] kept drilling ... every time they would voice a concern or raise an issue, [the President] kept going back to, “That’s not in the job description.” Even something about being culturally relevant, “It doesn’t say that in here.” But that is so important. It just feels like there is a disconnect in what they think might be happening or in what we teach or how we teach. That disconnect is evident even in this three days a week mandatory being on campus. Again, I get it. We negotiated it. We agreed to it. We ratified our contract. But the train had left the station. We were in COVID.

They provided another example of this disconnect in having heard administration instruct faculty to meet their students where they were at over the past few years. Their dean showed a graph during their professional development day with the percentage of course offering modalities in the division, which was completely flipped from pre-COVID to the present time. Prior to COVID, 65% of their classes were in-person, compared to 65% being online afterwards. To this participant’s surprise, not many faculty members were teaching hybrid, even though they thought it was “amazing.” To them, administration:

Needs to put their money where their mouth is. They’re telling us to meet students where they’re at, our students are online, so even though there was this push to try to get us all to come back and teach all our classes back in-person, that’s not what our students are asking for. That’s not what they want. So, we have to give them what they want if we want them to stay here. [They] need to support faculty so that we can do our job.

They previously had 50 students a class, which got narrowed down to 45. They also had only one student attend their office hours that semester. Similarly to the requests raised earlier by

Tomas and Ronald, this participant wished there was a greater connection or alignment between administration's expectations of faculty and the reality of their work, most tangibly illustrated through their number of required days on campus.

Isabelle felt that administration sent the message to faculty that they must figure out changing statewide legislation on their own without any guidance, which has been "really, really hard for several reasons." While she may have had a different perspective at the time, she was just trying to figure out how to best support her students, stating, "It had been hard for the math faculty to do that, to the level that some of us think that maybe the college just wants us to push through these students and just get them through whatever, but I don't believe that." She thought the college and administration were asking a lot of math faculty, since previously:

We've never had a student in a class where one should be in that class and at the right level and one is clearly not supposed to be there. We've had that in the past, but in the past, we were able to talk to that student and say, "Hey, I don't think you belong here. I think you would benefit from maybe moving on to this class and then, you know, kind of coming back and learn this material." And now we don't, we can't do that. And I think that's where we're at now. The college is expecting us to figure out this really big problem.

Isabelle described this shift as being particularly grueling because the students were the ones suffering. She also cited the lack of information and receiving essentially "nothing" as being the most challenging aspects of this transition. Teaching in FYE helped her see the benefit of teaching smaller classes. Class size and having more time to collaborate and work with students individually were areas she would be interested in exploring and find helpful. She understood that while it may be challenging and sounded very expensive:

More one-on-one ... they are expecting us to kind of figure out this magic, this solution at the institution level, but we're actually not. We're in the classroom, so we know what to do in the classroom, but it seems like they're asking us to come up with a solution at the institutional level. We can't do that.

Isabelle perceived administration as expecting faculty to troubleshoot institution-wide and statewide issues that extended beyond the role, scope, and job description of faculty work. Thus, participants were essentially forced to navigate far-reaching policy changes on their own while facing pressures to increase their classroom sizes and still teach effectively.

Cheryl believed one of the biggest areas faculty in the English department fought for was reduced class sizes. She would love to do more workshopping, spending ten minutes carefully poring through each student's essay outline and allowing them to partner up with one another. However, this was only possible in a smaller class of 15 students, where she could get to know each student. She believed there was a small reduction in class sizes in FYE. However, for an instructor with four sections of 30 students apiece, she had an overwhelming number of papers to read and grade. If each class required three to four assignments, this number could easily reach a several hundred, which she described as:

Exhausting. It's hard to be effective and to give everyone the time and the feedback they deserve. I think that's the fight, that's what's important for a lot of my colleagues. As a part-timer, it wasn't necessarily important to me because I only had two classes. So even though I had other work, it wasn't as in the forefront. But now with four classes, I definitely feel it more. I definitely understand the fight. That would probably be at the top of my wish list: reduced classes.

Echoing Isabelle's request for more reasonable class sizes, Cheryl found her teaching and grading loads to be excessive even if she felt fulfilled by her work and had positive working relationships with her colleagues. Many participants expressed feelings of exhaustion or fatigue by their workload, in addition to a lack of administrative understanding of their needs and concerns. This mismatch undermined the impact of their role in the classroom, forcing them to work outside the scope of their job description or allocate their time and energy to fighting for faculty issues.

Contractual Disagreements and Misalignment of Faculty and Administrator Approaches

Many participants noted a mismatch between how faculty and administrators perceived faculty roles and impact within the classroom. As participants noted many instances in previous sections of going “above and beyond” for their students, taking on excess responsibilities beyond their workload to the point of burnout and extending flexibility and compassion for the life circumstances of their students, they felt this same level of understanding was not reciprocated to them by the administration of Bay College. Similarly, this lack of understanding, or lack of even trying to understand, was reflected more tangibly in recent contract negotiations, which many faculty described as being in bad faith.

Stacy never sought a role in administration due to disliking meetings, but they found their behavior towards and negotiations with faculty to be consistently manipulative and characterized by underhanded tactics. How Stacy perceived their encounters with administration was further fueled by their own formal training in psychology. They wondered:

How come they gaslight, that’s their main way of doing it. We’re not idiots. We feel like we can’t talk to them, right? And so, since I’ve been in a lot of therapy because of my mom and stuff like that, I shut down when it comes to gaslighting. The minute you say something that tries to induce or manipulate my behavior, makes me feel bad, gaslight, whatever, I shut down immediately. And that’s everything that happens in every union negotiation, it sounds like, that I’ve seen. I’ve never been a part of the union’s board. I’m not sure how they do it and stay calm when they’re being gaslighted and things like that. And so, I can’t believe administration does that. I don’t know what kind of training they get to be administrators, but that has to be part of it, because I think they think this is how you get things done because that’s how they were taught. I’m guessing, I don’t know administrators. I’m a psychologist. I’m guessing that’s what they’ve experienced and feel works to stall negotiations and to stall faculty and staff from getting anything. They should be taught different ways to negotiate and not be codependent as leaders. They’re not being taught the correct way to communicate. I don’t know how they got like this.

Stacy described the abundance of cloning that took place when it came to hiring administrators, as they served on several hiring committees for vice presidents and deans in the past. They stated that administrators hired others who “employ the same tactics to try and save money,” while

candidates who communicated clearly, reasonably, and effectively ended up not being hired. Thus, they cited this cloning as the reason why administration and working conditions at Bay College have not changed. Stacy also described the faculty and staff union at the college as “always fighting with administration about money.” They discussed the contract, which was renewed every three years and perpetually late due to difficulties in finding an agreement. While faculty received retracted pay, negotiations immediately began for the next three years because of a 1.5-year delay.

Stacy expressed appreciation for their dean but described administration as “nickel and diming faculty and staff.” They received emails from the union notifying them that Bay College salaries were close to the bottom compared to other community colleges in Southern California. They considered moving to another community college with a fairer pay scale, but they found they could not escape the stress of knowing that salary negotiations constantly loom in the background. They mentioned:

I walked in many rallies for trying to shake up the administrators when they have their meetings, like the board’s meeting in there right now. So, we can stand right here and use a megaphone and yell and wear red and do all that kind of stuff. I find that extremely stressful because I shouldn’t have to care about where my money’s coming from. Apparently, we’ve been told they have the money because of a, b, and c, and they’re not even doing anything with the money. They’re just keeping it. So that also tells me, the way it comes across is, they do not appreciate faculty and our work. They think they can get away with it because they know the faculty who show up to rallies and faculty who really care, we’re not going to shortchange students because we’re unhappy about the pay. So, we’ll continue working for the students and they’ll pay us what they pay us, you know? So, we don’t feel respected or appreciated because of that.

They also described time-consuming tasks and activities that were not contractually obligated but still expected of faculty and beneficial to students at Bay College as “working for free,” such as updating the institution’s online platform. Stacy expressed not feeling as if there was adequate

faculty consultation and buy-in regarding these additional responsibilities, as administration would like to “get these numbers up” without directly addressing a way to do this.

Diane wished the campus culture was more faculty-driven. While she perceived much of it as being this way, she described too much administrative oversight and the expectations placed on faculty as not being “on a very human level.” Although she was in a different division from Stacy, Diane also praised her dean and identified the issue as being structural, stating, “I wished they would put certain things just back into our hands.” She remarked that administration was heavily numbers-based, especially when it pertained to graduation and degree or certificate completion rates. Diane wished administration would be more interested in qualitative indicators of growth, such as “a really great interaction with a student this past year that really blossomed.” While she believed her peers and dean celebrated these accomplishments, she did not think this same degree of appreciation was expressed or directly acknowledged at an upper administrative level.

