

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

A Narrative Analysis of the Cooling-out Process of Black and Latino/a/e Students Leaving Community College

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7064b6bc>

Author

Chavac, Liza

Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

A Narrative Analysis of the Cooling-out Process
of Black and Latino/a/e Students Leaving Community College

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

by

Liza Chavac

2024

© Copyright by

Liza Chavac

2024

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Narrative Analysis of the Decision-Making Process of Black and Latino/a/e Students Leaving Community College

by

Liza Chavac

Candidate for Doctoral Degree of Philosophy of Education

University of California, Los Angeles

Professor Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Chair

As community colleges have often been referred to as the equalizers in the U.S. higher education system, it is important to examine how these institutions reproduce inequities for Black and Latino/a/e students as they navigate their educational journeys. Through a narrative qualitative research design, this dissertation study collected 20 interviews with Black and Latino/a/e current and former students from three community college sites in addition to an analysis of online modalities to explore the structural and procedural challenges that cool-out these students from community college. This study implemented the use of institutional precarity (Hart, 2019) and procedural cooling-out (Anderson, 2015) to examine how the structural and procedural challenges in community colleges directly impact the educational goals of Black and Latino/a/e students. In addition, this study focused on the micro-decisions (Anderson, 2015) of students to explore how

students made daily academic decisions as they encountered these challenges. Findings revealed Black and Latino/a/e students experience several structural and procedural challenges that influence their cooling-out. These challenges include a lack of academic support, misinformation or a lack of accurate information, a shortage of required courses, and limited counseling appointments. All challenges that contributed to educational and financial aid delays and decisions to leave their college. Findings also demonstrated Black and Latino/a/e students face unique challenges based on their race and ethnicity which are upheld by placement policies like AB705, the allocation of resources, and disciplinary and advising practices. Furthermore, this study found that Black and Latino/a/e are often directed to make critical academic decisions on their own after encountering structural and procedural challenges. For this reason, this dissertation study demonstrates that community college attrition rates can be attributed to the structural and procedural challenges along with racialized challenges within the college. Research findings from this study suggest community college scholars should expand this work and focus on practices, policies, and reforms with a racialized lens as they often exacerbate inequities in the community college system. Additionally, this study calls for equitable legislation and practices that promote retention and academic support for Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

This dissertation of Liza Chavac is approved.

Jessica Harris

Jasmine Hill

Adrian Huerta

Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
VITA.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study: Community Colleges	2
Problem Statement of the Study	4
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	9
Significance of the Study	10
Overview of Chapters	11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS.....	12
The California Higher Education System.....	12
Community College Enrollment Trends.....	14
The History of Community College Funding.....	15
CCC Funding	17
Community College Compared to University Funding.....	19
Community College Reforms and its Effect on Black and Latino/a/e Students...	20
Community College Federal Financial Aid	21
The AB705 Legislation in Community College.....	22
Community College Structural and Procedural Challenges	23
Student Decision Making.....	27
Information-Based Decisions.....	28
Decisions Students Face in Community Colleges	29

The Concept of Micro-Decisions.....	32
Summary of Literature Review and Contributions	33
Conceptual Frameworks of the Study.....	34
The Study of Precarity in Literature	34
Institutional Precarity in Higher Education	35
Institutional Precarity in Community College	36
Cooling-Out in Community Colleges	38
The Concept of Procedural Cooling-Out	42
Application of the Conceptual Frameworks	43
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	46
Research Questions	46
Research Design.....	46
Research Site Selection and Description	48
Western College.....	49
Central and Banting College.....	50
Participant Recruitment and Selection.....	51
Data Collection Methods	55
Participant Interviews	55
Online Websites and Social Media Selection	57
Data Analysis	58
Interview Analysis	59
Online Analysis of Different Modalities.....	60
Positionality	61

Reflexivity and Trustworthiness	63
Reciprocity	65
Confidentiality	66
Limitations	66
Chapter Summary	67
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	68
Participant Context and Institution Background.....	69
When Institutional Precarity Meets Procedural Cooling-Out.....	79
“I Can’t Enroll in a Course Even if I Wanted To”	80
“They Just Didn’t Have the Time for Me”	89
“I Don’t Know Where to Get the Right Information”	100
Racialized Challenges as a Form of Cooling-Out.....	103
“They Make You Feel Inferior Because of who You Are”	104
“They Called Me out of my Name”	108
Online Analysis Findings.....	114
Campus Websites.....	115
Articulation Webpage	118
The Impact of Social Media.....	120
Conclusion and Summary of the Findings.....	124
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	126
Discussion	127
The Structure of Community Colleges	127
Institutional Precarity and Procedural Cooling-Out in Community Colleges	130

Black and Latino/a/e Student Decision Making	134
Cooling-Out Through a Racialized Lens	136
Online Sources as a Form of Cooling-Out.....	139
Implications.....	143
Implications for Research	143
Implications for Practice and Policy	148
Conclusion	152
APPENDIX A: SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT SCRIPT	155
APPENDIX B: INTEREST FORMS	156
APPENDIX C: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES	159
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE 1	161
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE 2.....	163
REFERENCES	165

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Figure 1. Institutional Precarity and Procedural Cooling-Out	44
Figure 2. Percent Distribution of Core Revenues in FY 2022	77
Figure 3. Percent Distribution of Core Expenses in FY 2022	79

Tables

Table 1. Black and Latino/a/e Current Student Participation Breakdown.....	54
Table 2. Black and Latino/a/e Former Student Participation Breakdown	54
Table 3. Percentage of Black and Latino/a/e Students Enrolled From 2021 to 2022	71
Table 4. Percentage of Students Enrolled by Age From 2021 to 2022.....	72
Table 5. Financial Aid Percentage by College From 2021 to 2022.....	72
Table 6. Course Success by Race and Ethnicity From 2021 to 2022	73
Table 7. Persistence Rates by Race and Ethnicity From 2021 to 2022	74
Table 8. Total Number and Percentage of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty in Fall 2022.....	75
Table 9. Total Number and Percentage of Full-Time and Part-Time Staff in Fall 2022	75
Table 10. Steps to Enroll in Community College for First-Time Students	117
Table 11. The Cooling-Out Process of Black and Latino/a/e Former Community College Students.....	134

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many people who have been a part of my journey and dissertation process. First, all glory to the most high. This would not have been possible without God, who has blessed every corner of my life, even more through the toughest times. To my mother, who immigrated to this country at 15-years old and gave up her dreams so that I could live mine. Everything I do is because of you and for you. Thank you for being my first teacher and teaching me how to hustle and grind. To my siblings, who laid the foundation and led the way for me to be here. Thank you for being the best examples for me to follow. To my nieces and nephew, thank you for bringing the happiness and joy that I needed to complete this journey. To my tias, tio, primas, primos, and bubs, who have been pillars throughout this journey, thank you for your endless support and love. And to my Lulu, thank you for being the best dog companion and my best friend these last 13 years. It truly takes a village.

To my community and the city that shaped me—Huntington Park (HP), let it be known that we all have the potential and are worthy to be in these spaces. To my childhood friends, friends that have become family, and new friends, thank you for your prayers, cheers, and for pushing me forward. Your endless support is what kept me moving. To the places that kept me sane, Koin Church for reconnecting me with God, and Koyano Weightlifting, Crossfit PRSVR, and Crossfit Insurgent for keeping me mentally and physically fit these last 5 years, thank you for everything.

To my committee, Dr. Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Dr. Jessica Harris, Dr. Jasmine Hill, and Dr. Adrian Huerta, thank you for guiding me throughout this process. Dr. Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, thank you for taking me under your wing, for caring for me, and listening to me. You are truly someone that I aspire to be not only because you are an amazing scholar in the field but because

you are the epitome of a caring human being. Dr. Jessica Harris, your CRT course was one of my favorites in the program. Thank you for pushing us to think critically and to incorporate a racialized lens in our work to make a difference in the field. Your guidance and feedback throughout this process was truly helpful. Dr. Jasmine Hill, thank you for providing a space like MERN and welcoming me to join this amazing community of scholars. Your work inspired this dissertation and if it were not for you, I would not have received the Bunche/IAC Fellowship that supported this study. Dr. Adrian Huerta, thank you for welcoming me to join your research meetings and meet amazing scholars that I can now call friends. Your work also inspired this dissertation study and many other projects I worked on. Thank you for being a leader in the field.

To the participants of this study, current and former students and the community college sites, thank you for giving me your time and allowing me to share your experiences. My goal for this study was to provide insights into the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students in the community college sector in order for the community college system to serve its students better. I truly believe in the mission of community colleges and believe they are a vehicle to social mobility. Thank you for allowing me to learn from you and your experiences.

Lastly, to the UCLA faculty who supported me throughout my journey, Dr. Ozan Jaquette and Dr. Patricia McDonough, thank you for believing me and giving me the opportunity to grow as a scholar. To my cohort members, Demeturie Gogue and Fernando Garcia, thank you for being in this crazy ride with me. We truly went through it all together and I am so blessed to have you both in my life. You both kept me afloat. And to my doctoral friends: Daniela Conde, Patricia Martin, Brianna Wright, Kaitlyn Stormes, Davis Vo, Dr. Daisy Ramirez, Dr. Sid Jacobo, Dr. Renee White Eyes, and Edgar Lopez, thank you for pushing me forward.

VITA

EDUCATION

University of California, Los Angeles Doctoral Candidate	2024
University of California, Los Angeles Master of Arts, Human Development and Psychology	2016
University of Southern California Bachelor of Arts, Psychology	2014
Santa Monica College Associate of Arts, Liberal Arts	2011

RESEARCH AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Santa Ana College, Research Analyst	2024
UCLA Department of Education and Information Studies, Teaching Assistant Educational Leadership Course	2021–2024
UCLA Department of Education and Information Studies, Graduate Student Researcher	2019–2024
UCLA Department of Education and Information Studies, Teaching Assistant Understanding College Pathways	2023
UCLA Department of Physical Sciences, Graduate Student Researcher	2022–2023
UCLA Department of Education and Information Studies, Teaching Assistant Introduction to Data Programming	2021–2022
Pasadena College, ASCEND Program Research Analyst	2020–2022
UCLA Civil Rights Project, Research Intern	2018–2019
UCLA Department of Education and Information Studies, Graduate Research Assistant	2015–2016
USC Youth Crime Lab, Research Assistant	2012–2014

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Rios-Aguilar, C., & Chavac, L. (forthcoming 2025). Funds of knowledge in community colleges. In *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Social Justice*.

Chavac, L. (2024, May). The experiences of Black and Latino/a/e community college men. CAMPR Group (virtual).

Chavac, L. (2024, April). *Understanding cultural complexities: A qualitative study of Black and Latino community college men*. RP Conference, Long Beach, CA.

Chavac, L., Vo, D., Rios-Aguilar, C. (2024, April). *Examining the labor market success of Black and Latina/e/o/x community college baccalaureate graduates*. American Educational Research Association Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Chavac, L. (2023, November). *A qualitative study of the academic and interpersonal support of Black and Latino men in higher education*. NASPA, Las Vegas, NV.

Huerta, A., Lopez, E., Torres, G., Chavac, L., Matias, N. & Jaramillo, A. (2023, April). *Relationships with ourselves, place, and community: Embodiment, mentorship, and freedom dreaming*. American Educational Research Association Conference, Chicago, IL.

Aguiar, A., Dones, C., Quinones, P., Rios-Aguilar, C., Chavac, L., Cruz, P. (2022, August). *Lessons from implementation: The experience of West Los Angeles College as a pioneer provider of the community college baccalaureate in California*. Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research.

Chavac, L. (2021). The Persistence and Success of Latino Men in Community College. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*.

Chavac, L. (2022, April). *Meeting students where they're at: Supporting Black and Latino/x community college men through validation Practices*. Council for the Study of Community Colleges, Tempe, AZ.

Chavac, L. (2021, October). *Institutional agents and their impact on the transfer success of Black and Latino/x college men*. Council of Ethnic Participants Pre-Conference at the Association of the Study of Higher Education, San Juan, PR (virtual).

FELLOWSHIPS

UC Berkeley, Gardner Seminar	2023-2024
UCLA, IAC/Bunche Predoctoral Fellowship	2023–2024
UCLA, Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship	2021–2022
UCLA, Council Diversity Fellowship	2020–2021

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My motivation and passion behind this research study is tied to my positionality as a first-generation Latina, raised in the predominately low-income Latino/a/e community of Southeast Los Angeles. I have navigated the higher education system for the last 11 years attending a community college and a private and public 4-year institution. Throughout my experience, I encountered many challenges as I navigated each system. However, none were as complex as the community college space. I often found myself lost, frustrated, and confused as I attempted to understand what courses I needed to transfer, how to schedule meetings with counselors, the financial aid process, and other procedures and requirements. Soon, I realized that other students of color expressed the same sentiments throughout this process, and I was not alone. Fortunately, after almost 4 years in community college I transferred to a university and 11 years later, I recognize how important the community college system was to my success. For this reason, this study places the experiences of students of color in community college at the forefront to express (a) how vital the community college space is to the success of Black and Latino/a/e students and (b) how the unpredictability of resources and procedures affect the completion of these students.

As a graduate student researching community colleges, it is no surprise that racial equity gaps persist in transfer and completion rates between Black and Latino/a/e students and their White peers. For example, in 2021, the Campaign for College Opportunity reported only 18% of Black students earned a certificate or degree within 4 years compared to 34% of White students (2021). That is a 16% difference in spite of 64% of Black undergraduates attending California Community Colleges. In a 2018 report, the Campaign for College Opportunity reported a 12-point percentage difference in graduation and transfer rates for Latino/a/e students compared to

White students (42% of Latino/a/e students compared to 54% of white students) despite Latino/a/e students holding the largest enrollment rates in California Community Colleges at 72%.

Additionally, Black and Latino/a/e students continue to encounter challenges within the structures and procedures in community colleges. Research shows that community college students continue to receive conflicting information from staff and/or faculty (Goldrick-Rab, 2010), have a difficult time reaching out and meeting with a counselor (Garcia-Louis et al., 2020), select the wrong courses and/or do not know what courses to take (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002), and often stress from the complicated process of financial aid (McKinney & Roberts, 2012; Mendoza et al., 2009). Similarly, in my last 5 years of community college research, I often heard these responses through research studies and partnerships with community colleges as students expressed similar issues with their institution. Being that community colleges are critical to the success of Black and Latino/a/e students, this study will examine how these students slowly cool out of their institution and make critical decisions based on their experiences.

Background of the Study: Community Colleges

It is imperative to provide a brief background of the establishment of community colleges to understand their significance in the higher education system. Since the emergence of junior colleges (known today as community colleges) in the early 1900s they have often been overlooked as institutions in the U.S. higher education system because of their open access, missions, and differences in funding compared to 4-year universities. Community colleges were initially created for two reasons: (a) to serve as a bridge between high schools and universities and (b) to address the need for trained workers at the beginning of the 20th century (Brint &

Karamel, 1989). Over time, university administrators pushed for the establishment of community colleges as an elitist movement to differentiate between 4-year universities and 2-year colleges often claiming that 2-year colleges can foster the social mobility of children from blue collar workers or farm families (Drury, 2003). Although this claim is accurate as community colleges provided students with vocational training that assisted in aiding the need for trained workers, it was a way to establish a belief that universities were only available for a selected few.

As community colleges were expanding throughout the nation in the mid 1900's, they were deemed successful for their capacity to train students who went directly into the workforce (Brint & Karamel, 1989). However, educational researchers and advocates began questioning their legitimacy in supporting students' academic goals. Researchers argued community colleges were diverting students from transferring to 4-year institutions and into vocational tracks to fulfill the need for a stronger workforce (Brint & Karamel, 1989; Clark, 1960). This meant that students who had hopes of transferring to a 4-year university were persuaded to pursue a vocational track instead. This process was later identified as *cooling-out* by researcher Burton Clark in 1960. A term used to describe how students are strategically influenced by the institution to lower their educational aspirations without knowing they were being influenced (Clark, 1960). Clark (1960) mentioned that community colleges had an informal set of practices that were used to handle students, who under their requirements, were classified as underprepared or lacked academic abilities. Later, researchers Brint and Karamel (1989) stated that community colleges intentionally targeted the educational goals of underrepresented and nontraditional students because they were often placed under these labels.

Ironically, despite the controversies surrounding community colleges, they are often regarded as institutions providing accessible and affordable higher education to all students

(Brint & Karamel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Cohen et al., 2014; Phillipe & Sullivan, 2005).

Community colleges offer various educational opportunities such as the ability to earn general education credits, vocational training, or an associate degree, and/or transfer to a 4-year institution (Brint & Karamel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Cohen et al., 2014).

Due to these various educational and vocational options, community colleges often serve a significant number of low-income students, designated nontraditional students, and students of color. According to the Community College Research Center (2021) at Teacher's College, in the 2019 to 2020 academic year, 61% of community college students submitted a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form and roughly 37% of students received a Federal Pell grant. Designated nontraditional students are identified as students who take a few years off after high school, students who have dependents and/or are parents, and students who work full-time (Carreira & Lopes, 2021; Huerta, Rios-Aguilar & Ramirez; 2022). In community college, 47% of students work full-time and 68% work part-time (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020a). Additionally, more students of color attend 2-year colleges than 4-year universities. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 51% of Latino/a/e students, 42% of Asian students, and 40% of Black students were enrolled in community colleges (Community College Research Center [CCRC], 2021). In California alone, in 2020, 46% of the student population identified as Latino/a/e, 11% as Asian, and 6% as Black (California Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2020).

Problem Statement of the Study

Community colleges serve as pivotal pathways to secure social mobility, particularly for Black and Latino/a/e students. However, research shows that navigating the system is not easy. Over 80% of entering first-year students at community colleges intend to transfer to a 4-year

university, but only 32% of students who started in fall 2015 transferred within 6 years (Community College Research Center [CCRC], 2021; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). This suggests that roughly 68% of community college students fall within the following category: (a) earn a certificate or vocational degree, (b) remain at community college, (c) decide to enter the workforce, or (d) withdraw from community college. Additionally, despite the high enrollment numbers of Black and Latino/a/e students attending community colleges there is little to no difference in their degree attainment. Research continues to show that Black and Latino/a/e students have the lowest completion and transfer rates compared to other racial and ethnic groups (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018, 2021; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014; Tovar, 2015). For instance, one of the sites of this study (Western Community College) primarily comprises of a Black and Latino/a/e student body – 21% identified as Black and 65% identified as Latino/a/e. However, in 2017 only 17% of full-time degree/certificate-seeking Black and Latino/a/e students graduated from the institution compared to 29% of Asian students and 100% of White students (IPEDS, 2017).

Online educational newsrooms have also focused on the critical state of Black and Latino/a/e students in 2-year colleges. In 2021, EdSource published an article called “Community Colleges Are Still Wasting Black and Latino Students’ Time” by journalist Jetaun Stevens, which called attention to the implementation (or lack of) of AB705—a legislation passed in 2017 that would require community colleges to take into account high school coursework and grades when determining English and math course placement for community college students. The article states Black and Latino/a/e students are still disproportionately placed in remedial coursework which lengthens their stay at community colleges. In addition, in 2021, journalist Juliana Clark at Prism published an article called “Students of Color in Junior

Colleges Are Set up for Inequities” which discusses racial gerrymandering in the community college system. The article focused on Dominique Baker et al.’s (2021) study on the political process of determining boundaries within the Texas community college system and found evidence of racial gerrymandering and how district boundaries were associated with tuition reduction—all of which affected funding for students of color. Through data and research, it is evident Black and Latino/a/e students continue to experience challenges in community colleges, therefore it is vital to examine how these challenges affect attrition.

There are three important issues that need further research concerning the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students in community college: (a) research unique to the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e community college students within a power structure (e.g., research through a racialized lens), (b) research on decision-making in the community college level, and (c) research that includes Black and Latina women along with studies on Black and Latino/a/e students who left the community college without completing their educational goal.

First, extensive research has found several factors associated with degree attainment, retention, and transfer rates for Black and Latino/a/e students in community colleges. Studies have revealed family support (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014), campus engagement, early entry (Greene et al., 2008), and relationships with faculty and counselors (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014) as significant predictors for student success. For example, in a research study by Garcia-Louis et al. (2020), which examined how implicit biases hindered the academic success of Latino community college men, found Latino students who felt disconnected with their professors were reluctant to ask for help, did not attend office hours, and were not engaged in their courses. Additionally, there has been research focusing on how the limited resources or procedures in community colleges affects the completion of students of color. Studies have examined how the

low counselor to student ratio in community colleges affects students because of large caseloads that impact the time they spend advising students on a one on one basis (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Similarly, research has examined how remedial coursework placement has affected the time Black and Latino/a/e students remain in community college because they are more likely to be placed in remedial coursework compared to White students (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Maldonado, 2018).

As research has focused on external and internal factors that affect the completion of Black and Latino/a/e community college students, research should expand on the unique experiences of these students as they navigate a structure with a history of institutionalized racism. Regardless of ethnic or racial group, all community college students experience the shortage of resources (e.g., low counselor to student ratio, lack of course availability, adjunct professors that have limited time), however, racial gaps continue to persist. Since Black and Latino/a/e students enroll in 2-year colleges at higher rates than 4-year institutions (The Campaign for College Opportunity 2018, 2021), one is left to wonder what components within the community college influence the cooling-out of these students. As a result, this dissertation study will examine the racialized experiences of Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students that contribute to their cooling-out.

The second issue concerns the limited research about Black and Latino/a/e student decision making while navigating and interacting with the community college system. Research has primarily focused on the decisions students make before entering college (e.g., what college to attend; McDonough & Antonio, 1996; McDonough, 1997; Perna, 2006) or what major or career to pursue (Moogan & Baron, 2003; Perna, 2006). It is also documented these decisions are often influenced by internal or external characteristics that surrounds a student's life. For

instance, a student can decide on what school to attend based on what their parents wants (Moogan & Baron, 2003), can make decisions of their careers based on their age (Kelly & Hatcher, 2012), or select a major based on their socioeconomic status (Leppel et al., 2001). Therefore, college students are influenced by several factors to make important academic decisions that impacts their success and persistence in higher education. This dissertation study explores how decision making goes far beyond selecting an institution or a major. Instead, academic choices include everyday decisions such as attending courses, completing assignments, attending counseling appointments, joining educational support programs, and/or meeting with college personnel. For this reason, this dissertation will shed light on the decisions students made prior to leaving community college and how they come to the decision to leave.

The final issue pertains to two groups of students often omitted from the conversation: Black and Latina women and Black and Latino/a/e former community college students who left before completing their educational goal. First, this dissertation study includes Black and Latino men and women to address issues of equity collectively. As data have shown Black and Latino men have the lowest completion rates (Felix & Gonzalez, 2022; Xiong et al., 2016), with only 15% of Black men and 17% of Latino men earning a certificate, associate degree or transferring to a 4-year university within 3 years (Xiong et al., 2016). Researchers began to refer to this critical issue as the vanishing Black and Latino men crisis in higher education (Esters & Mosby, 2007; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Soon after, research in community college shifted and focused on the experiences of Black and Latino men and often stating women of color fared better academically.

It is important to recognize Black and Latino community college men have the lowest completion and transfer rates, however, the experiences of Black and Latina women in

community college should not go unnoticed. Although it is a fact women of color fare well academically, Crenshaw et al. (2015) stated research focusing on men of color should be careful about inferring women of color are not at risk. These statements simply create assumptions that Black and Latino women know how to navigate the college structures, do not encounter exclusionary practices, and/or are not experiencing academic challenges (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2021; Gloria et al., 2005).

Although research in community colleges has focused on the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students as current students (Abrica et al., 2020; Garcia-Louis et al., 2020), it is equally important that scholars examine the experiences of students who attended community college but did not complete their educational goal. Community college is the first higher education institution for many Black and Latino/a/e students thus serving as a pivotal pathway to upward mobility (Moutjay, 2022). It is reported community colleges assist with the social mobility of underrepresented groups by providing intra and intergenerational mobility (Romano & Eddy, 2017) which is changing a student's socioeconomic status within their lifetime and within their families (Romano & Eddy, 2017). However, in the community college level, Black and Latino/a/e are less likely to complete their educational goals (Summers, 2003), thus not receiving the opportunity for socioeconomic growth. For this reason, it is imperative to focus on the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students leaving community college. In the following section, I provide a description on the research questions that guide this study.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was twofold. The first was to examine if the cooling-out process manifested in structural and procedural challenges that influenced Black and Latino/a/e students to leave community college. Secondly, I focused on the critical academic decisions of

Black and Latino/a/e students as they come to think about leaving the college. The following research questions guided this dissertation study:

1. What micro-decisions do Black and Latino/a/e students make to cool out of their community college?
2. How do institutional structures and procedures at the community college influence these students to cool out?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this dissertation study was to understand the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e current students that have thoughts about leaving the community college and Black and Latino/a/e former community college students who left without obtaining their educational goal. Considering most Black and Latino/a/e students begin their education in community colleges (The Campaign for College Opportunity 2018; 2021) this study is critical and timely. This study focused on attrition to address the issues of equity that continue to persist for Black and Latino/a/e students in community college and offer findings that would assist in their completion. In addition, this study looked closely at how students responded (e.g., made decisions) to the structural and procedural challenges they faced. For example, how Black and Latino/a/e students made decisions based on experiences with counselors, course shortages, and misinformation. Overall, the purpose of this study was to provide insight of the structural, procedural, and unique challenges Black and Latino/a/e students encounter which contributes to their attrition.

Based on the findings of this study, I provide recommendations for community college researchers, administrators, faculty, staff, and all instrumental programs assisting Black and Latino/a/e current students to prevent their departure from community colleges. It does so by

providing evidence that can improve the educational and personal experiences of these students and create best practices that can assist their academic success. Additionally, it provides insights for state and local policymakers to demonstrate how inequitable policies and funding affect the educational experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation study is composed of five chapters. Chapter 1 describes the current problems surrounding Black and Latino/a/e students in community colleges, the research questions guiding this study, and its significance. Chapter 2 is divided into the literature review and theoretical frameworks. The literature review provides a brief history of the California Community College system and describes what causes their precarious environment. Additionally, I discuss how the instability within the colleges affects the structures and procedures implemented at each institution. In turn, affecting how Black and Latino/a/e students make decisions and divert their educational goals. In Chapter 3, I provide reasoning and support for conducting a qualitative narrative study along with background information of the sites and data collecting measures. I conclude Chapter 3 with a discussion on the qualitative design, detail the inductive and deductive coding analysis, discuss my positionality statement, and provide limitations to the research study. In Chapter 4, I provide a discussion of the major themes and categories found in the study while highlighting the experiences of all participants and in Chapter 5, I discuss how the findings of the study connect to the relevant literature and provide recommendations for research, theory, practice, and policy.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This chapter begins with a broader look into the history of the community college system in California. In this section, I discuss the classification of community colleges within the California higher education system and how this classification hinders the stability within community colleges. More specifically, I summarize research studies on the variations of funding compared to 4-year universities and within community college districts and its effect on Black and Latino/a/e student attrition. Additionally, I provide a discussion on how the funding variations affect the structure within community colleges. That being the effect on faculty, counselor, and student interactions. Moreover, I explore how the precarious nature of community colleges is exacerbated by processes such as financial aid distribution and prerequisite course requirements, which frequently influence the educational outcomes of Black and Latino/a/e students. Lastly, I dive into existing literature on student decision-making process and systemic barriers that disproportionately affect Black and Latino/a/e students. Following the literature review, I provide a historical overview and outline key components of the conceptual frameworks used in this study: institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out.

The California Higher Education System

To understand the precarious nature of community colleges it is important to take a step back and examine the California higher education system as a whole. During the 1960s in California, the demographics began to shift and the need for vocational training became a necessity in the workforce (Callan, 2009). With University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses enrolling the top students who intended to earn a college degree and Junior Colleges enrolling students with different educational goals, the State Board of Education found it important to differentiate each institution in order to fulfill the needs of the

state (Callan, 2019). The California Master Plan was created and approved by the Regents and the State Board of Education to create three systems within the higher education system that focused on three components: research, teaching, and open access (Boland et al., 2018). The UC system was to focus primarily on academic research and provide undergraduate, graduate, and professional education. The UC system, guaranteed admission to the top 12.5% of the high school graduating class (Legislative Analyst Office, 2009; McGuiness, 2016). The second tier of the system was the CSU which focused primarily on teaching undergraduate and graduate education but not doctoral or professional degrees (McGuiness, 2016). The CSU system was to select from the top 33.3% of the graduating high school class. In the last tier, were the California Community Colleges (CCC) which were to provide academic and vocational instruction to any student who enrolled at the college (Legislative Analyst Office, 2009).

CCCs were labeled as the equalizers of higher education due to their open access (Khan & Unruh, 2022). However, over time the views of these institutions began to change. Since the California Master Plan set clear distinctions within each system of higher education, community colleges were viewed as “less than” institutions (Khan & Unruh, 2022; McCambly et al., 2023) because UCs only enrolled the top 12.5% of students while community colleges enrolled anyone regardless of GPAs, entrance exams, or background (Khan & Unruh, 2022). Furthermore, the differences between each system of higher education created inequitable opportunities for underrepresented students. High school students with a middle to upper class upbringing have the financial means to afford test preparation, private tutors, and private schools resulting in having an upper hand in the college admissions process compared to students from low-income communities (McDonough, 1997, 2004). This form of exclusion is also reflected in the enrollment demographics of top-ranked universities in California as they do not reflect the

diversity of the state's demographic breakdown (Monarrez & Washington, 2020). Findings from a report compared the racial/ethnic demographics of California colleges with the demographics of the college's surrounding area and found California public and selective institutions having an overrepresentation of White and Asian students. Furthermore, this overrepresentation at the college was present in communities where there was a higher Black and Latino/a/e population.

The exclusion of historically marginalized students from selective universities demonstrates the California Master Plan was strategically created to uphold a racialized structure that diverts these students into the community college route. Furthermore, the division of the California higher education system set the blueprint in managing enrollment, funding, and legislative policies discussed in the following sections.

Community College Enrollment Trends

Managing enrollment demand was a key component sought by the California Master Plan in order to assess the growth of each system in higher education (LAO, 2019). For community colleges, however, enrollment has been unpredictable. Community college enrollment has fluctuated throughout the years but begun to decline in the mid-2000s (Hillman & Orians, 2013; Juskiewicz, 2020). For instance, in 2003, enrollment nationwide in community colleges totaled 1,985,966 students compared to 1,666,993 in 2013 (Boland et al., 2018). In California, in the year prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were nearly 2.1 million community college students enrolled in the system (CCCCO, 2021). As a result of the pandemic, from 2021 to 2022 enrollment dropped to 1.8 million (CCCCO, 2021) with most community colleges seeing a 10% to 20% drop in their enrollment (Bulman & Fairlie, 2021). The decrease in enrollment is even more alarming when disaggregated by race. In CCCs, there was a 20% drop in Black student enrollment and a 18% Latino/a/e student drop in enrollment compared to other racial and ethnic

groups (Bulman & Fairlie, 2021). It is important to note these differences were not seen at the UC or CSU level. In fact, the COVID-19 global pandemic did not impact UC and CSU enrollment (Khan & Unruh, 2022).

Research in community college states the unpredictability of community college enrollment has two detrimental effects: (a) the social mobility of Black and Latino/a/e individuals and (b) community college funding (Abrica et al., 2022; Martinez & Fernandez, 2004). As previously mentioned, community colleges are often a stepping-stone to a better life for Black and Latino/a/e students (Abrica et al., 2022; Martinez & Fernandez, 2004). Community colleges offer Black and Latino/a/e students the ability to receive vocational training or earn a college degree (Brint & Karamel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Cohen et al., 2014). However, the drastic drop in Black and Latino/a/e student enrollment, will continue to exacerbate educational and social inequalities (Kolesnikova, 2010; Long & Kurlaender, 2009; Mountjoy, 2023). Secondly, community college enrollment is critical to the stability of community colleges as enrollment numbers are used in part of the calculation of the student-centered formula (Mills, 2023). This means the number of students, specifically full-time students, affects how much funding is given to community colleges. In the following section, I discuss the importance of enrollment and the variation of funding in community colleges.

The History of Community College Funding

The establishment of the first community colleges in the nation was initially seen as a success, but the lack of adequate funding soon posed significant challenges for these institutions (Tollefson, 2009). With minimal federal support, states were left to determine how community colleges would be funded. In 1917, California enacted the Ballard Act, marking the first legislation to provide state financial funding for community colleges, contingent upon their

classification under K–12 school district (Tollefson, 2009). This meant community colleges were seen as K–12 expansions often operating with limited resources as school districts were also responsible for funding K–12 education (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). Consequently, community college students attended courses on high school campuses and were taught by high school teachers. Soon after, states across the nation began to adopt California’s model and began to classify community colleges as high school expansions to serve different purposes. For instance, in South Dakota, community colleges were referred to as technical institutes while in California they were known for vocational training (Tollefson, 2009).

The K–12 school districts soon found themselves unable to continue supporting community colleges as they began to gain momentum and student enrollment increased (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007; Tollefson, 2009). For this reason, the pressure mounted on states to create sustainable funding models to support these institutions. By the 1960s, community colleges began to receive federal funding, in combination with local and state funding, through Title III and Title IV which created a promising shift towards federal support at the community college level (Davidson, 2015; Tollefson, 2009). By the 21st century, the United States recognized the importance of these institutions and provided funding from state appropriations, local property taxes, federal support programs, and tuition fees (Tollefson, 2009).

Despite the historical shifts of financial support for community colleges, it is important to note sources of funding vary by state and are dependent on the state’s economy (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). For this reason, community college funding is unpredictable as it varies by year (Kahlenberg, 2015). For instance, in the 2018–2019 fiscal year, CCCs reported 6% of their revenue was accumulated from tuition fees (CCCCO, 2019) compared to 4% in 2020–2021 (CCCCO, 2021). Furthermore, federal support programs accounted for 14% of funding from

2018–2019 compared to less than 10% in 2020–2021 (CCCCO, 2021; TACC, 2019). Thus, demonstrating not all community colleges receive the same amount of funds per year.