Diane did not feel that faculty were supported with their myriad requirements, which explained why so many administrators existed in the first place. While she understood the purpose of tasks, such as those relevant for accreditation, she also found these responsibilities to have increased substantially over the past 20 years. Thus, responsibilities were added on without any being taken away. Diane believed better support could be offered for release time. She acknowledged the reasoning behind this, as well as its budget-based nature, but shared cautionary words alluding to faculty overwork that “there is only so much juice you can squeeze out of that one lemon, and then you’re going to get the bitter stuff.”

Similarly to Diane, Isabelle underscored the importance of support and guidance from the administration towards faculty. While visualizing what this would look like for Bay College, she

highlighted listening to faculty concerns. However, she also requested for “more pay. At the end of the day, a lot of it is with money. If you’re asking [her] right now, anything and everything is possible, [she] would say that.” Isabelle shared her own experiences as a board member for a school district near her home, which allowed her to draw further connections to her own working environment and strengthened her belief that “administration can be doing a lot more.” Instead of this experience helping her better empathize with administrators, it led her to further question the disconnect between administration and faculty and wonder why faculty concerns were not better addressed or even listened to.

Similarly to Isabelle, Dave also served in an administrative role. However, he decided to return to teaching and described his love of it and being in the classroom as his “primary ‘it,’” sharing with many part-time or newer teachers that:

Teaching is kind of like an iceberg. You see the teaching, but that’s a small part of what goes on, when you’re in the classroom, a lot of the prep, the research, the grading, the office hours, the committee work, that’s kind of below the water that most people don’t see. I think the vast majority of us love the part that’s above the water, we love being in the classroom, we love performing ... and sometimes that stuff below the water line isn’t as exciting and can be frustrating.

Dave also served in a leadership role with the Academic Senate and had been on it for two decades. These experiences led him to respect administrators, whom he believed had a “difficult job.” He also acquired a strong understanding of how the college worked on an administrative level starting from the Board of Trustees and has served on many campus-wide committees, including those dedicated to hiring. His time in the Academic Senate helped him realize he wanted to stay in the classroom rather than move into administration, and he did not regret this decision. He expressed that faculty and administrators often had the same goal but diverged in their views on how to reach that goal. He compared the school to a big aircraft carrier, illustrating how “the bureaucracy can really wear you down,” as it could be difficult to “turn that

ship ... you can't do it quickly" when attempting to institute change. Over the past 24 years, Dave's experiences led him to believe that it "all really comes down to the budget and money."

Allen echoed many participants who did not find administration supportive or even receptive to faculty concerns, which was tangibly reflected in the ways they handled contract negotiations. Participants believed administration at Bay College continually added responsibilities to faculty workloads without providing adequate compensation, eventually hurting students and student outcomes. Allen shared:

I love this college, but I think the higher ups don't respect the faculty the way they claim they do, if I'm being completely honest. That's seen in negotiations, in the bad faith way they've negotiated in the past, this last round being a big example of that. I used to be on the executive board with the Federation of Teachers here, so I'm familiar with all that. Quite familiar. I feel like they want us to do more for the same pay or do more for even less pay if they could. And I don't think that's a good respect of faculty. I think they try to ask faculty to take on more students because it's helpful for students when it actually ends up harming students.

Allen provided an example of not being able to help a classroom of 45 students versus 30 students in the same way. He got to know his FYE classes of 27 to 30 students more on an individual basis, being able to identify when something was amiss and take the time to talk to them. However, Allen did not believe this is what administration wanted, instead thinking they would raise class caps to 50 to 100 students if they could and ask faculty to add beyond this number. He stated this would hurt student success and his students in getting the help they needed, as he was "stretched too thin to help them." This also hurt adjunct faculty who were unable to get another assigned section of a class.

Allen provided an example of his four sections of introductory U.S. government, two of which were for FYE, while the other two were online. If he added above his cap to the full waitlist for each section, this would equal 20 students, which would be enough to create another section. This section could go to a part-time faculty member, who could make an income and

support the economy, while students would receive more individualized support in a smaller section. Allen stated:

The administration doesn't see that. For them to say, it's a bottom line issue, and where can we cut the most money, save the most money at the cost of faculty and morale and student success, even though they claim to care about student success. If they did, they wouldn't ask faculty to do the amount they are doing without the support there to help them.

While Allen believed Bay College was great for students, he also thought it could do better. He had not been quiet about this on campus and served as a student trustee when administration "screwed over faculty" by imposing a contract from 12 months to 10. He was called to the Vice President's office the following day for overstepping and being rude to board members.

Although the Vice President was on his side, she was tasked with passing that message along to Allen. He said:

The way they were using the math was bad faith, which they have done constantly. I don't think that's the respect they claim to have for faculty. That's problematic. That's a multifaceted problem. That's problems with the mentality of the upper echelon of management, that's problems with the mentality of some of our faculty as well that are a little too pro-management and not pro-faculty and students the way they should be. That's become an issue after all.

Allen cited the consistent messaging faculty received from administration displaying respect, which ran counter to budget cuts and were further exacerbated by certain faculty perpetuating systemic issues by centering management over their peers and students. Peter also referenced a class cap committee and the lowering of class sizes being a "big fight." He was not on this committee, as he did not "want to deal with it." While he understood why this was the case financially, he did not believe it should be so strenuous, as certain disciplines required smaller class sizes. He stated:

We went through a really contentious contract agreement. People are upset ... some people wanted to strike, other people didn't want to strike. I don't think you're gonna approve a strike here. After that, now, the campus climate, the admin seems to be very

punitive. We won, we got the raise, and they're like, "We told you. There's no money now."

Peter discussed the impact of the recent contract agreement on the campus climate at Bay College. Even though faculty won and received a raise, administration took a punitive tone to this outcome and seemed hesitant to continue supporting faculty.

Likewise, Haley wished there was more trust between administration and faculty. She felt as if some administrators viewed faculty as eager to either get out of work or not work as hard as they should, basically "wanting to take the easy route out." She described the faculty contract being renegotiated to reduce their number of days on campus from four to three as "a huge win." However, the COVID-19 pandemic led Haley to teach most of her classes online. Thus, she was only in the classroom two days a week, while by contract, she was expected to be on campus a third day. She would get ready and commute to campus even though no one attended her office hours and she could have used that time to grade 50 assignments at home instead. Her dean asked the Vice President to reconsider allowing faculty to come in only two days a week, which he rejected because of the contract and what faculty had agreed to in it. Haley wondered if the Vice President thought she would be "out hiking or biking or at the beach" with that time, as "to make [her] come to work just because it's in [her] contract is so counterproductive." To Haley:

It boils down to trust. If they trusted us and knew that I wasn't taking advantage of the system, that I'm legitimately working, and by making me come to campus means that I don't get as much work done. So that means I'm going to be working on the weekend, which, by the way, I already do, you know? So, that's frustrating, that they can't be more flexible and reasonable. Will there be faculty who take advantage of this system? Of course, just like there are students who do, but I have to always keep my eye on the prize, and I know there are students who are not holding up their end of the bargain, but most students are. And there's where I need to put my attention.

Haley talked about how they had just “fought tooth and nail” to reduce class size, which was a “painstaking,” months-long process that eventually resulted in some movement, which was “not enough.” She understood the college must be fiscally responsible, but she often felt as if decisions were made without an economic reason as the justification, and instead due to a lack of trust or faith.

Ronald echoed similar sentiments to Haley and acknowledged that administrators had financial responsibility. While he stated that not all faculty were “perfectly trustworthy,” he also emphasized the importance and theme of trust that characterized Haley’s words. He stated, “Most of us are not in this job to get rich. We are in this job because we are about the students and what we do.” Ronald believed there was more to teaching than just the budget, although he recognized its importance and role at an institutional level. He would like faculty to be respected and trusted in a way that was not financial.

Many participants tried to empathize with management and understood their financial responsibilities and constraints, with some such as Isabelle and Dave even serving in administrative roles themselves. However, many of these participants did not feel they were viewed on a “very human level” by administration to quote Diane, instead expected to continue taking on responsibilities such as increased classroom sizes without expecting or asking for appropriate financial compensation. Conversely, faculty felt that qualitative indicators of student success, such as personalized mentorship that oftentimes consumed considerable time and labor, were overlooked in favor of an excessive numbers-driven approach to measuring outcomes. Even when faculty fairly won contract negotiations, they felt punished and gaslit in the aftermath by management.

Conclusion

This chapter consisted of analysis of the collected data. Thematic analysis led to several themes emerging in response to the research questions examining how faculty pedagogy and identity have been shaped by past and present teaching experiences and formal and informal communities of teaching and communities of practice. First, self-perceptions of faculty identity were shaped in multifaceted and nuanced ways. Participants exemplified a dedication to supporting students on an individualized basis and seeing them as people before students, relating to them in ways often influenced by their own personal relationships and life experiences. As faculty navigated their own teaching careers, they often tempered their expectations surrounding rigid displays of subject matter knowledge, instead showing flexibility with their students and how their own pedagogy encouraged this kind of learning. Next, faculty were shown to have formed communities of practice that led them to view their own growth as educators in tandem with the growth of their students as scholars. These communities were crafted formally and informally through the First Year Experience program's coordination and cohort model, as well as sustained through the exchange of course syllabi and professional development and mentorship opportunities across Bay College. Finally, participants expressed discontentment with how administrators treated faculty during contract negotiations, which signaled disrespect and hampered their growth through inequitable allocations of work, increased class sizes, and unreasonable demands surrounding office hours.

The following chapter discusses how these findings addressed the study's research questions while contributing to the literature and being connected to the theoretical framework highlighting transformative learning and supplemented by communicative action and learner-

centered approaches. Finally, the implications of this study's findings on practice, research, and policy are discussed.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter revisits the purpose of the study, which was to examine how the experiences of faculty working in the First Year Experience program at Bay College have shaped their pedagogy, approaches to working with students, and self-perceptions of their own identity as an educator. Furthermore, this study sought to explore faculty perceptions of institutional and disciplinary culture and examine how the intersection between these areas could be better facilitated to implement greater pedagogical change. This study was situated within the frameworks of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), communicative action (Habermas, 1981), and learner-centered theory (Baxter & Gray, 2002; Warmer, 2001). This chapter provides a discussion of the study's findings and illustrates a comprehensive overview of how the significance of its outcomes relates back to the theoretical frameworks and existing literature. Implications of this study for future research, proposed adaptations of theory, practical applications, and policy considerations are also reviewed at the end.

Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the key findings of this study and details how they directly addressed each research question and piece of the theoretical framework. As a reminder, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do First Year Experience program faculty perceive their role as an educator?
 - a. In what ways have the past and current teaching experiences of these faculty helped shape this perspective?
2. What role, if any, has teaching in a First Year Experience program had on faculty approaches to pedagogy and creating and/or sustaining communities of teaching and/or communities of practice?

- a. In what ways can communities of teaching and/or communities of practice created in First Year Experience be sustained outside the program?
3. What do First Year Experience faculty perceive as institutional conditions that shape pedagogical growth?

Table 6.1 below is intended to serve as an extensive overview of how each research question, guided by separate and respective components of the theoretical framework, is answered and addressed by thematically contextualized key findings of this study:

Table 6.1*Summary of Findings*

Theoretical framework	Research questions	Main themes	Key findings
Transformative learning	(RQ1) How do First Year Experience program faculty perceive their role as an educator? (RQ1a) In what ways have the past and current teaching experiences of these faculty helped shape this perspective?	(1) Self-perceptions of faculty identity (a) Supporting students on a more personalized basis (b) Evolution from content mastery to collaborative learning (c) Dispensing lifelong skills and facilitating learning beyond the classroom	• Faculty aimed to better support and relate to their students through a multilayered approach colored by their own personal, academic, and professional experiences and relationships. • Faculty embraced perceived imperfections more over time in both how their students demonstrated content mastery and their own pedagogical approaches. • Thus, faculty conceived their role as an educator as evolving over time alongside their students. • Many faculty described themselves as facilitators to their students, seeking to instill within them critical thinking skills, a newfound appreciation for learning, and an ability to self-advocate that could guide them during the rest of their time at Bay College and beyond.
Communicative action	(RQ2) What role, if any, has teaching in a First Year Experience program had on faculty approaches to pedagogy and creating and/or sustaining	(1) FYE as the exchange of best practices and knowledge (a) Sharing syllabi and common themes and assignments	• FYE provided community for faculty and students alike to engage in a structured and incentivized support program anchored by effective leadership. • FYE linked partners attempted to share common themes and assignments whenever feasible and frequently exchanged syllabi, which for many participants symbolized the equity-minded and co-

Theoretical framework	Research questions	Main themes	Key findings
	communities of teaching and/or communities of practice? (RQ2a) In what ways can communities of teaching and/or communities of practice created in First Year Experience be sustained outside the program?	amongst FYE linked partners (b) Cultivating communities of scholars and educators (c) Leadership as a guiding anchor amidst times of uncertainty (2) Syllabi as repositories of information and tools for advancing equity (3) Mentorship and collaborations as springboards for ideas and growth (4) Professional development opportunities at the institutional level	constructed evolution of their own pedagogy and class norms. • Informal mentoring opportunities and FYE collaborations were most successful when bridged by the proximity of office space. • However, more interdisciplinary collaborations were identified as being both wanted and beneficial. • Sustaining FYE communities of practice outside of FYE through professional learning opportunities: ○ Bay College provided many professional development opportunities related to pedagogy, technology, and distance education. ○ Faculty outlined the importance of expanding equity trainings, such as queer education, and making it more intersectional (e.g., supporting students of color and women in STEM) and run by leaders belonging to those groups.
Learner-centered theory	(RQ3) What do First Year Experience faculty perceive as institutional conditions	(1) Institutional and organizational facilitation of pedagogical practices	• Bad faith contract negotiations signaled disrespect to faculty despite institutional “lip service” suggesting otherwise, leading faculty to feel gaslit, manipulated, undervalued, and misunderstood.

Theoretical framework	Research questions	Main themes	Key findings
	that shape pedagogical growth?	(a) Institutional support and perceptions of faculty (b) Departmental dynamics and (in)equitable allocations of work (c) Contractual disagreements and misalignment of faculty and administrator approaches	• Faculty felt painted by a broad brushstroke of mistrust regarding institutional policies requiring them to be on campus thrice a week. • Increased classroom caps illustrated a misalignment between administrator expectations of faculty and the actual work of faculty. • Cloning of administrators served to perpetuate cycles of administrator-faculty disconnect. • Faculty faced messaging at both institutional and societal levels that they should feel grateful for their jobs and use this intrinsic value to sustain themselves rather than picket, protest, or fight for better working conditions.

Table 6.1 provided a comprehensive summary of how the key findings illustrated in Chapter 5 directly addressed each research question, which guided this study and were guided by the theoretical framework underlying it. The remainder of this section seeks not to simply rephrase what Table 6.1 has already laid out, but to contextualize it within a broader narrative underscoring the study's purpose and laying the groundwork for the implications related to theory, research, practice, and policy at the end of this chapter.

The first research question addressed how FYE faculty perceived their role as an educator, followed by a sub-question examining the ways their past and current teaching experiences helped shape this perspective. This research question stemmed from the study's overarching theoretical framework of transformative learning and spurred on thematic findings related to self-perceptions of faculty identity as shaped by a convergence of factors, including connecting with students in a manner elevated by personal experiences and relationships, a shift in pedagogical focus from content mastery to more collaborative forms of learning, and a broader objective in teaching as dispensing lifelong skills and learning beyond the classroom. Participants more closely related to their students and believed they were able to provide better support by critically reflecting on their own time in college and being vulnerable and open about this, as Daisy described. Furthermore, participants referenced personal relationships in helping them form more positive bonds with their own students, such as Stacy, who was cautious not to become too caring to the point of developing a codependency like their mother, or Daisy, Derek, and Sophia, who tried their best to support students because they would want someone to do the same for their own child(ren).

The willingness of many participants to take their teaching a bit more personally also gradually led to a less technical and prescriptive approach to pedagogy, instead having faculty

and students alike gravitate towards co-constructing new ways of thinking, learning, and knowing that prioritized critical thinking and stepping up for the greater good of society. Diane and Allen exemplified this sub-finding in their desire to want to help their students grow and learn as people, be good humans, and do good for society by becoming active participants in it and more civically minded, such as through voting. Similarly, this pedagogical approach lent itself to a more holistic and compassionate frame of mind towards the self as an educator and the student as a budding scholar. While participants such as Ronald and Sophia held grander visions of enacting societal change in their classrooms and of each student submitting their homework on time, they soon realized these dreams were not congruent with reality, not to any fault of the student's. As many students, particularly those attending Bay College, faced a barrage of personal responsibilities and matters in their own lives, much like their instructors, participants soon shifted their priorities and instead sought to maintain a certain level of academic standards while fostering a safe community and environment students could feel seen, heard, and understood in and desire to return to.