To further complicate the funding in community colleges, each state has developed a funding formula to calculate the number of dollars that should be given to community colleges even within the same region (Kahlenberg, 2015; Tollefson, 2009). State funding formulas are used for two reasons: preappropriation and/or postappropriation funds. Preappropriation formulas are used to determine the total amount of funds provided to a single school district before the fiscal year begins (Tollefson, 2009). These formulas are designed to provide equitable fundings across state community colleges and are primarily based on institutional needs, student performance, and enrollment numbers (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007; Tollefson, 2009).

Postappropriation formulas are based on the same components as preappropriation formulas but depend on data to calculate an accurate amount of funding for the college after the start of the fiscal year (Tollefson, 2009). In a study by Mullin and Honeyman (2007), the authors examined the typology of community college funding formulas across 48 states and found community colleges fell under three categories: (a) no funding formula which included states like Hawaii and Maine, (b) responsive formula which included New York and Arizona, and (c) functional component formula which included California. Altogether, the authors found that states funded community colleges based on different components such as cost of education, operations, academic support, and levels of study (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). Consequently, states have developed different funding models aiming to support student academic success.

CCC Funding

It is apparent community college funding formulas are complex. However, as it described in the following sections, funding formulas are important to understand as they affect the

educational outcomes of Black and Latino/a/e students through student support programs and academic policies (Mills, 2023). In 2019, the state government of California approved the student-centered funding formula, a formula used to calculate the amount of funding provided to community colleges. Common elements of the formula include base funding to cover operational costs and performance-based funding allocating for the number of students earning degrees or transferring, and enrollment funding based on the numbers of full-time students (Linden, 2022). In addition to these components, the new student-centered formula provided additional funding to community colleges serving Pell Grant recipients and undocumented students (Linden, 2022). Although legislatures argue the student-centered formula was developed through an equitable lens, researchers would argue against it (Beach & Bruno, 2018; Linden, 2022; Mills, 2023).

Community college researchers have mentioned the student-centered formula still produces inequities particularly for historically marginalized students (Linden, 2022; Mills, 2023). For one, while the student-centered formula accounted for the enrollment of part-time student enrollment, the formula continued to provide more funding to colleges if students were enrolled full-time (Beach & Bruno, 2018; Linden, 2022; Ortagus et al., 2020). As community colleges have a large enrollment of Black and Latino/a/e part-time students, colleges are not receiving enough funding to support their education (Linden, 2022; Ortagus et al., 2020). These funding disparities means Black and Latino/a/e students encounter several challenges like a lack of resources on campus which hinders their educational goals (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Secondly, the student-centered formula does not account for the success of Black and Latino/a/e students (Linden, 2022). Although the formula does account for the number of student transfers and degree holders, it does not hold community colleges accountable for the lack of educational achievements by Black and Latino/a/e students (Linden, 2022). Thus, community

colleges focus more on student outcomes than instilling equitable practices that focus on their success (Ortagus et al., 2020). Thirdly, elements within the student-centered formula (un)intentionally exacerbate the educational outcomes of Black and Latino/a/e students (Ortagus et al., 2020). As performance-based funding incentivizes colleges for the number of student transfers and degree holders, program funding is prioritized to students who fit the traditional student criteria which leaves out many Black and Latino/a/e students who are part time, work more than 20 hours a week, are family caretakers or have other household obligations (Ortagus et al., 2020). For this reason, it is important to examine the effects of funding formulas on the educational outcomes of Black and Latino/a/e students.

Community College Compared to University Funding

As community colleges often serve as the first undergraduate institutions for Black and Latino/a/e students, it is imperative to compare differences in financial support for student success in both educational systems. Furthermore, it is important to demonstrate these differences as selective 4-year universities enroll less Black and Latino/a/e students (Lopez & Hill, 2022). One critical disparity is the differences in academic spending for students. Academic funding covers vocational, remedial, and general academic instruction along with faculty wages and classroom needs (NCES, 2020a). In 2020, the NCES revealed significant disparities in academic spending per California higher education institutions. For instance, although 46% of expenses at a UC campus were spent on academic instruction, only 32% of expenses were allocated at CSU campuses, and even less at the CCC with 26%. These educational disparities indicated the UC spent at least 20% more on student academics than the CCC (NCES, 2020b). Nevertheless, these academic expenses are important to the Black and Latino/a/e students in

community colleges as many rely on vocational training and general education to transfer or obtain a degree (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Similarly, in 2020, NCES reported vast differences in academic support spending in the UC system compared to CCC. Academic support spending in community colleges covers resources for library services, curriculum development, instructional technology, and faculty professional development to name a few (NCES, 2020b). NCES data revealed the UC spent 17% in academic support compared to 6% at the CCC (NCES, 2020b). The differences in academic support meant university students received more services to support their educational success compared to community college students. Overall, the difference in spending shows CCC have less funding compared to the UC thus affecting the academic success of many Black and Latino/a/e students as they receive less financial support.

Community College Reforms and its Effect on Black and Latino/a/e Students

As community colleges are deemed as critical institutions that provide equitable learning opportunities for students of color, there are additional components in the system that exacerbate racial inequities (Graves, 2019; McKinney & Roberts, 2012). Two reforms developed to close racial achievements gaps have been federal financial aid (Heller & Kantrowitz, 2011; McKinney & Roberts, 2012) and reforms such as AB705 (Davidson, 2015; Levin & Calcagno, 2008). Although these were reforms developed to assist the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e students, research shows racial disparities in the financial aid process and in the retention of AB705 have persisted (Davidson, 2015; Graves, 2019). The following sections provide a brief history of financial aid and AB705 in the community college level and its effect on the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students.

Community College Federal Financial Aid

Community college students depend on three different forms of financial aid: (a) grants, (b) loans, and (c) work-study (McKinney & Roberts, 2012). At the community level, a majority of students receive the Pell Grant as it provides the most source of funding for students that demonstrate a financial need while less students apply to loans and work study opportunities (Heller & Rodgers, 2006; Kantrowitz, 2011). However, financial aid research demonstrates community college students fail to apply to financial aid and do not receive the necessary funding to support their education goals (McKinney & Roberts, 2012). Data reported by the NCES in 2016 documented Black and Latino/a/e students depend on more financial aid than White students (respectively 46% for Black and Latino/a/e students). In this dissertation study, Western College reported over 91% of students receiving some form of financial aid compared to 75% of students at Banting College and 64% of students at Central College. Although research is clear community college students rely on financial aid (Heller & Rodgers, 2006; Kantrowitz, 2011), research has also demonstrated the challenges Black and Latino/a/e face with the financial aid process (Graves, 2019; Mendoza, 2009; McKinley & Roberts, 2012; Person et al., 2006).

Although Black and Latino/a/e students rely heavily on financial aid, the process itself is daunting for many (Graves, 2019; Person et al., 2006). In a study by Graves (2019), which examined the cooling-out process in the verification process of financial aid, students of color reported issues of miscommunication with college staff and were often confused by the process. These issues resulted in students experiencing difficulties in submitting forms and receiving partial financial aid causing students to delay their educational goals (Davidson, 2015; Graves, 2019). Furthermore, the study showed community colleges reproduce inequitable learning opportunities for students of color as they experienced macroaggressions in the financial aid

verification process (Graves, 2019). Graves explicitly mentions the verification process functions as institutional racism because it assumes community college students seeking financial aid are Pell Grant runners. A term used to refer to students who receive Pell Grants and stop attending college after they receive aid. Despite the lack of support for these claims, stricter restrictions have been placed in the verification process that further complicates the process for students of color to receive aid. For this reason, it is important to examine how reforms created to reduce inequities actually reproduce them.

The AB705 Legislation in Community College

California has also enacted reforms to address the inequities of remedial coursework placement (Smith, 2019). Research has previously indicated Black and Latino/a/e students were overrepresented in remedial education (Levin & Calcagno, 2008; Preston, 2017; Smith, 2019). This overrepresentation contributed to Black and Latino/a/e students to experience educational delays, change their educational goals, and contributed to their attrition (Preston, 2017). Recognizing this alarming issue, in 2017, California enacted legislative bill AB705 to improve transfer and completion rates in community colleges (CCCCO, 2017). The intent was to ensure students are placed in transferrable English and math courses to progress through their college education efficiently and in less time (CCCCO, 2017). The bill states California community colleges must use multiple measures, such as high school coursework and grades, to determine placement, increase the number of students completing transferrable English and math courses within a year, and increase completion rates of Black and Latino/a/e students (Smith, 2019).

Despite its efforts to close racial and ethnic achievement gaps, research shows the reform might devalue equity and unintentionally reproduce inequalities for students of color (Darling, 2020). Even though AB705 has effectively increased the number of community college students

completing transferrable English and math courses quicker, research has indicated equity gaps for Black and Latino/a/e students persist (Hern et al., 2020). In CCCs, over 75 colleges continue to offer more remedial course sections compared to transferrable course sections particularly in the math department (Hern et al., 2020). When the data is disaggregated by race, research continues to display equitable gaps. According to the same report, Black and Latino/a/e students attend community colleges that have maintained several of these remedial courses. Therefore, Black and Latino/a/e students are at higher risk of being placed in remedial courses despite the new placement agreements (Hern et al., 2020). For instance, 29% of Black students were enrolled in remedial coursework compared to 17% of Asian students (Hern et al., 2020). Additionally, other scholars questioned the bill's expectation to complete transferable English and math courses within a year (Darling, 2020). Because many Black and Latino/a/e community college students have full-time jobs or manage other outside obligations colleges cannot expect these students to finish these courses within 1 year (Darling, 2020). For this reason, it is clear community college reforms continue to (un)intentionally maintain inequities for Black and Latino/a/e students.

Community College Structural and Procedural Challenges

Community college often encounters several insecurities regarding funding, enrollment changes, and reforms (Mills, 2023) that affect the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students. For instance, in community colleges enrollment changes affect how much funding colleges receive as they are often calculated into the funding formulas given to each community college. This in turn affects the educational services provided to all students (Goldrick-Rab, 2019; Mills, 2023). In addition, the variation of funding affects the hiring of full-time faculty, the effectiveness of student support services, course shortages, and the financial aid process (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). As community college students encounter these challenges, they must also

navigate institutional procedures, which include requirements to take placement exams, meet with counselors, submit financial aid paperwork, and complete remedial coursework (Anderson, 2015). In the following section, I discuss the research documenting the structural and procedural challenges that Black and Latino/a/e encounter as they try to navigate and complete their educational goals.

Different from 4-year universities, a majority of faculty in community colleges hold part-time positions (known as adjunct). Research has indicated part-time faculty teach over 58% of courses in community colleges, however, receive very little benefits (Barkley & Broderson, 2018). For instance, adjunct faculty are often excluded from committee and governance meetings, receive less professional development opportunities, are not provided an office space on campus, and lack the proper resources and support to develop course curriculum (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Furthermore, part-time faculty are responsible to teach a large number of students per classroom and often have to teach at various colleges to sustain a living (Barkley & Broderson, 2018; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). In a qualitative study examining the experiences of community part-time faculty found all participants expressed a love for teaching, however, they were often overworked, undervalued, and not provided enough resources to support student instruction and learning (Barkley & Broderson, 2018). Additionally, adjunct faculty were concerned many students were not reaching out for help because they were not always available to stay at the campus for a long time and no private space to meet students (Barkley & Broderson, 2018). For this reason, the variation of funding has detrimental effects on the sustainability of adequate learning opportunities for Black and Latino/a/e students as adjunct faculty primarily teach community college courses and are not valued on campus.

Along similar lines, there is a need for more academic and financial aid counselors at community colleges (Martinez & Elue, 2020). Community college students often depend on academic or financial counseling to gather information on what courses to take and the financial aid process (Allen et al., 2013). Despite their critical roles in the academic success of community college students, counselors are often dealing with a large number of student caseloads and are limited on the time spent on academic advising appointments (Martinez & Elue, 2020). This issue is often due to the variation of funding which affects the number of full-time counselors' community colleges can hire (Allen et al., 2013). Lastly, counselor roles are even more complex since community college students often have different educational goals (e.g., transfer, vocational training, or degree completion). Therefore, the lack of affective counseling services has a direct impact on the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e students.

Faculty and academic counselors play a critical role in the academic success of community college students, particularly for historically marginalized students (Dowd et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Dowd et al. (2013), the authors examined the linkage between institutional agents and student academic success. Findings from the study suggest faculty and counselors that get to know their students, spent time with their students, and showed students they were cared for were instrumental in their academic aspirations (Dowd et al., 2013). However, authors stressed faculty and counselors need to be given the proper resources and support in order to adequately serve underrepresented students (Dowd et al., 2013). This means being involved in school efforts, offer more professional development opportunities, and alleviate their workload (Barkley & Broderson, 2018). For this reason, it is important to further examine how the instability within the college, which includes the lack of faculty and counselor support, affect the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students.

In community college research, structural and procedural challenges do not only refer to physical resources or institutional requirements. Information is also a key component in community college structures as they provide students with the necessary knowledge to make important academic decisions (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Person et al., 2006). Therefore, how a student access and receive information is an important element in the academic success of community college students of color (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Research also indicates community college personnel assume students know how to navigate the system because information is accessible through websites, offices, and printed materials (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002). However, research studies have shown otherwise (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Person et al., 2006). In a study examining remediation coursework at the community colleges found underrepresented students often missed taking the accurate courses because students often lacked the proper information and/or were often misguided by college personnel on what courses to take (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002).

Similarly in a study by Person et al. (2006), which explored the connection between information and college procedures in seven community colleges found “serious deficiencies in students’ information” (p. 382) that was heightened throughout their academic journey. For instance, community college students mentioned to have received different information from college personnel when trying to enroll in a course (Person et al., 2006). This misguided source of information, then caused students to enroll in the wrong courses and experience educational delays (Hart, 2019; Person et al., 2006) which plays a part in their cooling-out (Anderson, 2015). For this reason, information should be examined to explore how it contributes to the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students.

Student Decision Making

Research in student decision making in higher education has grown specifically in the 4-year sector (Moogan & Baron, 2003). How students make academic decisions is an important component to explore as it provides an understanding on what factors contribute to a student's decision. For instance, as students enter the higher education system, the first decision they make is deciding what institution to attend (Galotti, 1994). Factors that may influence this decision may include college mission, proximity, reputation, and institutional characteristics (Moogan & Baron, 2003). Thus, research in student decision making has primarily focused on college major and career choice in 4-year universities (Baker, 2018; Moogan & Baron, 2003). Equally important, however, are the decisions students make at the community college level as they often engage in the decision-making process when choosing majors, courses, or educational goals (Anderson, 2015).

Community college research has focused on the decisions students make based on financial aid (Mendoza et al., 2019), interactions with counselors (Abrica et al., 2020), and household obligations (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Researcher Anderson (2015) extended this work by exploring the daily academic decisions community college students of color made throughout their academic journey. The study found students, which included Black and Latino/a/e participants, engaged in the decision-making process daily as they made choices based on courses they liked and disliked, the dissatisfaction with counseling appointments, classroom experiences, and much more (Anderson, 2015). For this reason, examining the decision-making process of Black and Latino/a/e students is important in the community college field as it provides a closer look at how and why students make specific decisions. In this section, I review the literature on student decision-making in the community college sector with a specific focus

on the information students use (Clayton, 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2010), the factors that affect these decisions (McKinney & Roberts, 2012) and the concept of micro-decisions (Anderson, 2015).

Information-Based Decisions

One of the major components that shapes how students make decisions is based on the information they receive (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Information can originate from various communication funnels including college personnel, peers, family members, or documents available in college offices or online. Researcher Goldrick-Rab investigated over 300 academic research studies to examine the highest reported successes and challenges in community colleges. The study revealed one common theme among all articles discussing community college challenges: the lack of information provided to students in order to navigate their educational journey. Goldrick-Rab mentioned that the lack of information not provided to students significantly impedes their ability to navigate college processes such as course selection, financial aid applications, and accessing educational support opportunities because it diverts students from making accurate decisions. For instance, if an academic counselor fails to mention that a specific course is no longer a requirement to transfer, the student may enroll in that course with no regard that it will count as transferrable credit. For this reason, research on what sources of information students rely on the most to make decisions is critical to explore as it will inform community colleges on the best practices to support Black and Latino/a/e students through different communication channels.

Scott-Clayton's (2011) report from the Community College Research Center at Teachers College further emphasized the importance of accurate information in student-decision making. The report highlighted that students often make choices regarding majors, colleges, or courses based on how the information they know (Clayton, 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). For instance,

community college students frequently found themselves making decisions when they were uninformed, uncertain, or dissatisfied (Scott-Clayton, 2011). Scott-Clayton (2011) mentioned a student might enroll in a particular course solely because their friend is taking, illustrating an uninformed decision-making process. Similarly, a student who enrolls in a course that misaligns with their educational goal demonstrates an uncertain decision-making process as they are making an inaccurate decision. Therefore, the literature on student decision making and information makes two things clear: (a) accurate information is necessary to make informed accurate decisions and (b) community college students frequently engage in the decision-making process (Scott-Clayton, 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Decisions Students Face in Community Colleges

As students in community colleges experience frequent structural and procedural challenges (Anderson, 2015; Hart, 2019), it is important to explore how Black and Latino/a/e students make decisions when encountering these obstacles. Structural and procedural challenges include the low counselor to student ratio, the lack of available courses, lack of full-time faculty, and lack of accurate information (Hart, 2019; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009). This section discusses the two most commonly referred challenges in community colleges experienced by Black and Latino/a/e students and how it influences their decision-making processes.