This community aspect lent itself to the next research question on what role, if any, teaching in FYE had on faculty approaches to pedagogy and/or creating and sustaining communities of teaching and/or communities of practice. Many participants expressed a two-fold appreciation for FYE in crafting communities for students, communities for faculty, and a community where students and faculty could coexist together within the classroom and outside its formal boundaries, such as through office hours and field trips, as Peter highlighted. Other participants, such as Ronald and Haley, noted the organic cross-pollination of topics that occurred within their students across disciplines without being shoehorned in, such as between English and anthropology, as well as sociology and anthropology. The nature of FYE's linked

communities created an intentional and incentivized space for interdisciplinary reimagining to take place not only within students, but also within the faculty members teaching them and collaborating to elevate this educational experience for them. Participants reported frequently exchanging syllabi with their FYE linked partners, and analysis of these documents shed light on how they essentially symbolized the evolution of faculty pedagogy and shared best practices over their teaching careers, as well as a tool for supporting students through the adoption of equity-minded practices, policies, and languages.

Furthermore, First Year Experience faculty may have felt more reinvigorated and fairly compensated through their stipends, while FYE students may have felt more motivated to join the program and utilize its services due to its heavily advertised benefits, such as priority registration. The incentivization of faculty and student alike in joining and investing in FYE naturally led to the third research question on how institutional support, attitudes, and perceptions helped or hindered these opportunities for growth and self-reflection as scholar and educator.

The final research question examined what faculty perceive as institutional conditions that shape pedagogical growth. While the first research question served as the core of this study through its examination of faculty identity, the other two research questions led to findings that had tense and, at times, contradictory outcomes on how participants conceived and worked towards their role as an educator. Support programs such as FYE, as highlighted in the second research question, created a space and community for faculty to grow together with their students and move away from content mastery and prescriptive instruction, instead moving towards more collaborative forms of learning rooted in compassion. Conversely, administrative perceptions and approaches to engaging with faculty, as highlighted in the third research question and

tangibly felt by participants during tense contract negotiations, undermined and devalued their work and the many communities nourished as a direct result of it. Participants such as Stacy and Allen described feeling disrespected, communicated to in bad faith, and even gaslit and manipulated when interacting with administration. Other participants, such as Ronald and Haley, described policies related to office hours and classroom caps as characterized by an institutional mistrust of faculty and a fundamental misunderstanding of their work. The cloning of administrators served to further perpetuate cycles of misalignment between faculty and administrator perspectives.

However, participants did not generalize this across all administrators, as many of them empathized with the financial burdens placed on administrators and some had even served or were serving in an administrative role themselves. Furthermore, many participants noted a fondness for their department deans and the FYE coordinator, suggesting that mid-level management could serve as a possible bridge or intermediary between faculty at the frontlines of teaching and upper-level executive leadership. This potential bridge is further explored in the section on implications for practice and policy.

Contributions To Theory

This section discusses the study's findings through the lens of the theoretical frameworks centered on transformative learning, communicative action, and learner-centered theory. The tenets of transformative learning, specifically the centrality of experience and critical reflection, are used in this study to examine how participants constructed their own approaches to learning and teaching, as well as how they sought to facilitate these conditions within their own students. The framework of communicative action, in the context of communicative rationality, communicative discourse, and communicative learning, is applied to better understand how the

conditions of transformative learning can be facilitated when power dynamics exist, encouraging challenging prevalent social norms and capitalist worldviews. Finally, learner-centered theory provides a framework for conceptualizing participants' student-centered approaches, fostering increased faculty engagement in their subject matter and essentially transforming them into the role of the student.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is defined by Mezirow (2003) as a form of learning that seeks to transform "problematic frames of reference," which refer to habits of mind, meaning perspectives, and mindsets (p. 1). Thus, these frames of reference are transformed to become more inclusive, open, reflective, and receptive to change. The goal of transformative learning is to essentially guide learners to a desire to act on new realizations of the reasons behind their experiences, thus allowing experiences to be the source of both action and deconstruction (Mezirow, 1991; E. Taylor, 2000). This section discusses two of the tenets of transformative learning, the centrality of experience and critical reflection, as underscoring the pedagogical approaches and teaching histories of the study's participants, utilized as a tool by faculty to better understand and transform both the self and their students. The final tenet of transformative learning, rational discourse, is not applied as a framework in this study due to its limitation in not adequately addressing how power dynamics influence student-educator interactions.

The Centrality of Experience

The centrality of experience is identified by E. W. Taylor (1998) as a key component to transformative learning, even if it is not worded explicitly that way in Mezirow's own writing. The centrality of experience alluded to in Mezirow's (1991) work underscores the importance and even necessity of experience in meaning making, as learning can be described as a larger

process of constructing a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience. Meaning perspectives, which refer to frames of reference and belief systems, are then used to categorize and filter these experiences (Mezirow, 1991). Thus, one's lived experiences and the feelings and beliefs they have cultivated along the way are integral to one's learning. Tomas' pedagogy embodied this centrality of experience, on both his students' and his own behalf. He ultimately chose his work and found fulfillment in it because it closely reflected his heritage and culture, and he encouraged his students to embrace their own identities rather than change themselves to fit into another group.

On the other hand, while Isabelle's discipline of mathematics may not have initially seemed to allow for such explicit connections to be made between her belief system and the course content she facilitated the learning of, this was not the case, as her centrality of experience remained at the forefront of her decision to pursue teaching and her desire to highlight her own students' centrality of experience, especially those who could identify with her. As Bay College served a predominately Latino student population, she found it important for her students to be taught by a Latina in STEM, especially since this representation was largely absent from her own undergraduate experience.

Other participants, such as Derek and Daisy, discussed how their children shaped the ways they related to their students and even increased their appreciation for institutional support of students, both programmatically and on an individual scale. Stacy also expressed their disappointment when a female Indian job candidate for a faculty opening was ultimately not hired, even though she would have shared experiences with a different demographic of students compared to other faculty in the division. Thus, the centrality of experience on behalf of both student and educator worked in tandem to facilitate classroom conditions and pedagogical

approaches that were further enriched by the invitation of lived experiences, serving to strengthen mutuality between students and faculty.

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection, which is often considered integral to adult learning, promotes questioning the integrity of one's beliefs and assumptions based on past experiences (Mezirow, 1991). Critical reflection is typically identified as a precursor to notable social or personal transformations and can occur either implicitly or explicitly (Mezirow, 1998). Critical reflection emerged as a unifying theme among many participants, both as a hallmark of their pedagogy and a recurring topic in their own teaching histories.

Many participants, such as Daisy, Diane, Peter, Allen, and Haley, explicitly used the word "critical thinking" to describe a facet of the skills they sought to instill within their students. Some participants described critical thinking as possessing an open mind and developing better decision-making capabilities grounded in analysis. However, for other participants, these critical thinking skills were synonymous with developing a greater propensity towards enacting social change. Diane specifically hoped her pedagogy would help her students become good humans, while Allen described his role as an educator as helping his students learn and grow as people. Daisy talked about wanting to provide her students with the tools and knowledge to have their "ah-ha" moment of seeing themselves as scholars and viewing school as an environment for learning and not for grades, even if this moment did not take place in her classroom.

Many participants also described experiencing their own "ah-ha" moments characterized by critical reflection, which required them to modify their beliefs and assumption around their education and place in the world, much like their students. Examples included Albert labeling

college as “for losers” until his mid-20s, Ronald initially not taking his studies seriously, Cheryl refusing to pursue a career in teaching until she eventually realized it was where she was meant to be all along, and Haley’s crushing realization that her childhood dream did not align with the work she actually wanted to do. Participants excelled at encouraging and creating space for their students to engage in critical reflection, which was perhaps at least in part due to their own sustained and, at times, transformative moments of critical reflection. Participants, such as Isabelle and Albert, also noted how FYE served as an ideal space to foster critical reflection because its population consisted of recent high school graduates.

Rational Discourse

Rational discourse is the final interrelated component of transformative learning Mezirow (1991) proposed, posited as an essential avenue through which transformation is facilitated. Discourse can serve as a platform for cultivating critical reflection and lead to crafting new or revised interpretations of experiences (Mezirow, 1991). However, rational discourse has been criticized for not sufficiently addressing how power relations between student and educator can distort the ideal conditions under which critical reflection takes place (Clark & Wilson, 1992; E. W. Taylor, 1998; E. Taylor, 2002). Thus, the framework of communicative action discussed below provides a better explanation for how critical reflection can be fostered while navigating power relations between student and educator, namely through questioning pervasive capitalist mindsets and established social norms.