When community college students experience challenges such as the low counselor to student ratio, students are often directed to make important academic decisions on their own. For instance, in a study by Abrica et al. (2020) and Garcia-Louis et al. (2020), the studies found Black and Latino community college male students reported having negative experiences with their academic counselors and in return, these students made the choice to no longer seek them if they needed support. Black and Latino male students reported feeling frustrated with their

counseling appointments and felt a lack of connection with their academic counselors that they often relied on their peers and family members to make academic decisions (Abrica et al., 2020; Garcia-Louis et al., 2020). For this reason, these academic studies indicate the need for further research on the effects of structural and procedural challenges on the decision-making process of Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

One of the most reported complicated components in the community college system is the financial aid process (Broton, 2019; McKinney & Roberts, 2012; Mendoza et al., 2009). In the system, over 84% of community college students of color nationwide need financial aid, however many students opt out because they get lost in the application and/or verification process (Broton, 2019; Community College Review, 2022; Graves, 2019). Additionally, the lack of support from the community college sector prevents a hands-on approach to help alleviate the stress of students of color in completing the financial aid application (McKinney & Roberts, 2012). For instance, in a study conducted by McKinney and Roberts (2012), which examined the complexity of the financial aid process through the perspective of counselors, found financial aid counselors experienced a tremendous workload environment. Counselors mentioned “there is more demand for financial aid than there are hands to work it all. It is difficult to work on files, answer phone calls, see students, and do everything else” (McKinney & Roberts, 2012, p. 767). Furthermore, financial aid counselors stated that community college students do not apply to financial aid because either the process is too complicated, students would rather work, and/or students do not believe they are eligible to receive financial support (McKinney & Roberts, 2012). As a result, financial aid counselors believe that community college students make uninformed and uncertain decisions when it comes to financial aid. The study concludes with the

authors stressing the importance of expanding the topic of financial aid in community colleges to examine how the lack of aid affects the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e students.

Decisions Students Face Outside of Community Colleges

As a significant portion of Black and Latino/a/e community college students are part-time students, work full time, are caretakers, and have other household obligations (Bryant, 2001; Goldrick-Rab, 2018), other components that may contribute to their cooling-out are external factors (Anderson, 2015). Thus, it is important to examine if other factors (e.g., work or household obligations) contribute to the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. Previous research in the instability of community colleges has confirmed that several students of color work and go to school (Hart, 2019; Snyder et al., 2019). For instance, approximately 46% of full-time community college students work 10 hours a week and 81% of part-time students work 20 hours or more a week (Hart, 2019). Hart's (2019) study, which explored the effect of outside circumstances of community college students on decision-making, demonstrated over half of the participants decision to switch course schedules, majors, or to leave the college were caused by obligations outside of the college environment. Among the 30 community college participants, which included Black and Latino/a/e students, nine disclosed having substantial household responsibilities, such as taking care of siblings, household chores, and running errands, in addition to academic responsibilities. Furthermore, 13 participants reported household financial pressures as the driving force behind their academic decisions. Hart's (2019) study showcased participants were often conflicted with their educational goals because these external obligations often diverted their time and energy elsewhere. Although participants expressed a desire to become full-time students and commit to their educational

plans, they were unable to do so because work or household duties often came first. The results of Hart's study showed that obligations outside of academics influenced their daily choices.

Similarly, external factors, such as familial obligations, cause dissatisfaction in community college experiences (Strayhorn, 2011). Strayhorn (2011), who examined the relationship between background traits, familial commitments, and satisfaction in the experiences of Black community college students, found familial responsibilities affected participants college experiences. After analyzing over 503 participant responses through a quantitative analysis, Black participants cited familial responsibilities affected one's schoolwork and affecting their college experiences (Strayhorn, 2011). As a result, participants mentioned to begin questioning if their educational goals were achievable. Community college research on student-decision making is therefore necessary to examine as it will explore how external factors influence the decision-making process of Black and Latino/a/e students to leave community college.

The Concept of Micro-Decisions

Higher education research has historically centered on the decisions students face when starting their college journey, such as selecting a college, declaring a major, or deciding on a career path (Baker, 2018; Moogan & Baron, 2003). Although understanding the decision-making process behind these choices is important, it is equally important to explore the day-to day decisions students make that lead to a major decision, such as leaving the college. For this reason, Anderson (2015) coined the term micro-decisions. The term refers to the reoccurring decisions students make as they navigate college. For instance, in Anderson's study, the author examined the micro-decisions of community college students to understand the cooling-out process at the college. The study revealed students, which included Black and Latino/a/e

students, continually made decisions regarding course selection, meeting with college personnel, enrolling in academic programs, and simply whether to submit class assignments. Furthermore, the study found students were constantly faced with these decisions because of the procedural requirements on campus that forced them to make these decisions.

Anderson's (2015) work demonstrates a significant stride towards understanding the intricacies of the decision-making process. The study shows the importance of focusing on students decision-making process as they provide valuable information into how students' progress through their educational goals. At the moment, research on micro-decisions in higher education is limited, therefore it is crucial researchers continue to expand on this work. It is equally important to further examine the decision-making process of Black and Latino/a/e students to understand how they navigate the community college space.

Summary of Literature Review and Contributions

I began this chapter with a discussion of the community college sector in California. First, I described how reforms such as financial aid and AB705 efforts (un)intentionally reproduce inequities for Black and Latino/a/e community college students. Then, I discussed the development of the California Master Plan and its impact on the enrollment trends and variations of funding in the community college sector. In doing so, I highlighted studies focused on how the enrollment trends and differences in funding often leaves community colleges in an unstable position unable to successfully provide adequate educational resources to its students. Furthermore, I provided an in-depth description on how the instability within the community college structure along with its procedures hinder the academic outcomes of Black and Latino/a/e students. Lastly, I reviewed the literature on student decision making in community colleges to emphasize the importance of examining student decision-making patterns especially

as they pertain to how students make the decision to leave the community college. In the following section, I discuss the conceptual frameworks that support this study.

Conceptual Frameworks of the Study

For this dissertation study, I incorporated the conceptual frameworks of institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out to examine how the instability within the community college structure and the required procedures influences the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e students. Furthermore, I examine the decisions Black and Latino/a/e make before they decide to leave the community college and how these thoughts emerged. To begin this section, I discuss a brief sociological history of precarity and its expansion to educational research. In doing so, I wanted to provide a historical background on the impacts of precarity within a workplace structure and its mirroring effects to the precarity students experience in the community college structure. After, I presented Hart's (2019) notion of *institutional precarity* and discussed research studies from the mid 2000s that focused on the instability of educational structures and its unpredictability on serving students properly. To discuss the history of cooling-out, I review how the idea was developed and spread throughout community college research to examine if institutions were in fact cooling-out specific students. This is followed by a discussion of Anderson's (2022) redefined concept known as *procedural cooling-out* which examines the ways institutional procedures hinder student academic success. I conclude this chapter by discussing how these two frameworks intersect and inform my study.

The Study of Precarity in Literature

Stemming from the study of sociology, precarity was first identified as a cause of problematic social issues surrounding economic changes (Bourdieu, 1998; Kalleberg, 2009). Over time, as the economic landscape in the nation affected individuals through job loss, bankruptcies,

and foreclosures particularly through the great recession of the late 2000s (Leitch & Fitzgerald, 2007), sociologists began to study how economic instability affected the workplace and workers' lives (Kalleberg, 2009). Sociologist Kalleberg (2009) examined how organizational practices in the workplace affected employment relations and increased the unpredictable and shaky workforce structure in the United States. In doing so, Kalleberg (2009) coined the term *precarious work*, which referred to employment that is “uncertain, unpredictable, and risky” (p. 2) in turn affecting the lives of its workers.

Kalleberg's (2009) qualitative findings suggested structures within workplaces have increased job and worker insecurity in many ways. For instance, one is the decline in attachment to employers. In his study, the average length of time employees spent in their positions had decreased dramatically (e.g., employees in tenure positions) because of the constant changes in the economic landscape. Secondly, as workplaces adjusted to the supply and demand from consumers, most often organizations leaned towards offering contract and temporary positions. This affected employee insecurities as they were in constant worry about losing their position. Kalleberg stated, “Precarious work has contributed to greater economic inequality, insecurity, and instability” (p. 8) and encouraged researchers to further examine how organizational structures, specifically those that are unstable, create uncertainties in the lives of individuals.

Institutional Precarity in Higher Education

Although research in precarity has been limited in higher education, various studies have focused on different forms of instability and unpredictability in students' higher education journeys. For example, studies have shown that financial insecurities, such as food and housing, have caused students to skip meals, take out loans, work more than two jobs, or miss out on the opportunity to purchase books (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Therefore, these insecurities also

affect student grade point averages, attendance, grades, and college completion (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Perez & Farruggia, 2022) as students must deal with more important situations. On the other hand, Bonner-Thompson et al. (2021) conducted a study that explored how transgender college students managed feelings of uncertainty and insecurity on campus. Based on the analysis of 15 interviews, the authors discovered transgendered students experience a range of emotions including fear, anxiety, comfort, and hope in different spaces of the university. It suggests that transgendered students had specific places on campus where they felt safe but not in several other spaces therefore creating an unstable environment. The findings align with Kalleberg's (2009) concept of precarity, which suggests organizations and their structures can significantly impact the experiences of individuals.

Institutional Precarity in Community College

Studies on the impact of the community college structure and its unpredictability on student success is not new. Many of the studies in the field have examined the effect of specific resources within the community college on students' completion. By resources, I refer to the access to faculty, counselors, staff, support programs, offices/centers, and all entities that help community college students achieve their educational goals. Research studies have examined the effect of positive student relationships with counselors and faculty on their success (Tovar, 2015; Xiong et al., 2016), the importance of receiving correct financial aid information (McKinney & Roberts, 2012), and the need for guidance and support on proper course placement (Maldonado, 2019). Although these studies have looked at specific resources, this dissertation study focuses on the structure of community colleges to examine how its unpredictability affects to the access to reliable resources for Black and Latino/a/e students.

Following the studies of precarity, Hart (2019) further examined the concept in higher education by studying the precarious environment of the community college structure and how it intersects with the precarity in student lives. Hart coined the term institutional precarity to refer to the instability of resources within community college. This definition alludes to the shortage of resources on campus such as, the unpredictability of enrolling in a course, the lack of financial aid received, the low counselor to student ratio, and much more. Furthermore, the study also described how the precarious lives of students also interfere with students' academic success. Hart refers to this precarity as the responsibilities and/or stressors that students deal with on a day-to-day basis such as work, familial responsibilities, and/or social relationships.

Through an exploratory analysis with traditional and nontraditional community college students, Hart (2019) argued these two forms of precarity (institutional and personal) intersect and divert student academic journeys. The findings of the study suggest community college students encountered several challenges that stemmed from the precarity of resources in community college. For instance, students often had to wait semesters (i.e., approximately 10–14 weeks) to take required courses due to the lack of courses available or decided to drop a course because of the lack of communication between students and faculty, and often had to choose between work or school because of the limited amount of financial aid received. Furthermore, the students who participated in the study also faced precarious situations in their own lives, such as experiences with financial insecurity and having to take care of family members. As a result, students often felt overwhelmed with having to juggle school and home obligations and felt the need to make decisions that affected their academic success.

Inspired by Hart's (2019) study, this dissertation examined the effects of limited resources in community college on the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students. Furthermore, I

investigated how the precarity in the structure of community colleges causes Black and Latino/a/e students to experience educational delays, receive inaccurate information, and improper guidance and support regarding their studies throughout their time at the college. In turn, the concept of institutional precarity demonstrated how Black and Latino/a/e students were experiencing repeated challenges that slowly cooled them out of their institution.

Cooling-Out in Community Colleges

This dissertation study also incorporated Clark's (1960) concept of the cooling-out process. In the case study of San Jose Junior College, Clark described community colleges are often met with challenges because of the open admissions policies that result in the enrollment of students with various educational backgrounds and goals. Clark mentioned that within this large group of enrollments, there are a vast number of "academically unprepared" students that also begin their education in community colleges. To funnel students through their community college studies, Clark (1960) described community colleges engage in the cooling-out process to filter those who are academically prepared and unprepared. The concept of cooling-out referred to community colleges actively redirecting students away from pursuing a 4-year college degree and into a vocational or certification program (Clark, 1960; Conway, 2010; Grubbs, 2020).

Clark (1960) described five components community colleges engage in during the cooling-out process. These components include (a) the requirement of placement tests which places many students in remedial coursework, (b) the requirement of students to meet with counselors to register for courses, (c) the requirement for students to attend orientation events, (d) distributing academic warning notices or keeping track of students' nonsuccesses, and (e) placing students on academic probation. According to Clark, the cooling-out process in community colleges was designed to divert student academic journeys in order to send

academically prepared students to universities and those who are not into the workforce (1960). Furthermore, the cooling-out process intentionally causes students to blame themselves for not completing their initial goals often causing feelings of not being college material. Although cooling-out was not viewed as negative process by Clark because students who were diverted still completed some form of education, it is clear the process continuously harms the educational success of community college students and contribute to the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students as they often experience negative interactions with faculty and staff.

Research focusing on the cooling-out process has shown mixed results on student success (Acevedo, 2020; Bahr, 2008; Grubbs, 2020). For one, Clark (1960) emphasized academic counselors partake in the process of cooling-out community college students through advising appointments, however, Bahr (2008) found no supporting evidence that meeting with a counselor diminishes students' academic aspirations. In Bahr's (2008) study, the author examined the effect advising has on students' educational goals and if they were dependent on student's academic preparedness and their race/ethnicity. Through a quantitative analysis of a 1995 Fall cohort of first-time first-year students in a CCC, the author found counselors were in fact beneficial to student success particularly for underrepresented students undergoing academic challenges. Therefore, contradicting Clark's notion of counselors partaking in the cooling-out process of community college students.

Alternatively, researchers have examined other components of the cooling-out process that affect the academic success of underrepresented students. Conway (2010) examined the educational aspirations of community college students and if and how these aspirations changed throughout their academic journey. Conway gathered admissions and performance data from a Northeastern community college which consisted of primarily female, traditionally aged, and

native and immigrant student group population. The study revealed that at the start of their educational journey over two thirds of the students ($n = 1,667$) intended to transfer to a 4-year university. However, throughout their academic journey, students were slowly cooled-out. For instance, native students were more likely to be placed on academic probation and underrepresented students were placed in remediation courses at higher rates compared to other students in the study.

Through a logistic regression, the study found over 40% of students did change majors and lowered their educational aspirations (Conway, 2010). Conway (2010) stated this change occurred due to the counselor to student ratio and the lack of guidance in vocational training. One important piece of Conway's study is the notion that the cooling-out process is present and can move in any direction. This movement meant cooling-out also includes a student changing majors or careers, lowering their educational goals, and leaving the college altogether. The author concludes that the components of the cooling-out process are present in community college and should be further investigated to assess its effect on the academic success of students of color.

In a similar study, Grubbs (2020) found the cooling-out process was also present in community colleges. However, the process presented itself in ways that were not acknowledged in Clark's (1960) original five components. In the research study, the author used data from the 2002 Educational Longitudinal Study to examine if initial enrollment and credit attainment affect students' educational goals. Through a quantitative analysis of 2,550 12th grade participants, Grubbs found students who attended community college compared to 4-year universities were less likely to earn a college degree. Furthermore, students were less likely to reach their educational aspirations of obtaining a bachelor's degree if the student enrolled in several

community colleges or obtains an associate degree. Although this study did not provide insight into why this occurs, it did imply the cooling-out process presents itself through different components beyond Clark's original five.

As observed in the literature, the cooling-out process in community college manifest in various ways. Building on the concept that the cooling-out process can influence students' academic journey, Anderson (2015) examined how the cooling-out process influence student choice. The author conducted interviews with 60 participants who identified primarily as Latino/a/e, Black, and Native American students from a community college in the Southwest. The study found six patterns in students' educational journey: (a) students relied primarily on family and peers for information, (b) students who seek information from student services did not receive proper guidance, (c) support personnel is critical for the academic success, (d) students must be assertive to receive quality information, (e) students visited offices more than once to receive proper information, and (f) students blamed themselves for the challenges they experienced. Furthermore, Anderson (2015) found students were often making important academic decisions. As a result, the author mentioned that neither advising nor academic probation decreased student aspirations to obtain a 4-year degree.

However, certain aspects of the cooling-out process remained, such as "the illusion of self-directed decision-making, self-blame, and lack of blame directed toward the institution" (Anderson, 2015, p. 118). This meant students felt accountable for every decision they made—encountering registration issues, dropping courses, not getting advising appointments, or not completing the FAFSA—was solely their decision and not influenced by the institutional structure. For this reason, Anderson (2015) clarified that practitioners and researchers should not

ignore the procedures implemented by community colleges that mirror the cooling-out process and refers to them as *procedural cooling-out*.