Communicative Action

Communicative action as a framework is used to conceptualize reason as multifaceted in the ways it justifies differing approaches to learning, fostering mutuality and complementarity among participants (Gouthro, 2006; Hart, 1992). This section breaks down three tenets of

communicative action: communicative rationality, communicative discourse, and communicative learning to theorize and better understand how faculty make meaning of their role as an educator and actively implement this pedagogy in their classrooms. Similarly, while faculty participants facilitated the conditions of communicative rationality for their students via communicative discourse and learning observed in their pedagogy, they engaged in a similar process themselves by learning to make meaning of their own pedagogical identity, relationship to their education, and role in the institution.

Communicative Rationality

Communicative rationality is a branch of communicative action espoused by Habermas (1984) encouraging the validity of social norms to be critiqued, as well as underlying value questions to be prioritized over profit. Habermas categorized rationality away from a more prescriptive description of objectivity and instead called for mutuality between participants to better understand learning. Thus, communicative forms of action could serve as an antidote to pervasive capitalist worldviews adopted by educational institutions that perpetuated inequities (Habermas, 1987; Hill, 1997). Essentially, communicative rationality encourages the proposal of validity claims that can only be appropriately resolved through discussion.

Communicative rationality is a framework that embodied the pedagogical approaches of many participants, especially those housed in English who held Socratic seminars during their classroom observations. This approach fostered a discussion and constant flow of ideas and opinions, even those that ultimately led to diplomatic disagreements. Since these seminars were student-led and did not require participants to raise their hands to speak as long as they remained respectful, multiple perspectives could be heard and acknowledged as valid without fixating on identifying a singular correct answer. Along these lines, Cheryl desired to help her students

become stronger communicators who could think for themselves, ask questions, and articulate how they felt and why they felt that way. Similarly, Daisy highlighted the importance of language in changing how her students perceived their circumstances, describing themselves as “getting” to go to school rather than “having” to. Thus, the capability of language in empowering students, elevating their voices, and helping them better understand themselves and their place in the world stood out as a core theme in the pedagogical approaches of many participants.

Communicative Discourse and Communicative Learning

The following tenets of communicative action are complementary and address conditions that can facilitate communicative rationality in a classroom. Communicative discourse aims to lead participants towards a better understanding of the world while resolving conflicts that may arise along the way (Habermas, 1981). When revisiting communicative learning, it may be helpful to contrast it once more in relation to instrumental learning, which focuses on assessing the validity claims mentioned in the above section for the purpose of ultimately controlling and manipulating one’s environment (Mezirow, 1981). Conversely, communicative learning refers to communicating for the purpose of understanding another and is facilitated through the promotion of ideal conditions, including a sense of safety, openness, and trust, as well as student-centered approaches (Mezirow, 2003; Mezirow, 1995). Thus, communicative rationality as an openness to critiquing social norms, which was described in the earlier subsection, can only occur in educational contexts when these conditions are met and communication occurs that is motivated by meaning making.

Participants such as Stacy and Daisy described efforts to create this safe space and environment where students felt free to learn in their classes, focus on building soft skills, and be seen as individuals outside an educational context. Haley’s example of a linked FYE community

student expressing discomfort over performing Aztec dancing as possible cultural appropriation reflects this alignment of communicative learning and discourse that facilitated communicative rationality in the classroom. Only when these students were adequately supported did they feel comfortable enough to begin questioning social norms, even towards their instructor in the case of Haley's linked community when a power imbalance existed. Many participants cited their smaller class sizes in FYE as actively facilitating the conditions espoused by communicative learning.

For several participants, communicative learning offered an avenue for them to put their pedagogical approaches into practice, while communicative discourse and communicative rationality essentially served as learning outcomes for students to find comfort in questioning and making meaning of the world around them. This tripartite framework aligned with many participants' approaches to teaching, which were multifaceted and involved creating a safe environment for students that actively encouraged them to better understand and adopt a critical lens towards the world. Student-centered approaches that can also facilitate communicative learning are elaborated on below.

Learner-Centered Theory

Finally, learner-centered, also referred to as student-centered, theories describe a grouping of theories that switch the roles of student and teacher and call for educators to view their students as seekers to be guided on their journey of intellectual development, as opposed to empty vessels needing to be filled with knowledge (Baxter & Gray, 2001). Participants such as Daisy and Haley explicitly used the term "student-centered" in their interview responses and/or course syllabi to articulate their pedagogy and how they engaged with students. Daisy sought to help her students recognize the myriad choices available to them in college, including receiving

an education in the first place, and instilling within them a desire to take ownership of these decisions. Haley similarly focused on encouraging her students to adopt a strong sense of personal responsibility through her own student-centered approach. Closely intertwined with the tenet of critical reflection in transformative learning and communicative discourse in communicative action, learner-centered theories elevated how faculty participants engaged their students, adopting a broader practical lens by guiding them towards a realization of their own choices in life and a need to take personal responsibility for them.

Furthermore, Baxter and Gray (2001) called for a model highlighting students as actively engaged in the learning process instead of simply becoming passive absorbers of information, while teachers became facilitators no longer placed with the burden of being content experts (Tärnvik, 2007). In fact, Isabelle, Diane, and Derek explicitly used the word “facilitator” to describe how they conceived their role as an educator, choosing to distance themselves from a model of exclusively lecturing and presenting the material and instead helping engage their students with the course content. During student encounters that did not always facilitate idealized levels of engagement, participants tried to ensure students at least had these opportunities available and could be led to them if desired. Thus, a piece of their pedagogy centered on figuratively opening their students’ eyes to possibilities and pathways of opportunities, which may have previously been unperceived or even unavailable.

While engagement itself is not listed as a core principle of learner-centered theory, it emerged as a unifying principle amongst participants in their self-identification as a facilitator. Opportunities for engagement facilitated by participants seemed to have a reciprocal exchange, allowing them to become more engaged with their teaching and even find new connections to the course material. Diane gained a stronger understanding of art history after she started teaching

compared to even her own graduate studies in the discipline. Thus, engagement served to enrich the experiences of faculty and students alike at Bay College. Although moving towards an expertise in the course material is not necessarily a focus of learner-centered theory, it inadvertently served as a benefit for students and faculty that engaged with and remained open to its tenets. Thus, students may not be the only “learner” the framework of learner-centered theories could be applied to, viewing faculty as active recipients of their own learning, knowledge, and growth.

Contributions to Literature

One of this study’s most significant contributions to literature is highlighting the role of faculty as change agents uniquely positioned at the nexus between campus administrators and students. While previous studies have painted faculty as resistant to change (Tagg, 2012), this study shed light on how administrative, institutional, and bureaucratic policies and practices served as constraining factors to faculty enacting pedagogical change amidst a flurry of growing responsibilities, minimal to no guidance from the institution and state in navigating legislation directly impacting faculty curricula, and tense contractual disagreements leading faculty to perceive an organizational culture at Bay College that was disrespectful towards them.

Furthermore, this study aimed to contribute to the literature on faculty socialization and teacher identity within the context of the study site’s institutional type of community college, whereas previous studies centered teaching as a component of the tripartite mission of the research university rather than its primary mission (Boice, 1991; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Many participants sought out employment at Bay College because of their and the school’s commitment to teaching. However, rather than this mission serving to singlehandedly strengthen teacher identity, as suggested by previous studies (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Akkerman &

Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), many study participants observed more nuanced and mixed experiences where they found themselves frustrated with unrealistic and increasing responsibilities due to their institution's expectations of them to teach. Conversely, what strengthened the teacher identity of this study's participants were interactions with their peers and students, often facilitated through FYE, that allowed them to reimagine curricular connections across disciplines, find greater fulfillment in their work and collegial relationships, and even elevate their understanding of course content they had been formally educated in and taught for years.

This study also aligned with literature, such as in O'Connell et al.'s (2002) Faculty Change Agent Model, that observed how faculty participants self-selected into professional development opportunities, which led them to feel more motivated for the common purpose of improving their instructional practices. Some participants, such as Daisy, acknowledged that a certain degree of self-selection into FYE may have existed, where faculty who believed in the program actively sought it out and thus may have connected faster and better than their non-FYE peers would have. Ronald, Cheryl, and Peter also shared how they were formally recruited to FYE after being recommended to the faculty coordinator by departmental peers. This study affirmed findings that faculty who approached their work with a desire and willingness to enact pedagogical change observed greater student outcomes by implementing new practices (O'Connell et al., 2002). However, at the same time, many study participants felt constrained in actively seeking out and engaging in these opportunities due to growing expectations and responsibilities handed to them by administration.

The findings of this study also aligned with those in the literature noting how the wider context of higher education can have a constraining effect on the identity development of

university teachers (Lankveld et al., 2017). However, this study contributed to the literature by identifying factors within the wider context of higher education that can serve to strengthen faculty identity. The implications section below sheds light on how this study's findings identified certain institutional agents, as well as programs or interactions occurring within or because of this institutional context, that have the potential to dismantle this wider constraining effect and reinvigorate and reengage faculty in their work.

Implications

This section takes the findings and discussion of this study and presents implications for research, theory, practice, and policy based on them. Specifically, implications for future scholarly research are suggested based on a proposed model, which mirrors faculty and student trajectories of learning and describes the institutional conditions necessary to guide them to fruition. Participants were invited to share their perspectives on how they believed the institution viewed the role and biggest expectations of faculty. Subsequently, implications for practice and policy outlined at the end draw from key findings of the study and participant voices to offer actionable recommendations that can facilitate the growth of community college faculty.

Implications for Research and Theory

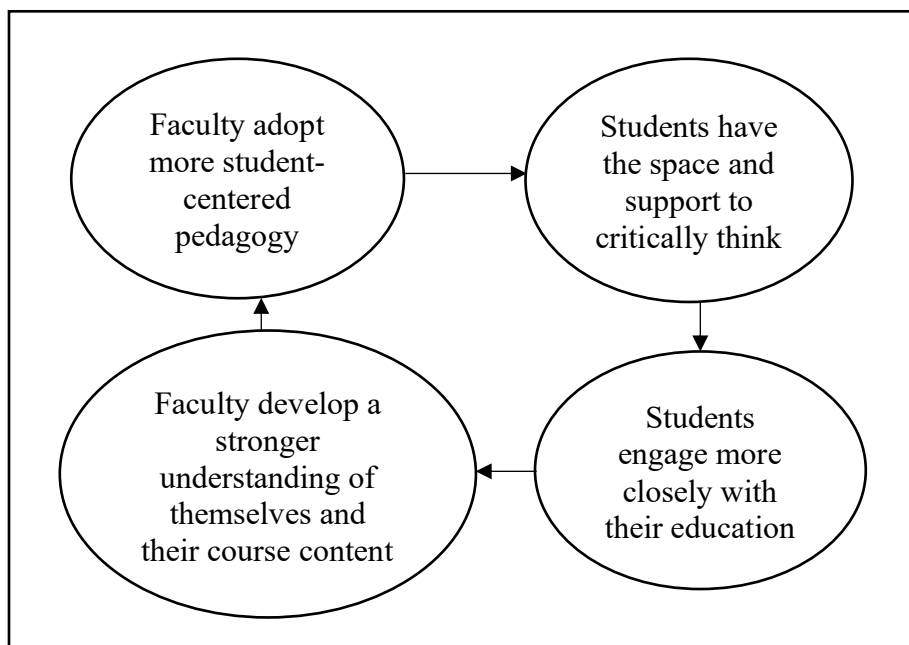
Findings from this study can shape future advancements in research and theory. This section offers implications for scholars by first presenting a model that aims to fill a gap in the literature on pedagogical approaches that have remained stagnant over time, as well as sustained cycles of faculty socialization that breed further resistance to change (Tagg, 2012). This model provides a look at the mutuality of faculty-student learning, examining how trajectories of growth in faculty and students often mirror one another through conditions that facilitate a safe environment for critical reflection, collaboration, and a deeper understanding of course content.

Thus, students and faculty swap roles as scholar and educator. However, these conditions can either be helped or hindered by the institution and often require some form of structured support, such as FYE, to further promote growth.

This study did not draw upon organizational frameworks highlighting administrator roles and responsibilities, as it sought to exclusively elevate faculty voices and better illustrate the multifaceted ways they engaged students in their learning. Instead, this study sought to fill a gap in the literature on instructional approaches to higher education that have remained slightly antiquated, guiding faculty away from cycles of socialization that have bred a resistance to change often hurting student learning outcomes (Tagg, 2012). The study's findings point towards a model of mutuality in faculty-student learning that centers faculty as both learners and institutional and pedagogical change agents, crafted through faculty narratives of their pedagogy and teaching histories and pictured in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1

Mutuality of Faculty-Student Learning



Many participants noted a learner- or student-centered approach that allowed them to offer more personalized support to their students and create a safe environment for learning and asking questions. For many of these participants, their student-centered pedagogy stemmed from a combination of factors but was perhaps most tangibly shaped by each faculty member's own life experiences. Whether this meant formative childhood memories, missteps in academic or professional trajectories, or a deeply impactful encounter with a mentor figure, each participant's personal experiences helped them better relate to and empathize with their students, as each faculty member had also been a student at one point. In fact, they were still students, not simply because they worked at an educational institution, but because they adopted the same lens themselves that they tried to foster within their students.

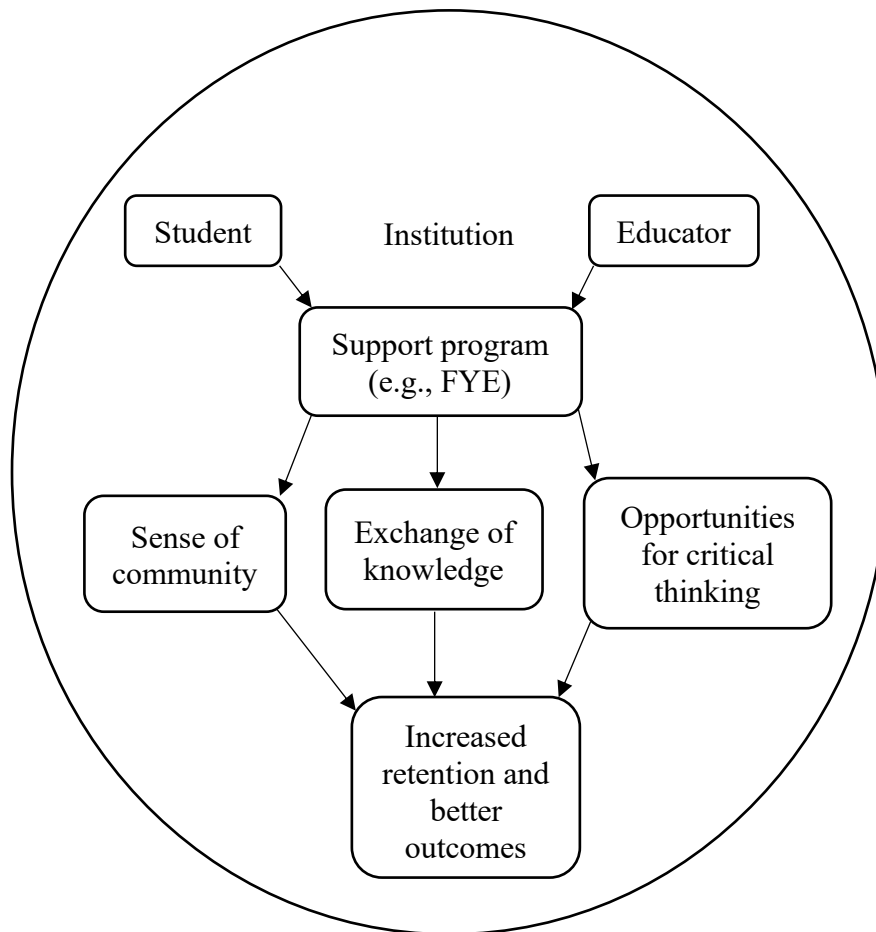
These educators nurtured within their students the conditions to facilitate critical reflection and thinking, which ushered a deeper understanding of both themselves and their course content. At the same time, faculty extended these conditions to themselves, as observed when Karen said her students kept her young and helped her view and understand her subject matter in ways even her graduate program had not instilled within her. Thus, a certain degree of reciprocity took place where faculty helped students find meaning in their learning and course content, which then led faculty to discover new ways of knowing, thinking, and making meaning.