The Concept of Procedural Cooling-Out

An additional component in Anderson's (2015) study was the exploration of the institutional procedures and its influence in students' choice. In the student interviews (which were primarily students of color), the author found students expressed constant frustration with the challenges they experienced in community college. These challenges included receiving inconsistent information from student support services, dealing with time-consuming and unclear academic procedures such as course enrollment, and constantly making important decisions without the proper guidance. For this reason, Anderson (2015) proposed the term procedural cooling-out, referring to "the process of hindering a community college student's ability to access and proceed through timely education due to college procedures" (p. 120). Anderson mentioned that rather than receiving proper guidance to make critical decisions about their educational goals, students faced additional constraints. For example, students at the community college were often required to meet with a counselor to enroll in courses. However, due to the low counselor-to-student ratio, there was no guarantee they would be able to meet with a counselor during their enrollment period. As a result, students often had to make important decisions about which courses to take without proper guidance and support.

From a different story in the study, a student had to verify documents in order to receive financial aid. However, the student received inaccurate information regarding which documents to submit and led the student to missing the deadline and receive only partial funding (Anderson, 2015). The student then had to wait the following semester to take the required course. The author stated that procedures put in place at community colleges cause students to lengthen their

stay at the college and affects their educational goals. Therefore, students in the study experienced the cooling-out process in the procedures within the community college structure. Anderson (2015) mentioned it is necessary to further explore the processes in the community college sector in order to explore its effect on the academic success of predominately underrepresented and nontraditional students.

Following Anderson's (2015) suggestion, this dissertation study implemented procedural cooling-out as a framework to examine how community college procedures influence Black and Latino/a/e students to leave their institution. Furthermore, the framework allowed an exploration on how Black and Latino/a/e students make decisions as they encountered these challenges. That is, how do these students seek information? Is this information accurate? And who do they rely on when making important academic decisions?

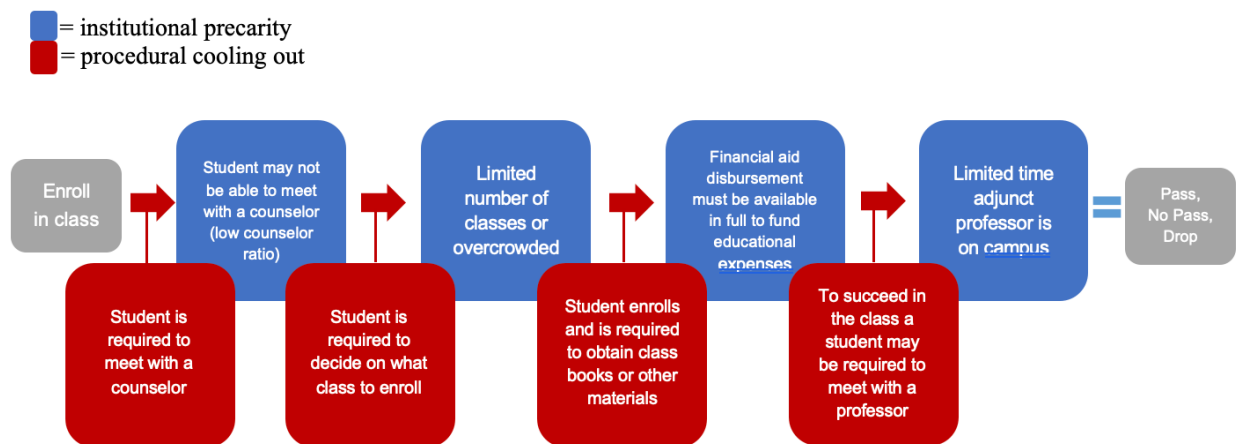
Application of the Conceptual Frameworks

In this study, Figure 3 illustrates how institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out worked together. The blue squares symbolize institutional precarity, which refers to the lack of resources stemming from the precarity in the community college structure. Meanwhile, the red squares represent procedural cooling-out, which refers to the procedures that hinder student access to resources and academic success. This dissertation study examined how these concepts incorporate components of the cooling-out process and affect the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. It is important to note that as students move through this process, they may or may not experience the same challenges. For instance, a student that experiences issues with enrollment may not experience issues with financial aid. For this reason,

Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students may experience the cooling-out process differently.

Figure 1

Institutional Precarity and Procedural Cooling-Out



Institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out demonstrate the challenges students face as they pursue their educational goals. For instance, when a student needs to fulfill a course requirement, they must first enroll in the course. To do so, students are often advised or required to meet with a counselor. However, due to the low counselor-to-student ratio, the student may not be able to meet with a counselor on time and may have to rely on peers, family, or their own knowledge to make decisions. After enrolling in the course, students are also required to purchase books or lab materials. However, if the student has only received partial financial aid, they may not be able to afford educational materials. Throughout this process, students often have to make decisions about courses, educational programs, majors, and meeting with counselors, among other things. Although research on institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out has been studied independently (Anderson, 2015; Hart, 2019), this dissertation study

finds it important to combine institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out to explore how structural and procedural challenges result in educational delays and influence the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of participants experiences throughout specific events or situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research focuses on examining the process and outcome, with a particular emphasis on answering the “why.” For this study, the goal was to understand why Black and Latino/a/e students leave community college at higher rates than any other racial/ethnic group. Additionally, this research aimed to examine the decision-making process of these students to understand what influences their decision to leave. In general, the focus was on how their experiences were impacted by the precarity within the colleges structure and procedures and how their experiences, as Black and Latino/a/e students, differ from their peers. This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology including the research questions, the research site and participant selection process, data collection and analysis, my positionality statement, trustworthiness measures, and limitations.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the dissertation study:

1. What decisions do Black and Latino/a/e students make to cool-out of their community college?
2. How do the institutional structures and procedures at their community college influence student decisions to cool-out?

Research Design

To describe the methods used in this study, I first explained how this qualitative project originated. During my time at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), I focused my attention on the experiences of men of color in community colleges. As a result, I engaged in

several research projects focused on the retention and completion rates of these students. Initially, I wanted to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences. However, I soon recognized college faculty and staff played a significant role in their experiences and success. For this reason, my focus shifted to interviewing institutional agents to understand their perceptions of Black and Latino college men and examine their validating efforts to support their academic and interpersonal success.

Through conversations with college faculty and staff and conducting data analysis, it became clear most issues and challenges faced by Black and Latino men were due to the institutional structure and procedures in place. At the time, I was also a qualitative research analyst for the men of color program at a community college where these structural and procedural challenges were also observed. At first, I intended to conduct this dissertation study on Black and Latino college men but later decided to include Black and Latina women as their experiences are often not mentioned. Additionally, I wanted to focus on students that are rarely studied in community college research—students who have left without completing a degree, certification, or transferring. This dissertation study has developed over a period of 5 years of community college research in collaboration with community colleges in the Los Angeles County area.

To further examine the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students in community college, this study focuses on the structural and procedural challenges that influence the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e students. To highlight student experiences, I used a narrative inquiry methodological approach. This narrative approach is used to study individuals' experiences over time and involves the concept of storytelling (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) which has a long history in qualitative research. The concept of storytelling was first used

in educational research with autobiographies and biographies (Berk, 1980), oral histories (Dorson, 1976), and children's storytelling (Applebee, 1978). Additionally, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stressed the importance of incorporating an understanding of "the negotiation entry" (p. 3) in a narrative approach, which entails creating a safe space where the participant feels comfortable in sharing their story. In doing so, narrative inquiry creates a collaborative environment that combines the experiences of participants and researchers into one (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The dissertation study employed a narrative inquiry method to conduct an analysis that will highlight the student voice. The interview findings comprised of narratives from the student experience which were analyzed into two major findings (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). It is important to note this narrative approach was not limited to interviews. Rather, this approach was used throughout the dissertation study by acknowledging my experiences and biases as a Latina and former community college student. By being aware of these potential assumptions, the findings were co-constructed by the participants and myself. Ultimately, the process of a narrative inquiry approach allowed for a thorough analysis in exploring the participants experiences and decision-making process as they navigated structural and procedural challenges. Additionally, this narrative approach allowed for a further examination of the systemic issues that arise from being a Black and Latino/a/e student in community college.

Research Site Selection and Description

This research study involved three community colleges: Western College, Central College, and Banting College. Although the initial focus of the research was on Western College, the inadequate response rate from former students necessitated the expansion of the study to

include Banting and Central College. The following section provides a comprehensive description of each of the colleges and the rationale behind their selection for the study.

Western College

Western College (WC) was selected as the primary location for this study for many reasons. Among all community colleges in Los Angeles County, WC had the highest percentage of Black students compared to other community colleges in the county at the time of this study. According to the latest WC Success Dashboard Report, WC had a total enrollment of 14,028 students, with Black and Latino/a/e students making up the largest proportions. In the Fall of 2020, 65% of students identified as Latino/a/e and 21% identified as Black, followed by 6% of Asian and 2% of White students. Moreover, around 70% of its students relied on some form of financial aid, 76% of students were part time; and 80% of students intended to earn a certificate, degree, or transfer to a 4-year institution. Due to its significant percentage of Black and Latino/a/e students, WC was an appropriate place to conduct this study.

Secondly, WC was selected based on its historical significance as a community college that served students of color, as well as its concerning retention and graduation rates for Black and Latino/a/e students. Initially established in 1927 as part of the Western Unified High School District, WC provided the last 2 years of high school and the first 2 years of college, according to their homepage. By the 1960s, it became an independent junior college, and the demographics of the institution began to shift from predominately White students to Black students due to the white flight in Los Angeles. Throughout its years, WC has faced many structural and financial difficulties that by 2005 the college lost its accreditation citing financial instabilities and corruption by the governing board. Following this instance, instead of removing the college altogether, its sister community college decided to provide educational resources and instruction

to its current students and took over Western College. Nonetheless, through several agreements and support measures over the years, WC was able to regain its accreditation in 2017. At present, WC offers more than 40 degree programs and 20 certificate programs and serves primarily low-income, first-generation, Black and Latino/a/e students.

Despite WC having the highest percentage of Black and Latino/a/e students compared to their surrounding colleges, according to the institution's 2021 IPEDS report, the college struggles with low retention and graduation rates. Only 42% of first-time full-time students return the following year, in comparison to 52% at their surrounding colleges. Similarly, the graduation rate at WC is 18% compared to its neighborhood colleges at 25%. Given the challenges faced by WC and its critical need to serve its community, it became the primary site for this dissertation study.

Finally, I decided to select WC as the site for my research due to personal reasons. I wanted to conduct my research in a community college located within a city often overlooked in research. Because I was raised in a predominantly low-income community of color myself, it is my passion to include communities like WC in the conversation to shape effective and culturally responsive practices for Black and Latino/a/e students. Additionally, Western College serves surrounding communities like Lynwood, Carson, and South Gate which are also predominately communities of color. As a result, Western College became the ideal research site for this study.

Central and Banting College

Originally, WC was the sole participant in this dissertation study. However, due to challenges in recruiting former participants, two additional community college sites were included in the study. Banting College, a public 2-year college in the northeast area of Los Angeles County, offers academic and career pathways for students seeking to transfer to a 4-year

university, receive vocational training, or obtain an associate degree. The college served a predominantly Latino/a/e student population at the time of this study, with over 35.8% of students being enrolled, followed by 31.1% of White students, 6.3% of Asian students, and 5.4% of Black students. I chose to include Banting College in this dissertation study due to my connection with the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and their fast recruitment process. The third community college site selected for this study was Central College, a public 2-year college located in an affluent neighborhood west of Los Angeles. Central College has been recognized as the #1 community college for transfers to UCs and offers over 200 degrees and certificates. The student population at Central College consisted of over 37% Latino/a/e students, 31% White students, 9% Asian students, and 8% Black students at the time of this study. I selected Central College as the third site for this study because of my prior collaboration with the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness on other research projects, as well as my status as an alumnus of the college.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

In this dissertation study, I engaged in two forms of sampling to gather participants: convenience and purposeful sampling. Convenience sampling refers to a technique used to recruit participants who are easily accessible to the researcher (Stratton, 2021). For instance, I recruited participants through each Facebook college's group because it contained at minimum 200 members each. The convenience sampling method was particularly helpful to recruit former community college students as they were difficult to recruit through the assistance of the institutional research offices at WC and Central College. Additionally, I used a purposeful sampling method which refers to selecting participants based on specific characteristics and

experiences (Palinkas et al., 2016). This method involved reaching out to Black and Latino/a/e student programs on campus because they fit the criteria of eligible participants in the study.

The recruiting process for this study was not easy, particularly the recruiting of Black and Latino/a/e students who left the college without transferring, completing a vocational program, and without obtaining an associate degree. To begin the process of recruiting, I created two recruitment flyers for each college site (see Appendix A). One flyer was for current students that fit the following criteria: (a) 18 years and older, (b) identify as Black and/or Latino/a/e, and (c) are a current student at WC, Banting College, or Central College. Potential current student participants were then prompted to a Google interest form (see Appendix B) where they were able to provide additional background information and answer the following question: “Do you have thoughts about leaving the college?” Participants who selected yes were then randomly selected to participate in the study. In total, there were over 150 participants who submitted the Google interest form, with over 70 expressing thoughts about their current college.

Overall, 10 current students were selected to participate through random sampling. Current students were paid \$30 per interview through an Amazon gift card or the Venmo application. All Venmo application transactions were private. For participants who left the college, the process was much longer. First, I created a flyer for students who left with the following criteria: (a) 18 years and older, (b) previously attended WC, Banting College, or Central College, and (c) left the college without transferring, earning a certificate, or obtaining an associate degree. At WC and Banting College, only the institutional research offices were approved to contact these students. I was not given permission to student data because of FERPA regulations. Altogether, these two offices sent emails to over 2,500 students who were flagged as

former students that fit the criteria. Additionally, I joined Facebook groups for each college to post the recruitment flyer.

Participants who were interested in participating submitted a Google interest form to provide background information and answer the following questions: (a) “Did you receive a certification from this college,” (b) “Did you receive an associate’s degree from this college,” and (c) “Did you transfer to a 4-year university from this college?” These questions were asked in order to reassure only former students without any of the three options listed were selected. In a 14-month period, only 42 participants submitted an interest form, and 10 participants were eligible. Former students received their choice of a \$30 Amazon gift card or \$30 through the Venmo application for participating in the study. It is important to note that no students were recruited from Central College because their institutional research office is not allowed to contact former students. Under policy, only program managers are eligible to reach out to students, but this process yielded no results.

The interview sample was predominantly female, with 12 female participants, 7 male participants, and 1 participant identifying as nonbinary. The sample’s age was considered nontraditional, with an average mean of 32 years old, which is older than the average age of an undergraduate student. Additionally, 11 participants identified as Latino/a/e, 7 participants identified as Black, and 2 participants identified as both Black and Latino/a/e. The majority of participants attended Banting College compared to WC and Central College, with 10, 6, and 4 participants, respectively. Of the current students, 9 had intentions of transferring to a 4-year institution, while 2 planned to pursue an associate degree and one was pursuing an ASN (associate in nursing). For former students, most students were from Banting College and aspired to transfer to a 4-year institution, however, they all left their college without transferring or

obtaining any certification or degree. All participants were interviewed once over a 14-month period (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1

Black and Latino/a/e Current Student Participation Breakdown

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Community College	Major	Educational Goal
Jorge	Latino/a/e	Male	25	WC	Kinesiology Arts &	Transfer/AA
Carter	Black	Male	27	WC	Humanities	Transfer
Sean	Biracial	Male	19	CC	Economics	Transfer
Aileen	Latino/a/e	Female	31	CC	Gender Studies	Transfer
Roland	Latino/a/e	Male	54	CC	Sociology	Transfer
Maria	Latino/a/e	Female	19	CC	Mathematics	Transfer
Kevin	Black	Male	23	BC	Biology	Transfer/AA
Frankie	Black	Male	24	BC	Physics	Transfer
Emani	Black	Female	40	WC	Nursing	ASN
Bryan	Latino/a/e	Non-Binary	18	BC	Theatre	Transfer

Table 2

Black and Latino/a/e Former Student Participation Breakdown

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Community College	Educational Goal	At the Time of Interview
Zuri	Black	Female	62	BC	AA	Seeking different CC
Stephanie	Latino/a/e	Female	23	BC	Transfer	Seeking different CC
Juan	Latino/a/e	Male	23	BC	Transfer	Working
Mayra	Latino/a/e	Female	30	WC	Learn English	Working
Silvia	Latino/a/e	Female	45	BC	AA	Working
Maya	Black	Female	36	WC	Nursing	Stay at home mom
Jessica	Latino/a/e	Female	20	BC	Transfer	Seeking different CC
Brooke	Black	Female	65	BC	Certification	Seeking employment
Kesha	Biracial	Female	26	WC	Transfer	Stay at home mom
Laura	Latino/a/e	Female	31	BC	Transfer	Seeking employment

Data Collection Methods

A qualitative study was selected for this study because of its ability to provide a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences (Cleary et al., 2014) as they navigated community college. In most instances, qualitative studies involve collecting data through interviews, observations, archival documents, and focus groups in order to generate findings (Cleary et al. 2014). In this section, I discuss the data collection process of the dissertation study and dive deeper into the analysis to provide an understanding on how the themes and findings came surfaced. To shed light on the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e former and current community college students I relied heavily on one-on-one interviews and online modalities to examine the cooling-out process in the structure and procedures in community colleges.