Students and faculty alike experienced nearly parallel pathways and trajectories. Students often began their higher education journeys with critical thinking skills that were not fully developed. Similarly, faculty also began their careers with an overreliance on trying to be subject matter experts due to inexperienced pedagogical approaches, even if they had taught in graduate school previously. While students and faculty journeys were both marked by uncertainty, a

source of support such as FYE could be instrumental in crafting a space for them to acquire certain skills, experiences, and knowledge central to their development, as shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2

Parallel Trajectories of Student and Educator Growth



While the example of the support program in Figure 6.2 is listed as FYE due to its focus in the study, supports could also include less structured or formal avenues involving mentorship or professional development that participants identified as transformative. These sources of support facilitate the conditions for a safe and coordinated environment to be met where students and faculty alike can explore, learn, collaborate, and ask questions, receiving support as a human in addition to being a scholar and educator. Thus, a structured community such as FYE actively

rewards collaboration through stipends for faculty and benefits such as priority registration for students, leading members of this community to better understand themselves and how they relate back to the school and broader society. In doing so, they critically refine their belief systems and values along the way and become change agents.

However, this entire process of support is facilitated by the institution and occurs within its bubble, as seen in Figure 6.2. As such, the presence or absence of funding, messaging felt through contract negotiations, and campuswide initiatives and policies can either help or hinder student and faculty growth. At the same time, Figure 6.2 is encompassed within a circle denoting the institution not to suggest these conditions are constrained to or can only occur within an institutional context. On the contrary, a sense of community, the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and opportunities for critical thinking can touch many aspects of the lives of students and faculty, extending far beyond the classroom and campus at times. However, the onus is on the institution to actively foster and facilitate these conditions through incentivized and compensated forms of support, which can then support institutional outcomes and increase retention of both students and faculty at the college. Several key constraining and/or strengthening factors on faculty pedagogical growth and participation in communities of practice are pictured in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3

Strengthening and Constraining Factors on Faculty Pedagogical Growth

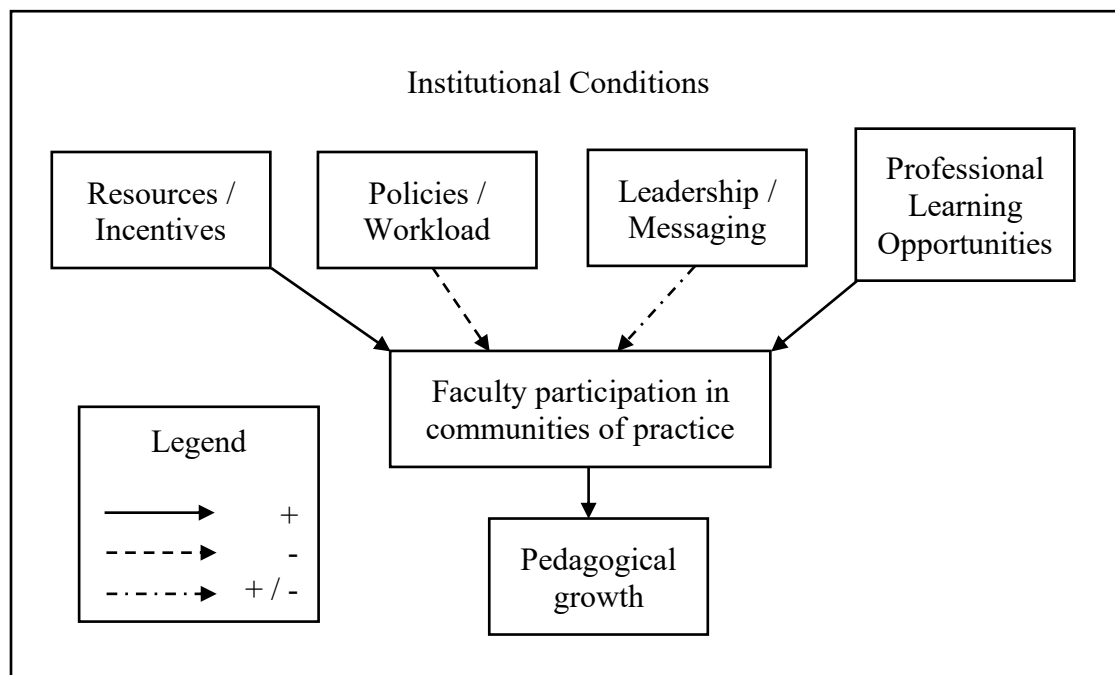


Figure 6.3 highlights how institutions inform faculty teaching and learning by depicting how specific institutional conditions, such as resources/incentives, policies/workload, leadership/messaging, and professional learning opportunities, can facilitate or constrain faculty's pedagogical growth and participation in communities of practice. While participants noted how resources, incentives, and professional learning opportunities positively influenced them seeking out and sustaining communities of practice, institutional policies and faculty workloads constrained their participation. Meanwhile, leadership and messaging served to either strengthen or constrain their participation based on whether this leadership was situated at the organizational, disciplinary, or programmatic level. As the study's findings and Figure 6.2 highlight the role of structured support programs such as FYE in improving faculty retention and outcomes, institutional conditions that ultimately help or hinder faculty participation in communities of practice also inevitably impact their pedagogical growth.

This study did not center administrators, instead examining how administrative and institutional perceptions, language, and decisions affected the conditions for growth and learning found in faculty and students and described by study participants. However, future research would be enriched by also uplifting the voices of administrators and examining their academic and professional trajectories. A tripartite study connecting administrator trajectories to those of students and faculty may paint a broader picture of how the roles, identities, and meaning making processes of these groups are shaped by and within the institution, especially if accompanied by an organizational framework. Administrators are often vilified for their work even when they are forced to manage competing interests and make difficult decisions, so hearing their perspectives would also help to humanize them.

Implications for Practice and Policy

This study's implications for practice underscore the importance of administrators, both at the institutional and state levels, continuing to support and sustain programs such as FYE. Figures 6.1 to 6.3 reflected how investment in these support programs resulted in better institutional outcomes for students and faculty alike by increasing their retention at the school and commitment to its mission. The importance of programs such as FYE is directly supported by statistics provided by the Office of Institutional Research at Bay College, indicating that students who participated in FYE were twice as likely to earn an associate degree within three years. Furthermore, FYE students were more likely to persist into their second year and transfer to a four-year university by a 20- to 25-point difference compared to their non-FYE counterparts. Furthermore, participants such as Dave and Sophia detailed lifelong connections made with former FYE students, extending beyond just the "first year" described in the program title. Participants continued to mentor and write letters of recommendation for former FYE students

long after they had left Bay College and even pursued graduate school or post-college employment. Furthermore, former FYE students often returned for panels and events to mentor and guide incoming and current FYE students. Participants such as Sophia also noted how many of their students sustained stronger and longer lasting bonds with their FYE professors at Bay College than they did at their transfer institution.

While this study aimed to center faculty voices and synergistic moments between students and faculty, the role of administration in fostering or hindering these collaborations emerged as highly impactful based on the study's findings, as shown in Figures 6.2 and 6.3. Participants such as Haley and Ronald felt that administration painted all faculty with a broad brushstroke characterized by distrust. Many participants acknowledged the financial constraints and difficult decisions management often grappled with, as Dave and Isabelle had even worked in administrative positions themselves. However, participants such as Stacy and Allen felt disrespected, communicated with in bad faith, or even gaslit by administration. While trust cannot be (re)built overnight, faculty cannot be expected to balance competing obligations themselves if they are met with unfair working condition or assigned work inequitably distributed to them.

Departmental Deans as Middle Managers Between Faculty and Administrators

On the other hand, many participants noted how much they appreciated or even loved their departmental deans, although some such as Stacy wished their dean could step in more frequently to keep faculty accountable for committee work. While departmental deans are undoubtedly inundated with their own set of responsibilities, perhaps some of their work could be allocated towards the role of serving as an indirect intermediary between faculty and upper-level administration. Many participants did not feel respected by administration and believed

management did not understand faculty work in the classroom or even trust them to do their work. Many participants identified their dean and/or assistant dean as informal mentors and described having positive working relationships with them, so deans seemed to exist in the middle ground between administrators and educators.

Finally, many participants, such as Haley, Ronald, Sophia, and Tomas, discussed the impracticality of being expected to commute to campus for a singular office hour that was attended by one student the whole semester. Other participants, such as Diane, wished management could step away from promoting a numbers-driven culture and instead be more open to qualitative indicators of student success, such as individual stories. Perhaps the workload of departmental deans, who had advocated for reduced weekly days on campus in the past, could be allocated towards generating data-driven reports that illustrated how this time could be better spent.