Participant Interviews

Once the participant submitted an interest form, I assessed their eligibility for the study and set up a time and date to conduct the interview (see Appendix C). I conducted 20 60–75 minute one-on-one interviews. For these interviews, I used a semi structured approach since having a set protocol (see Appendices D and E) to follow not only assisted with guiding the interview but allowed for a more open-ended conversation between the participant and myself (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Although I am aware semi structured interviews may introduce biases as I deliberately focused on specific questions regarding college experiences, it's important to note I also ensured the participants' stories were centered during the interviews. Keeping this in mind, I adopted a narrative approach throughout the interviews to create a “therapeutic” effect, as suggested by Stuhlmiller (2001). This approach involves what Stuhlmiller (2001) described as “the warm-up, the story, and the wrap-up” (p. 66). The warm-up phase included introductions and casual conversation that transitioned into discussing the study and its purpose. The story

phase commenced with the initial protocol questions, and the wrap-up phase concluded with the participant's final response. Although this seems like a typical interview, Stuhlmiller (2001) stressed the importance of incorporating a narrative approach throughout the interview to ensure comfort and reduce anxiety by conveying empathy, respect, and attentive listening. It is important to mention that before the interview began, participants were given background information about the study and were reminded they could ask for clarification, skip a question, or stop the interview at any time.

In the interview protocol, I engaged in a process that encouraged participants to share their background, emotions, feelings, and experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I created two interview protocols (one for current students and another for former students) that consisted of 18 questions total. Black and Latino/a/e participants were asked about their experiences navigating their college, the challenges they experienced, and what decisions they made based on these challenges. For instance, for Black and Latino/a/e former students, were asked questions surrounding their decision to leave the college. Protocol questions for former students included: (a) Tell me about your experiences at Western College, Banting College, or Central College?, (b) Did any of the challenges you experienced influence your decision to leave the college?, and (c) How did you feel about your decision to leave?. The interview protocol was created based on the research questions of this study and the literature on the conceptual frameworks: institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out. For this study, all 20 participants were given the option of in-person interviews or Zoom interviews with all participants selecting the online modality. Participants were also compensated with a \$30 Amazon gift card while half preferred payment through the Venmo application.

Online Websites and Social Media Selection

Initially, this study had planned to collect physical documents regarding transfer, course, and/or major information, however very few of the Black and Latino/a/e students in the study relied on these physical documents. After conducting a few interviews, it became clear Black and Latino/a/e students relied heavily on online tools to gather important academic information. Bowen (2009) stated documents can include anything from meeting minutes, event information online, and course catalogues. However, most of this information is now located online. For this reason, this study made the switch from physical documents to the online modalities that students relied on the most: (a) campus websites, (b) articulation sites like assist.org, and (c) social media accounts like Instagram, and X (formerly known as Twitter). I decided to focus on these three different sources of information because most Black and Latino/a/e students in the study relied on these modalities to gather important academic information.

In this study, an online analysis was conducted to explore the primary sources of information Black and Latino/a/e students relied on while navigating their studies. The analysis aimed to provide a thorough understanding of how Black and Latino/a/e current and former students made decisions based on their knowledge. Online analysis of different modalities is crucial for three main reasons. First, they offer insight into how students interpret different online documents and gather information (Bowen, 2019). Second, analyzing various types of information helps identify their contents and any missing information, which can guide necessary changes to enhance comprehension (e.g. the transfer process). Lastly, for reliability purposes, an online analysis contributes to the credibility of the findings when compared to interview findings. Ultimately, the online analysis of different modalities in this study provides

additional information on the structural and procedural challenges that Black and Latino/a/e current and former students experienced in community colleges.

Data Analysis

A qualitative analysis often requires a series of steps in order to create categories and themes in order to make sense of the data. Creswell and Creswell (2018) referred to this process as “peeling back the layers of an onion” (p. 190) because researchers must peel each layer of the data apart in order to reveal the findings of a study. Since this dissertation study sought to conduct a narrative inquiry, the data analysis process stemmed from the qualitative work of Saldana (2013) which revolved around different methods of coding. In the following section, I provide a brief discussion on the multiple steps of the data analysis process to properly examine and shed light on the cooling-out process of Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

Before diving into the coding methods, it is important to note I engaged in different analysis procedures simultaneously. As interviews were ongoing, I also analyzed documents, transcribed, and coded transcripts. Therefore, the analysis portion consisted of different moving parts at the same time. Additionally, since qualitative interviews are so rich and provide a lot of information, I engaged in a method called winnowing. Winnowing the data is a process focusing on specific data from the interviews and disregarding other portions that are not relevant to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). My focus during the analysis was to highlight the structural and procedural challenges Black and Latino/a/e students experienced and in what ways they mirrored the cooling-out process. For this study, I used two computer software programs to assist with the transcribing and coding process. The first was a transcribing website called Rev.com that assisted with converting all interview audio files into text. Interviews were transcribed by

individuals in order to get the most accurate reading of the audio files. After they were transcribed, I went through each transcription to assure accuracy of the interviews.

The second computer software I used for the analysis portion was Dedoose, a software used by many qualitative researchers for its ability to organize data, create parent and child codes, gather categories and themes, and export the data into excel spreadsheets. The Dedoose software also has the ability to store data confidentially through a password protected account. Furthermore, to keep all audio files and transcripts confidential, I created a password locked folder on my desktop which only I had access to. In the following sections, I provide a description of the deductive and inductive coding methods used in the study to develop the themes.

Interview Analysis

After conducting interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed using the Rev.com website. The first step involved sending each participant their transcripts to review the accuracy of their responses, a process known as member checking. This was done to ensure the precision and validity of the collected data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) and to ensure accuracy of the findings. The validity section of this study provides further details on this process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The second step involved reading the interview transcripts to gain a general understanding of the information that needed to be coded. During this step, I reflected on the participants' statements, formed general impressions, and made notes in the transcripts that stood out during the interview. The third step involved using the deductive and inductive coding approaches to gather the findings of the study.

To engage in the deductive coding approach, I created a qualitative codebook that contained a list of predetermined codes stemming from the literature review (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018) and the conceptual frameworks: institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out. For example, codes were created to be consistent with institutional precarity (Hart, 2019) and procedural cooling-out (Anderson, 2015; e.g., low counselor to student ratio, complicated procedures, and inaccurate information). For the deductive approach, I engaged in two rounds of hypothesis coding, which is defined as a coding method that analyzes transcripts through the lens of the conceptual frameworks and research questions (Saldana, 2016). The hypothesis coding process allows the researcher to capture the categories and themes regarding the research topic.

To prevent biases, I used both predetermined codes and an inductive coding approach in the study. The inductive coding method involved creating codes directly from the interviews, allowing for the capture of additional categories or themes that may have been missed by the deductive coding method. In this method, I performed two rounds of in-vivo coding, which involves creating codes based on the participants' own words (Saldana, 2016). Altogether, this study focused on examining participant interviews through the lens the literature, frameworks, and most importantly the student voice. After all interviews were coded, I identified the most frequently mentioned codes and created categories based on the findings. For instance, many Black and Latino/a/e current and former students mentioned challenges with course enrollment and counselors. Therefore, they were selected as categories. I then focused on identifying broader themes. The categories mentioned by the participants fell under the theme of institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out. This emerged as a major theme of the study, alongside one other category: racialized challenges and challenges with online information.

Online Analysis of Different Modalities

As information is a vital component often exchanged, modified, or misconstrued within a community college, for this study it was important to examine the most used online modalities

by students. Documents, whether physical or online, are a form of data collection method that provides a voice and meaning to a research interest (Bowen, 2009). For this study, I analyzed three sources of information from each college site: (a) campus websites, (b) an articulation site, (c) social media accounts in X and Instagram. The first step of the online analysis was conducting a content analysis of each source. A content analysis provides information on what the document contains such as, the organization, consciousness, or missing information (O’Leary, 2014). For instance, in this study, when examining the Instagram accounts of Banting, Central, and WC, I examined the differences on information of events, topics, and important due dates along with the number of posts and followers from each account.

The final step was to conduct a thematic analysis of all online modalities. This analysis examined any patterns or differences within the sites and social media pages (Bowen, 2009). For example, it aimed to identify what information the campus website at Banting College had that WC or Central College did not. The analysis aimed to uncover whether the sites or social media pages provided incomplete or necessary information for students to navigate their educational goals. As a result, the analysis of different online modalities was a vital component of the study as it provides information on how Black and Latino/a/e students gather information and make decisions based on the information they find.

Positionality

As I wrote this dissertation, I could not help but think that every experience I had in life served a purpose, culminating in this research study. As I mentioned before, I am a first-generation Latina who was raised in a predominantly low-income community of color for most of my life. Often regarded as a dangerous community, my memories often consist of the delicious food, my childhood friends, and the culture within the community. I attended a high

school with over 4,000 students, and many of us had to sit in cramped classrooms, shared torn books, and dealt with teachers who at times told us our “people don’t amount to anything.” Feeling like I was not college material, I skipped applying to universities and went straight to community college, not knowing what to expect.

I remember feeling frustrated with the transfer process when I was at community college, even though I was attending a college known as the “Number 1 college for transfers.” In my first year, I felt lost, took unnecessary courses, struggled to afford books, and was placed in remedial English and math courses. I often talked to friends who dropped out of college, and I even considered dropping out and start working full time because the process was just. too difficult. Over the years, I continued to face the same challenges. Counselor appointments were limited, I had trouble enrolling in courses, and meeting with faculty was difficult due to my school and work schedule. As a result, my friends and I often questioned if we were going to transfer.

Without my knowledge, a counselor informed me I had completed 80 units, which meant I could have already applied to the University of California system (which required only 60 units) or private universities (which only required 30 units). Additionally, I could have already earned an associate degree which I did not know I was eligible to. In total, I spent 4 years in community college trying to navigate the transfer process where I was ultimately able to transfer. After I left the community college system, it became clear the misinformation, the limited resources, and the procedures played a significant role in many of the challenges I encountered.

Throughout my graduate studies and research, I have focused on the experiences of students of color in community colleges. Prior to this study, I spent 3 years conducting research, publishing, and presenting my work on the experiences of Black and Latino community college men. I also worked as a research analyst for a men of color program at a community college

located in Los Angeles County. In addition to research, I have always made it a priority to give back to communities that resonate with my own experiences. During my first year of graduate school, I collaborated with an English professor at East Los Angeles Community College to co-facilitate workshops for a social justice student program. Furthermore, for the 2 years preceding this study, I continued to work with an educational nonprofit program serving Black and Brown high school young men in Inglewood and surrounding communities. Although much of my work has focused on the experiences of men of color, I realized the need to include the experiences of Black and Latina women in the conversation. I am aware my experiences may have led to biases, but this dissertation topic goes beyond just completing my degree. It is my passion and the reason I joined the doctoral program. To ultimately make a difference by conducting research in low-income communities and for students who share my experiences.

Reflexivity and Trustworthiness

Reflexivity is considered one of the most important components in qualitative research because it allows researchers to address any potential biases (Dodgson, 2019). This reflective practice requires researchers to be aware of their own identities (e.g. race, age, experiences, and background) and how these intersect with the identities of the participants. Dodgson (2019) stated acknowledging these differences and similarities to oneself as a researcher holds us accountable for our own reactions during the study and enhances the credibility of the findings.

In this study, I aimed to be mindful and considerate of how my identity and past experiences in community college might intersect with the identities and experiences of the participants. As a woman of color, I shared similar identities and experiences with students of color, women, and particularly Latina women. Additionally, my own experiences at a community college allowed me to relate to the experiences of all the participants. I was aware

these similarities could be perceived as potential biases. To address this, I engaged in reflexive thinking by incorporating written memos. These memos included observations, thoughts, or concerns about the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). They also helped me consider how my assumptions might influence the findings. I made it a point to write these memos after every interview, often asking myself: “Are my experiences influencing these results? And if so, in what ways?” Engaging in reflexive memos allowed me to account for my assumptions and biases, which further strengthen the validity and credibility of this study.

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research is an ongoing process throughout a research study. It involves a series of steps researchers need to take to verify the accuracy of the research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure trustworthiness in the study, I provided detailed descriptions of the dissertation findings, discussed written memos with my advisor, involved participants in checking their transcriptions, and used methods of triangulation. First, I sent each participant a transcript of their interview to review and make any necessary changes. This is a form of member checking that enabled participants to provide input about their interviews. Additionally, it allows participants to ensure that I captured their experiences correctly. Then, during the interview process and while coding and writing memos, I discussed these memos with my advisor to identify and address any biases and review the categories and themes. This peer review process allowed for input from individuals other than me (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

For this study, I used two types of triangulation techniques: triangulation of observers and triangulation of measures (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Triangulation of observers involved discussing the dissertation findings with my advisor to ensure their accuracy and credibility. Triangulation of measures involved collecting and analyzing both interviews and online modalities to support

the findings. This method allows the findings from both sources to reflect similar themes that answer the research questions. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), establishing themes based on data from multiple sources adds to the validity of the study. Lastly, I provided a detailed description in the dissertation findings, aiming to allow readers to immerse themselves in the setting and gain a deeper understanding of the student experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Overall, this study employed various methods to ensure the validity of the findings.

Reciprocity

In this chapter, I wanted to address the often overlooked concept of reciprocity in qualitative research. Reciprocity involves the exchange between researchers and the individuals being studied, including the participants and the institution itself (Curry, 2012). Participants, as well as institutions and their staff, invest time in providing researchers with insights into their experiences, which in turn shapes the advancement of knowledge (Trainor & Bouchard, 2012). Participants often receive incentives, primarily monetary, while institutions gain valuable findings that can inform future practices and research. However, researchers argued reciprocity should be a fundamental element in qualitative research to demonstrate a commitment to honoring participants, their stories, and “the diverse ways of knowing” (Curry, 2012, p. 92).

In this study, I implemented two forms of reciprocity. First, participants received a \$30 Amazon gift card or a direct payment through the Venmo application for taking part in the study and reviewing the accuracy of their transcripts after completing interviews. Additionally, as this research was conducted at Central, Banting, and WC, I proposed establishing a partnership with each college. The findings from this study will be shared with each college for their own reference. Moreover, the institutional research offices have expressed interest in a presentation

for administrators, faculty, and staff. Collaborating with these colleges not only facilitated data collection for this study but also supported the colleges with their own campus efforts.

Ultimately, in qualitative research, it is the researcher's duty to reciprocate the favor and give back to the participants and institutions involved in the study.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of participants, both current and former students, was a top priority throughout the study. Confidentiality ensures information about the participants is kept private and known only to the researcher (Kamazi & Romania, 2019). This approach is particularly important in qualitative research, as it encourages participants to freely share their experiences. For online Zoom interviews, participants were provided with a secure link and meeting passcode to prevent unauthorized access. Additionally, I made sure to conduct the interviews in a private, noise-free environment to maintain confidentiality. Furthermore, after completing each interview, students were given the option to choose their own pseudonym to protect their identity. The institutions in this study were also given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Lastly, all data transcripts were stored in password-protected folders on my desktop and in a secure coding software like Dedoose. After conducting the analysis, all data from the study was securely stored in a locked folder using Box software.

Limitations

In this study, I examined how structural and procedural challenges influence the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. Additionally, the study explored how these students came to this decision by investigating their decision-making processes. Although the data from this dissertation advances the literature on the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students, there were a few limitations in this study. Firstly, the data collection for former students

was restricted, as no students from Central Community College participated in the study, resulting in a pool of primarily Banting College and WC students. Secondly, the study had a majority of female participants, which meant the experiences of Black and Latino men were not fully represented. Lastly, although I discussed the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students together, I want to clarify I do not imply all Black and Latino/a/e students have the same experiences. Black men do not share all the similar experiences as Latino men and vice versa.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the data collection and analysis process used in the study. I described each study site, including background information and the selection process for each institution. I also explained how I gathered data from 10 current students and 10 former students at Banting College, Central College, and WC over a 14-month period. Additionally, I discussed the data analysis process, including the deductive and inductive coding approaches for interviews and the content and thematic analysis for the online modalities. Finally, I briefly addressed my positionality statement, trustworthiness and confidentiality, along with the study's limitations. In the following section, I discuss the major themes of the study and share the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from the data collected and answer the following research questions:

1. What decisions do Black and Latino/a/e make to cool-out of their community college?
2. How do the institutional structures and procedures at their community colleges influence students' decision to cool-out?

For this study, I examined the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e former and current community college students using the conceptual frameworks of institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out. In doing so, I wanted to understand the structural and procedural challenges that Black and Latino/a/e students encountered, their decision processes as they encountered these challenges, and if and how these challenges influenced their cooling-out. This chapter presents the key themes found in the student interviews. The first section of this chapter provides context information about the participants and a comparison of each community college from two publicly accessible online data systems. With this information, I examined differences in the percentage of Black and Latino/a/e students enrolled, the number of full-time and part-time faculty and staff, and the colleges core revenues and yearly expenses.

The second section provides a significant finding that addresses the two research questions that explores the cooling-out process of Black and Latino/a/e community college students as they faced structural and procedural challenges. The third section discusses a second major finding that addresses the unique challenges experienced by Black and Latino/a/e students in community colleges which derive from their identities as students of color. Lastly, in the fourth section, I discuss the online website and social media analysis that examined how

information, even when located online, contributes to the challenges Black and Latino/a/e students experienced as they navigate their educational goals.

Participant Context and Institution Background

This chapter presents findings based on a total sample of 20 Black and Latino/a/e current and former students who attended one of three community colleges in this study (see Tables 1 and 2). Current community college students had to fit the following criteria: (a) be 18 years and older, (b) identify as a Black or Latino/a/e student, and (c) be currently enrolled at one of the three participating colleges. Former community college students had to identify with the following: (a) identify as Black or Latino/a/e student, (b) be previously enrolled at one of the three participating colleges, and (c) have left the college without transferring or obtaining a certification or associate degree. It is important to note the length of time to complete these interviews was well over a 14-month period because it was difficult to recruit former students even with the support of the institutional research and effectiveness offices at each college.

The institutional research offices at Banting College and Western College reached out to over 2,500 students flagged as former students and fit the criteria and only 42 participants submitted an interest form. Out of those 42 participants, only 10 were eligible to complete the interview as others had previously completed a certification or associate degree. The Central College institutional research office was unable to reach out to any former students as they were not allowed to do so under college policy. Therefore, I relied on the Black and Latino/a/e student programs to send any recommendations of former students which yielded no results. This challenge accounted for the lack of participation of former students from Central College despite different outreach methods.

Participants in the study ranged in background and life experiences. As seen in Table 1 and 2, the age of the participants varied with the youngest being 18 years old and the oldest being 65 years of age. More than half of the students identified as first-generation college students and the first in their family to obtain some form of higher education. Additionally, this sample of participants consistent of nontraditional students, family caretakers, and student parents. For current students, almost all students had dreams of attending a 4-year institution while one student aspired to be a nurse. Student academic majors ranged from the social sciences to humanities and science, technology, engineering, and math. It is important to note, 4 out of the 10 current students were reverse transfers, which refers to students who began postsecondary education in 4-year institutions and decided to leave their university to attend a 2-year college. All reverse transfer students indicated they found 4-year universities too difficult, so they decided to attend a 2-year college instead.

Additionally, out of the 10 current students, only one student did not work, while five students held part-time positions and four students worked full time. Regarding former students, about half aspired of transferring to a 4-year university, three wanted to earn a certification, and two wanted to obtain an associate degree. With the exception of one student, most former students identified as female, and none were former students at Central College therefore presenting limitations to the study. Out of the 10 former students who participated in the survey, five were currently employed or seeking employment, two were stay-at-home parents, and three decided to search for a new community college to attend. Overall, seven of the former students mentioned they had no interest in returning to the community college due to the challenges they previously experienced on campus.

To contextualize the community colleges in this study, I used data from the Student Success Metrics (SSM) and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). SSM is an accessible data launch board that provides information regarding enrollment, persistence, and completion. IPEDS is also a publicly accessible data system that gathers enrollment and completion data along with descriptive information such as the number of faculty and staff on campus and revenues and expenses of universities, colleges, and vocational programs (IPEDS, 2024). By using SSM and IPEDS, I gathered information on all three colleges: Banting College, Central College, and Western College to provide an overall comparison. First, in regard to enrollment data, as seen in Table 3, Western College had the largest percentage of Black and Latino/a/e students (23% and 65%, respectively) compared to Central and Banting College. Alternatively, Central College had the highest number of total students enrolled with over 35,777 students from the 2021–2022 academic year (SSM, 2022).

Table 3

Percentage of Black and Latino/a/e Students Enrolled From 2021 to 2022

	Banting College (N=21,289)	Central College (N=35,777)	Western College (N=4,221)
Black	5%	9%	23%
Latino/a/e	54%	42%	65%

Note. From Student Success Metrics (SSM, 2022)

Regarding age, the age distribution among the three community colleges did vary. For instance, across all community colleges, Western College had the highest percentage of 25 and over students at 57%, compared to Banting College at 51% and Central College at 43%.

Additionally, Central College had the largest enrollment of students 24 years and under at 57% compared to Banting and Western College (SSM, 2022; see Table 4).

Table 4

Percentage of Students Enrolled by Age From 2021 to 2022

	Banting College (N=21,289)	Central College (N=35,777)	Western College (N=4,221)
24 and under	49%	57%	42%
25 and over	51%	43%	57%

Note. From Student Success Metrics (SSM, 2022)

In terms of financial aid, over 91% of students at Western College received some form financial aid (e.g., scholarships, grants, loans), compared to 75% of students at Banting College and 64% of students at Central College (IPEDS, 2022). These differences can be attributed to the fact that Western College is situated in an area that is predominantly low-income residents, in contrast to Central College, which is located in an affluent community (see Table 5).

Table 5

Financial Aid Percentage by College From 2021 to 2022

Banting College	Central College	Western College
75%	64%	91%

Note. From Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, 2022)

For course success by race and ethnicity, there were also differences between colleges. Course success is defined in SSM as the completion of a course with a passing grade of A, B, C, or P according to the students selected journey (e.g., transfer, certification, or degree). As seen in Table 6, Western College had the lowest course success rates for Black students at 61% compared to Central College at 64% and Banting College at 66%. For Latino/a/e students, Western College also had the lowest success rates with 64% compared to Central College at 70% (SSM, 2022). In spite of these differences, per community college, Banting and Central College had the largest course success gaps for Black and Latino/a/e students compared to White students.

Table 6

Course Success by Race and Ethnicity From 2021 to 2022

	Banting College	Central College	Western College
Black	66%	64%	61%
Latino/a/e	68%	70%	64%
White	80%	83%	64%
Asian	79%	83%	91%

Note. Student Success Metrics (SSM, 2022)

Lastly, in terms of persistence, the SSM (2022) defined it as the number of students who remained at the college for 1 academic year (e.g., fall to spring). As seen in Table 7, Black and Latino/a/e had higher rates of persistence in Central College (65% for Black and Latino/a/e students) compared to Banting and Western College. However, Central College maintained the largest persistence gaps when compared to White and Asian students. It is also important to note,

Western College had higher persistence rates for Black and Latino/a/e students compared to White and Asian students.

Table 7

Persistence Rates by Race and Ethnicity From 2021 to 2022

	Banting College	Central College	Western College
Black	43%	65%	52%
Latino/a/e	55%	65%	57%
White	58%	71%	49%
Asian	45%	77%	42%

Note. Student Success Metrics (SSM, 2022)

To further analyze the differences between community colleges, I used IPEDS data to study how each college is sustained through its instructional faculty and staff, core revenues, and expenses. The following data represented the most recent data available from the IPEDS site for the 2022 fiscal year. In terms of instructional faculty, as seen in Table 8, Western College had the largest percentage of full-time faculty at 40.7% compared to Banting and Central College. However, Western College had the lowest total number of instructional faculty on campus. Central College had a total of 1,188 instructional faculty on campus with an average salary of \$106,000, followed by Banting College at 601 instructional faculty with an average salary of \$91,000, and Western College at 243 instructional faculty with an average salary of \$82,000 (IPEDS, 2022). The differences between faculty and student numbers means there was a 1:38 faculty student ratio at Banting College, 1:28 faculty to student ratio at Central College, and 1:24 faculty to student ratio at Western College.

Table 8*Total Number and Percentage of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty in Fall 2022*

	FT Faculty	% FT	PT Faculty	%PT	Total
Banting College	178	29.6%	423	70.4%	601
Central College	355	29.9%	833	70.1%	1,188
Western College	99	40.7%	144	59.3%	243

Note. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, 2022)

In terms of the number of staff at each institution, there was not as much variation as there was for instructional faculty. For example, all three community colleges had over 90% of their staff working full-time, with over 5% working part-time (IPEDS, 2022). It is worth noting according to data from the IPEDS site, 0% of the staff at Western College were reported to be working part-time, but this may have been a reporting issue as IPEDS data were collected through computerized surveys (see Table 9).

Table 9*Total Number and Percentage of Full-Time and Part-Time Staff in Fall 2022*

	FT Staff	% FT	PT Staff	% PT	Total
Banting College	234	91.8%	21	8.2%	255
Central College	522	94.7%	29	5.3%	551
Western College	163	100.0%	0	0%	163

Note. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, 2022)

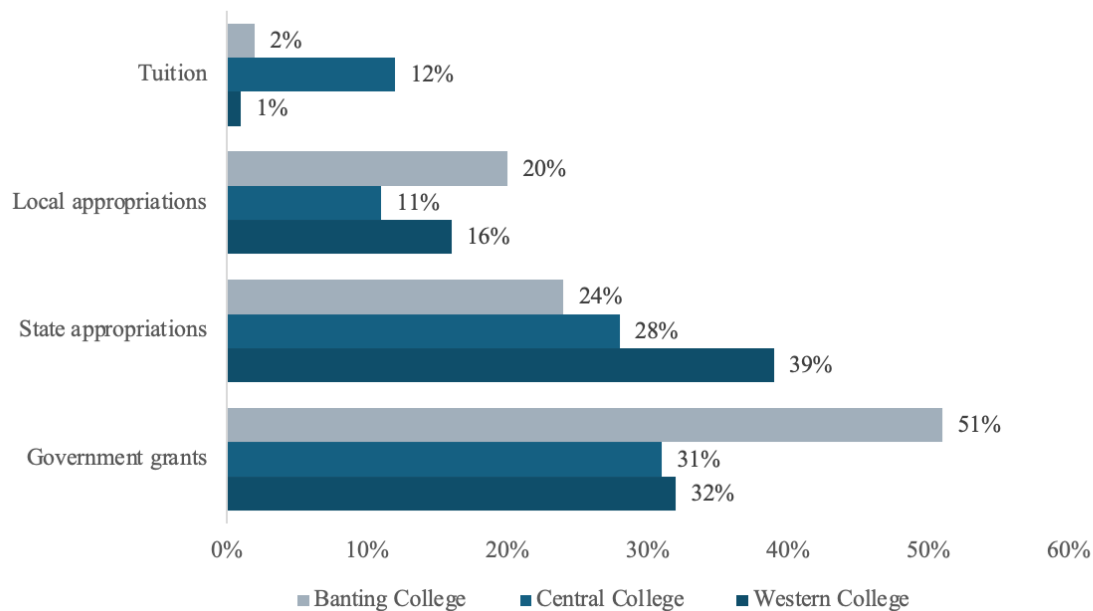
As discussed in the literature review, community college funding and expenses vary by each institution; however, they all depend heavily on tuition, local and state appropriations, and

government grants. Before diving deeper into each college's revenue, it is important to define each component of funding. First, community colleges generate revenue through tuition, this is the amount earned per student who is enrolled at the college. Secondly, there is also local and state appropriation funding. Local appropriations are defined as revenue collected through property taxes which includes district and support sources below the state level (You et al., 2022). State appropriations are sources of funding set aside by legislatures and provided to colleges according to the state budget and the needs of the college (CCCCO, 2020; You et al., 2022). Lastly, community colleges also generate revenue in the federal level through government programs and grants.

Figure 2 shows each community college had different methods of funding. For instance, Central College generated 12% of its revenue through student tuition, while Western College only generated 1% due to their smaller enrollment numbers. In terms of local appropriations, Banting College received more revenue from local taxes (20%) compared to the other colleges and Western College received the highest proportion of state revenue (39%). Additionally, Banting College received the most grants and program funding from the government, with 51% compared to Western and Central College. The differences in funding sources demonstrates how each community college generates revenue through distinct channels that varies by year.

Figure 2

Percent Distribution of Core Revenues in FY 2022



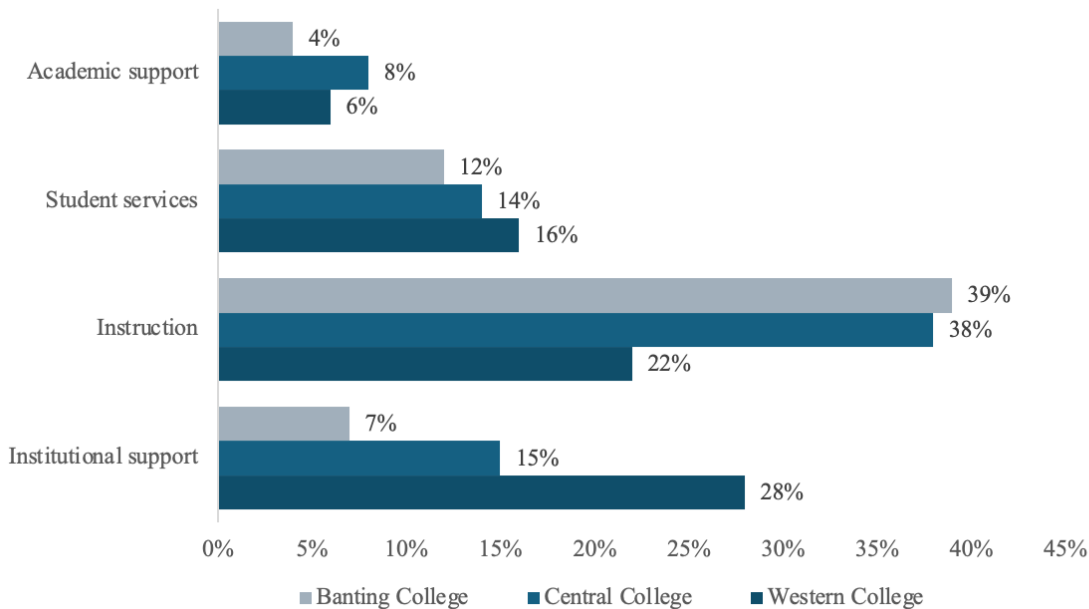
Note. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, 2022). Fiscal year (FY) is 12-month budgeting and accounting period that begins July 1 and ends the following June 30.

In each community college, four major expenses were allocated: (a) academic support, (b) student services, (c) instruction, and (d) instructional support. According to IPEDS, academic support refers to expenses of services and activities that support the community college's mission. This includes library services, media support, and course development. Student services are programs on campus that support the academic and personal well-being of students, such as student organizations and support programs. Instruction expenses refer to the expenses spent on academic instruction, including credit and noncredit courses. Institutional support expenses are the day-to-day expenses that help operate the institution.

Based on IPEDS 2022 fiscal year data, there was not much variation in how much the institutions spent on academic support and student services. However, there was a variation in instruction and institutional support. Banting College spent over 39% of its budget on instruction, followed by 38% in Central College and 22% in Western College. These results may be attributed to differences in the total number of faculty at each institution. Additionally, Western College spent 28% of its budget on institutional support compared to the other two colleges. This means Western College spent more of their budget on the day-to-day operations of their institution than on instructional learning. The difference in expenses ultimately demonstrates how each community college spends their funds across departments and programs which affects the academic learning and experiences of its students (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Percent Distribution of Core Expenses in FY 2022



Note. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, 2022). Fiscal year (FY) is a 12-month budgeting and accounting period that begins July 1 and ends the following June 30.

When Institutional Precarity Meets Procedural Cooling-Out

This section provides the findings from the qualitative interviews that answer the research questions of this study. Through a thorough analysis, the second research question was answered as findings suggested that structural (institutional precarity) and procedural (procedural cooling-out) challenges were present in community colleges and, in fact, have cooled out Black and Latino/a/e community college students. Although these concepts are separate frameworks, the analysis showed institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out may function as one as they are often reliant on one another, or one concept is more prevalent in specific cases. For example, both concepts functioned together when students were required to meet with counselors but there

was a lack of counselors available. In other cases, a student experiencing a sudden drop of their course for a campus wide lack of interest only referred to institutional precarity. It is important to note findings demonstrated that despite their aspiration of obtaining a college education, Black and Latino/a/e students considered leaving their college not because of a single challenge but because of repeated incidents that hindered achieving their educational goals.

As part of the research study, I also found Black and Latino/a/e students had to face several challenges in their institution. Therefore, prior to making the decision to withdraw from their college, students made a series of important academic decisions (e.g., micro-decisions). These involved choices regarding the courses to enroll in, identifying accurate information, and seeking reliable sources. Consequently, they felt the need to seek help from their families, peers, or other academic support programs available on campus to navigate community college the best they could. In the following section, I discuss the most significant components within institutional precarity and procedural cooling present in the analysis. These subcategories include the challenges of simply enrolling in a course, experiences with counselors and professors, and receiving a lack of accurate information.