Creating Part-Time Faculty Communities of Practice

This study also sought to elevate the voices of part-time faculty due to their substantial numbers across California community colleges, alongside the poor institutional working conditions they often encountered due to job insecurity and high turnover rates (CCCCO, 2019; Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). First Year Experience was chosen for this study due to its effectiveness as a program in increasing retention and grade point averages for students and cultivating a sense of community for students and faculty alike, coupled with my own positionality shaped by my experiences as a counselor and non-instructional faculty member in the FYE program of a California community college (Barefoot, 2000; Cox, 2003; Stassen, 2000; Wills & Allegreti; 2013). However, the data collection process quickly shed light on how difficult the goal of elevating part-time faculty voices in FYE at Bay College would be when this

intersection was nearly nonexistent. Amber was the only part-time faculty who participated in the study, sharing how she was the only part-time faculty who had worked in FYE for years. Furthermore, Amber believed her involvement in FYE was only possible due to her long history with the college and program through Supplemental Instruction. At the same time, she understood why part-time faculty may not be suitable for the program due to their constantly fluctuating teaching load each semester, while one of the hallmarks of FYE included learning communities set in stone far in advance of the academic year.

However, this study still addressed part-time faculty needs and concerns even if they were largely absent from the participant pool. Each full-time faculty participant had served in a part-time role at Bay College, and often simultaneously at other California community colleges, for at least a few weeks up to a few years before moving into their current role. Participants, such as Diane and Isabelle, empathized with the stress part-time faculty experienced commuting across multiple campuses. Other participants, such as Derek and Allen, wondered why more part-time faculty could not be hired full-time or at least given more classes due to an evident need based on consistently increasing classroom caps. While Derek believed Bay College valued adjunct faculty even though the college could do a better job, he worried upcoming projected budget cuts would hurt adjunct faculty.

Thus, this study points to a need for part-time faculty needs, concerns, and voices to be amplified and more closely listened to. Especially since part-time faculty are vulnerable to being perceived and treated by administrators in a way that can become exploitative, it is imperative that streams of institutional support such as those pictured in Figure 6.2 are not denied to them (Levin et al., 2006). However, certain programs that require faculty participation for set durations of time to guarantee more structured support to students, such as FYE, may not

realistically align with unstable part-time faculty schedules and availability on campus.

Similarly, participants such as Cheryl discussed how growing class sizes and the grading fatigue that followed were far less apparent to her as a part-time faculty member teaching only two classes. However, these nuanced scheduling conflicts should not automatically disqualify or exclude part-time faculty from similar opportunities that could benefit and support them.

While there is no immediate or one-size-fits-all solution to this issue, it is crucial that administrators and institutions first listen to part-time faculty voices and concerns and ask what they need to feel more supported. Perhaps support programs such as FYE, as well as this study's recommendations tailored to full-time faculty, can be offered on a smaller basis to part-time faculty. For example, support programs akin to the faculty-led academies participants such as Daisy were involved in and even helped run could pair part-time and full-time faculty members as peer mentors. This program could coordinate activities such as peer observations and a year-end symposium on campus where faculty share pedagogical takeaways. This program's structure could also ensure a certain degree of part-time faculty representation. Similar ideas for other support programs could encourage more interdisciplinary collaboration through structured partnerships and brown bags that incentivize faculty spanning divisions to form connections across course content. Additionally, while participation in these programs could help part-time faculty feel more connected to their campus, they would still entail additional time and labor that should be appropriately compensated, such as through a stipend or reduced teaching load. These recommendations have the potential to benefit all community college faculty, including full-time faculty.

Policymaker Guidance Navigating New Statewide Legislation

Many participants in the study, particularly those housed in English and mathematics, also described hardships navigating statewide legislation that removed remedial courses from California community college curricula for equity purposes. Participants, such as Isabelle, felt they were on their own in instituting these sweeping changes in their classrooms and adequately supporting students throughout it all, with minimal to no guidance from the college. Other participants, such as Daisy, even helped run faculty programs guiding instructors in navigating the new normal of students no longer remediating. Ronald felt that many statewide decisions were passed from the perspective of policymakers who had not taught or were at least disconnected from the classroom. Thus, policymakers should take into consideration faculty and even administrators when making decisions related to student equity. Expectations for faculty to singlehandedly institute and navigate far-reaching changes while guiding their own students through that uncertainty are unreasonable. Not only does a lack of support hurt faculty who become inundated by the excess labor of supporting themselves, but it can also hurt student outcomes when faculty are unable to extend personalized attention to their students. Thus, policymakers should consider recommending reasonable and realistic processes and guidelines faculty can follow when passing and proposing policies that promote equitable outcomes for students.

Conclusion

This study sought to deepen an understanding of how community college faculty housed within a First Year Experience program made sense of their identity as an educator. Utilizing a qualitative single-site case study design, this study drew connections from interviews and classroom observations of 15 faculty members working in the FYE program at Bay College, in

addition to reviewing each of their course syllabi and observing the FYE faculty meeting that took place that semester. A framework integrating transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), communicative action (Habermas, 1981), and learner-centered theory (Baxter & Gray, 2002; Warmer, 2001) was proposed to examine how faculty pedagogical approaches fostered critical thinking in a way that sparked self-reflection within the self. The findings of this study suggest that a mutuality of growth and learning exists between students and faculty, where faculty who foster a safe environment for their students to explore invoke similar feelings of self-analysis for themselves. This study also highlighted how participation in a support program such as FYE can further accelerate these conditions by requiring students and faculty to engage in interdisciplinary collaborations. Through the formation of communities of teaching and communities of practice supported at an institutional level, educators can transform their students and, in turn, be transformed into students and agents of pedagogical change themselves.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW INTAKE FORM

Faculty Experiences Interview Form

Please fill out the short demographic form below. Once you have submitted this form, you will be contacted by Catherine Choe within a week to schedule an interview and classroom observation.

1. Full Name (First, Last)
2. Email Address
3. Preferred Pronouns
4. Gender Identity
5. Racial/Ethnic Identity (Please mark all that apply)
 - a. Asian/Asian American
 - b. Black/Black American
 - c. Hispanic or Latina/o/x
 - d. Native American or Alaska Native
 - e. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - f. White/Caucasian
 - g. Other:
6. Faculty Rank
 - a. Temporary (part-time) academic instructor
 - b. Academic tenure-track (full-time) instructor
 - c. Other:
7. How many years have you worked at Bay College?
8. How many years have you worked in FYE?
9. Please list the names and/or numbers of the FYE classes you have taught or are currently teaching.
10. Please list the highest degree you have completed.
11. If there is anything else you would like the Principal Investigator, Catherine Choe, to know before she reaches out to schedule an interview and observation, please include it below.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Questions

Background and Context

Can you describe your teaching history?

Why teaching? Why Bay College? And why FYE?

How did you learn how to teach? Have you received any training on this?

Have you worked, or do you currently work, at any other institutions?

If so, for how long, and what types of classes?

Can you walk me through your syllabus?

Pedagogy

[In reference to the classroom observation]

Has your approach to teaching this lesson changed over time?

How does this class session compare to a typical class for you?

Do your teaching strategies and classroom activities differ between your FYE and non-FYE classes?

Do the ways your students engage in that/those class(es) differ from your FYE classes?

Are there any classroom moments you would like to share?

How would you define your role as an educator?

Has this definition changed since you began your faculty career?

Has your experience in FYE shaped how you view yourself as an educator?

How does your work as faculty compare to how you view your role as an educator?

What areas do you feel most comfortable with as an instructor? What areas do you feel least comfortable with as an instructor?

Is there anything you believe you need help with in your teaching?

Program, Department, Institution, and Discipline

In what ways have you been able to connect with other FYE faculty? Do you feel like you are influenced by them?

Do FYE faculty exchange ideas and syllabi? How often do you talk with each other?

Based on your interactions with your peers in FYE, what are your thoughts on how they perceive their role as an educator?

What about your peers outside of FYE and/or at other institutions?

What are your thoughts on how Bay College views the role of its faculty?

What do you consider to be Bay College's biggest expectations of its faculty?

What are your thoughts on how your academic discipline views the role of faculty?

Support, Mentorship, and Professional Development

Are you receiving or have you received any form of mentoring?

What types of professional development opportunities have you sought out since beginning your faculty career, if any?

What types of professional development opportunities has Bay College provided?

How does this compare to the professional development opportunities provided by other institutions (if applicable)?

What areas of professional development are you most interested in? What types of professional development opportunities would you like to see Bay College provide more of?

What do you believe institutions should/can be doing differently to support faculty?

Closing Remarks

We are almost at the end of our interview.

Is there anything else you would like to share, or do you have any questions?

That concludes our interview. Thank you so much for your time.

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