“I Can’t Enroll in a Course Even if I Wanted To”

The first subcategory of this study, mentioned by all 20 Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students, was the challenges surrounding community college courses. All students expressed some form of difficulty when it came to enrolling in courses as a result of the precarity and procedural challenges. These issues were mainly due to complicated procedures, course availability, course shortages, and courses being dropped due to the lack of student interest. For instance, a few students expressed having late enrollment dates that often required them to wait a semester (e.g., a full 10 to 16 weeks) to take the course the following

term without a guarantee. And although a few Black and Latino/a/e students decided to crash the course—attend the course without being officially enrolled—the chances of being selected to enroll was 50%. As a result, some students attended the course for 3–4 weeks at a time and were not selected to enroll in the course. These nonguaranteed course situations left Black and Latino/a/e students to decide what the next step will be—wait it out, enroll in a different course, go to another community college, or leave. Throughout these challenges, however, it is important to mention students did put effort in trying to navigate such a complex space and tried to persist the best they could by figuring it out themselves or relying on their families to make important academic decisions. The following excerpts highlight the stories of Black and Latino/a/e students trying resist the cooling-out process as they navigate a system of constant instability.

Complicated Course Enrollment Procedures. For many community college students, prerequisite courses are a daunting experience because they are courses required before reaching an advanced level course. Although prerequisite courses are implemented to ensure a student has the knowledge and the skills to move forward to an advanced course, the literature indicates these courses most often add an extra layer of challenges for community college students and influenced them to leave their college as they often get stuck in the process (Anderson, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Hart, 2019). If students do not place in credit courses, there is frequently a procedural requirement to take an extra one to two courses to reach an advanced level course therefore lengthening their time at the college. Although these courses are hailed as necessary to help the student succeed academically, it is a required process where many students feel stuck and constantly have to make decisions. These are the stories of Black and Latino/a/e students who experienced these challenges:

Kesha, a 26-year-old mother of two and former Western College student shared her experience as she was trying to enroll in the correct math course. Kesha stated:

I had trouble enrolling in the math course that I needed because they [Western College] kept saying that I had to do a prerequisite even though I had given them my transcripts from the previous college that I had completed those prerequisites. I actually had to skip doing math that semester because they needed to go back and fix everything on their end.

Kesha expressed she had to take matters into her own hands to get her academic issues resolved. She reached out to her counselor's multiple times and visited their office more than once. Kesha shared her prerequisites from her previous college took 16 weeks to get final approval, causing her to experience a delay in her educational plans by forcing her to wait a semester to take a required math course. Although this procedural requirement was not the reason Kesha left her community college, she admitted the frustrating process with the courses and the college played a role in her decision to leave.

Similarly, Emani, a 40-year-old nursing student at Western College, experienced the same situation. As she was trying to enroll in courses for the semester, she was required to take courses she had previously completed in a different community college. Emani mentioned counselors required her to take an English and math course she had completed but she was determined to override these courses. She mentioned:

I was really dedicated. I had conviction in what I was saying to the counselors. I showed them the transcripts and told them I could do this and to give me clearance. I was not trying to do any intro courses to anything and didn't have to. I did the work already.

Emani faced a similar situation as Kesha where she had to repeatedly contact her counselors to override courses she had already completed. During the interview, Emani mentioned she was able to get approval and override her English courses, but unfortunately, she was denied the ability to skip the math course. This forced her to retake a math course she had completed at her previous institution. Emani mentioned she contemplated leaving the college but decided to retake the course anyway because of her passion for becoming a nurse and helping others. Despite these procedural challenges, Emani remains determined to continue pursuing her dream.

Although some students fought to get approval from departments to take the appropriate courses, other challenges arose with complicated course enrollment procedures where students were constantly being retained and feeling stuck in nontransferable courses. When I asked students about their educational journey, both current and former students stated that prerequisite courses led them to consider leaving or was the reason they left college.

Jorge was a 25-year-old current student at Western College. Jorge stated:

I would say the prerequisite courses. So when I try to register for some of the courses, it said I would need a prerequisite for that course right? I would understand like, okay, if you took the course like way back then, but like if you continuously asked for like the prerequisites and you've already took it, then there is no point on asking for it.

Jorge, a kinesiology major, had to take prerequisite courses before he could take transferable courses in many of his science courses. However, at times, the enrollment system indicated he had to retake a course he had already taken. This occurred twice, and although counselors were able to fix the mistake immediately, it required Jorge to reach out to their office and wait weeks to get approval. This put Jorge at risk of dealing with full courses which often happens in community college because one must wait to get the issue cleared. Ultimately, Jorge decided to

stay at the community college because his brother was a valuable resource who guided him throughout the situation and his academic journey. However, he admitted he would like to leave the college in search of a “better community college” that could serve him because of the lack of courses offered at Western College.

Like Jorge, Laura, a 31-year-old former student at Banting College, intended to transfer to a 4-year university to complete a degree in social sciences. However, her experience with a prerequisite English course put her plans on hold. Unlike Jorge who had someone to guide him through the process, Laura had a different experience. During her time at Banting College, she felt defeated and embarrassed because she could not pass a remedial English course. She expressed that while she understood the material, Laura had a difficult time putting what she learned into practice in papers and exams. Sadly, she expressed she received no support from her professors, counselors, or anyone on campus and failed the course three times. She stated, “I internalized that it was me and not the college, so I left.” Without any guidance, this procedural requirement influenced Laura to leave Banting College despite being only two courses away from earning an associate degree.

When asked if anyone had reached out to her during this difficult time, she replied with a simple “no.” Now, Laura had no plans to return to Banting College or any other college and has decided to seek employment instead. Altogether, these challenges present the procedural challenges that influence the decisions Black and Latino/a/e students have to make. Although these stories highlight the challenges students experience with overriding and prerequisite courses, this is only the beginning of many challenges Black and Latino/a/e students’ experience. The following situations describe the circumstances students encounter throughout their course enrollment.

Course Availability and Shortages. If one has ever been a community college student, one knows how difficult it can be to enroll in courses. This challenge is particularly difficult for students who have late enrollment dates, are caretakers, or work because it limits their opportunities to take courses in the mornings or evenings. Additionally, enrollment periods are a nightmare to students because one is never secured a space in the course. In this research study, findings suggest most Black and Latino/a/e students reported facing issues in trying to enroll in courses or complete required courses due to the lack of availability and/or being at capacity.

Although some students decided to stick it out and wait to enroll in the course, others decided to leave their college because of the constant hurdles of simply trying to enroll. The following stories highlight the challenges students experience with the instability and requirements in community college. Maya, a 36-year-old former part-time student at Western College, faced difficulty enrolling in required courses in order to apply to the nursing program. Despite having an early registration date, Maya was unable to secure a spot in a required math course that filled up too quickly. She described her frustration with the situation. Maya stated:

My registration date was in the very beginning but even that didn't help. The math course that I needed got too full fast. All the times were full and they offered it Monday through Friday and every last one of them was full. It seems like they didn't take the steps to get more teachers or professors to do the courses.

Maya described enrollment challenges often hindered her educational goals despite her efforts to simplify the situation by reaching out for help. She met with counselors to get clarity on what courses to enroll in, however, courses were often at capacity by the end of the enrollment week. She states while courses were offered Monday through Friday, the number of courses offered was limited. Instead of the math course, Maya decided to lean on her own understanding and

take an elective course hoping that it would help her progress towards her educational goals. However, even this alternative was not without its own set of challenges. The elective course was not a requirement, and it was not a part of Maya's original plan. As a result of these enrollment roadblocks, Maya experienced educational delays in her journey and while she decided to remain at the community college, she said these challenges contributed to her decision to eventually leave.

Although a majority of students mentioned courses were full too often, a few students also described course shortages. Maria, a 19-year-old current student majoring in mathematics at Central College, described the challenges she faced as a working STEM student. She defined her experience enrolling in courses as a "nightmare" because most STEM courses were offered primarily in the morning. As a full-time student working 40 hours a week, Maria was often left with the difficult choice of missing her class because she was also required to work in the morning. She stated:

Physics courses are either Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the morning. It's intense and because of work I would go one day, wouldn't go the other, I would go the next, and not the other so being a STEM student here is difficult.

Maria had to make tough decisions when it came to balancing her job and her courses at Central College. She often chose work over the class, which often had her consider dropping the course. However, when a student worker position opened up on campus, Maria jumped at the opportunity and quit her off-campus job. This new opportunity made Maria's life more convenient and allowed her to continue her studies as a STEM major. She ultimately stated if it were not for the job opening, she would have likely changed her major to take evening courses or would have taken a break from school altogether. She stressed the college should highly consider

offering STEM courses in the evenings to accommodate students who have to work during the day. Maria's and Maya's stories demonstrate the instability Black and Latino/a/e students encounter and how they influence their decisions. Although course shortages and availability are significant structural issues that impact students' decisions to stay or leave their college, other challenges related to low enrollment are also present.

Lack of Student Interest and Unexpected Course Drops. It is a common occurrence for students at their community college to face the challenge of sudden course drops due to low enrollment and lack of student interest. What this refers to, is if a student enrolls in a course and there are only a few students enrolled (e.g., enrollment requirement varies by community college) the college may determine to drop the course because of the lack of interest. Unexpected course drops occur in community colleges when there is not enough interest for a particular course or major. They often cause students to scramble last minute in search of other courses and even cause students to switch their majors resulting in educational delays. This situation occurred to a few Black and Latino/a/e students primarily from Western College.

Carter, a current 27-year-old student at the college shared his experience of trying to complete his required science courses for his first major. Carter's initial major was computer science, as he had an interest in troubleshooting computer issues and had become the go-to person in his neighborhood for any information technology-related problems. However, he soon realized completing these courses was going to be an uphill battle. He mentioned two of his computer science courses were dropped due to the lack of students enrolled in the course. He stated:

I enrolled in this computer course but if courses don't get enough students enrolled they drop it. So, the course was dropped and I wasn't able to take it. So that's why my major

was first computer science but there are never enough students enrolled. Black students in particular.

Carter mentioned both courses were dropped a few days before the start of the semester, so he was often left scrambling to enroll in a different required course. He admitted these situations often left him contemplating his decision to stay at the college or explore other colleges where STEM courses were more of a priority. As a result, despite his love for computer science, Carter decided to change his major to arts and humanities after a conversation with his counselor. He stated that unbeknownst to him he found out he was four credits away from graduating with an arts and humanities associate degree. Therefore, he decided to make the switch. Carter's decision was not easy, but he realized it was the best option for him to complete his degree as he had already been at the college for more than 4 years. The sudden drop of his computer science course was a significant setback for him, but Carter was determined to succeed and find a new path allowing him to graduate this spring. Throughout his journey, instability with courses not only delayed his educational goals but also forced him to switch majors in order to graduate.

The documented experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students in their respective community colleges reveal the range of structural and procedural obstacles they encountered and how these challenges affected their academic decisions. Analysis of these experiences showed the most significant hurdles faced by students were course related. For instance, issues with enrollment, course availability, prerequisites, and unexpected drops were the most frequently mentioned. All of these subcomponents fall under one single category of navigating community college – simply enrolling in a course. Ultimately, although some Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students decided to stay despite their thoughts about leaving,

students who left the college before completing their educational goal found it in their best interest to leave.

“They Just Didn’t Have the Time for Me”

Counselors and professors play a crucial role in helping Black and Latino/a/e students navigate community college. They assist Black and Latino/a/e students by enrolling in the appropriate courses, understanding the course material, serve as mentors, and overall support students in achieving their educational goals. Although their positions are critical to the success of community college students, the literature suggests adjunct counselors and professors in community colleges are often overworked, underpaid, and face their own challenges in a system of constant change and instability (Barkley & Broderson, 2018). Therefore, it is no surprise the second emerging subtheme that influences the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students are the experiences with counselors and professors.

Although there were a few Black and Latino/a/e students who praised their counselors for their academic and interpersonal support, it is important to note these particular counselors were only available to students who were a part of specific programs like STEM. These programs provided the opportunity for students to receive one-on-one services with counselors knowledgeable in their major/field, receive priority enrollment dates, tutoring support, and guidance throughout their academic journey. In return, students who were a part of these programs were required to meet with counselors and attend workshops or monthly meetings. Out of all the Black and Latino/a/e students in the study, only five were a part of support programs, all of which were current students. This shows that support programs are beneficial to Black and Latino/a/e students, however, are only available to a selected few. The following interviews

demonstrate the challenges students experienced in situations with counselors and professors that stem from the instability within the community college structure.

Counselor and Student Interactions. Counselors play a tremendous role in the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. However, the instability with the low-counselor to student ratio often hinders the amount of time and adequate information students receive (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Based on the interviews conducted, it was found many Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students faced several challenges with their counselors. Some of these problems included quick counseling appointments, mistaken identity, lack of information, and an overall feeling of being uncared for. Students often expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and frustrated while selecting courses or trying to understand what steps to take to reach their educational goals because they often felt alone in the process. As a result, many Black and Latino/a/e students had to rely on their families or themselves to make important academic decisions. These challenges led students to take unnecessary courses due to the lack of knowledge of transferable courses. Although some students had no one to seek guidance from on campus, other students relied on additional resources like assist.org or specific student programs such as the STEM club, Latino Association (pseudonym), and Black Scholars (pseudonym) programs for proper guidance. In the following section, I highlight a few stories that discuss their experiences with counselors and how they influence Black and Latino/a/e students to leave (or think about leaving) their college.

Kesha, a former student at Western College, encountered several hurdles with counselors on her campus. When asked about her experiences she discussed several. Kesha stated:

Kesha: I had to switch off from two different counselors just because either they didn't respond or they confused me with another student when we met. The appointment took longer than it was supposed to and I still didn't get to ask my questions.

Interviewer: They confused you with another student? How so?

Kesha: They had my name and student ID number but they were calling me by a different name. So they had the wrong file pulled up and kept insisting that I had to take courses that I had already taken. I kept telling them that that person wasn't me but they insisted. I didn't get anything from this meeting.

Kesha expressed frustration as she is a mother of two children under 2 years old and could not easily return to campus to meet with a counselor. She revealed after this situation occurred, she tried to schedule another appointment online. However, these appointments often took weeks to get, and she needed important information on which courses to take. Therefore, she relied on 15-minute express counseling appointments to get the information she needed.

At the time of the interview, Kesha had recently moved to New York to be with her husband stationed there and tried her best to continue her studies at Western College. She described these challenges got worse because of the time difference and lack of accessibility to the campus. She mentioned she expressed her situation with counselors and professors, but they simply showed no empathy and expected her to "figure it out" despite the time change and recent move. As a result, Kesha decided to leave the college altogether, despite being two semesters away from earning her associate degree. She is now spending her time raising her two young children with hopes to one day return to college. Although Kesha experienced situations of mistaken identity, other students had difficulty getting appointments in the first place.

Jessica, a 20-year-old former student at Banting College, had dreams of completing a college degree in the social sciences to one day become a high school counselor. However, she saw her dreams slowly diminish throughout her time at Banting College because of the lack of proper guidance she received on campus. She stated:

I tried to get counseling appointments at the beginning of each semester to know what courses to take but it was difficult. Sometimes randomly there would be students who canceled, so there would be appointments at random times but I couldn't make those.

Several times I had to wait weeks or months to get to talk to one so I didn't know if I was in the right course or not.

Jessica described her experience with pure frustration and defeat because she was often left making her own decisions and questioning whether her courses were transferable or not. Thus, often relying on transfer websites like assist.org or online college catalogs that constantly changed what courses are transferrable. Additionally, as the first in her family to go to college, Jessica mentioned she had no one to rely on for information and was not aware of the resources on campus that can help. After a year of trying to navigate Banting College by herself, Jessica decided it was in her best interest to leave the campus to work and help provide for her family. Two years after leaving community college, she has now decided to begin her second attempt in postsecondary education in hopes of creating a different experience. Jessica's story displays a narrative that many community college students can relate. It is a narrative of feeling alone and frustrated as one navigates a complex educational system. While Jessica experienced issues with lack of availability, other students expressed how overwhelmed their counselors seemed during their counseling appointments.

Maria, a current student at Banting College, described her early experiences with a counselor as difficult because the counselor seemed swamped with the number of students they had to serve. She stated:

Talking to the counselor was kind of, I could tell they're really overworked, so I was just like "I'll keep it short." I just want to make sure I'm on the right track and they're like "Yeah, for this semester you should be good." It was just hard because I could tell since it was fall and the transfer season that she was trying to cut the session short. She was there but not really there. So I knew what courses I would take in the fall but we didn't talk about winter or spring courses. So I didn't know. I don't know.

After her first experience with the counselor, Maria decided to pick a different counselor to guide her in selecting her winter and spring courses. However, she described this second experience as even more frustrating than the first because the counselor kept suggesting courses not feasible with her working schedule at the time. She said:

They looked so run down and I didn't feel like they cared. They didn't ask me questions like "Oh, are you working as well?" or "I would recommend this course because students like it more" or "You can try to appeal this course since you've taken this prerequisite." They just regurgitated things that I already knew.

Maria mentioned after these two attempts, she questioned herself and her abilities as a college student. She became so frustrated with the process she began to have thoughts about leaving the campus. One day, however, after speaking with her family she decided to take matters into her own hands and heavily depended on her big sister, who had previously attended Banting College, and websites like assist.org to guide her through her studies. She additionally joined the STEM club on campus after her professor talked about the program in course in order to receive

additional support and proper guidance to continue her studies. Maria praised the STEM club, and her new job on campus, as the only reasons she remained at the college.

The stories of these three current and former community college students display issues with counselors caused by the instability in community colleges. These challenges with counselors demonstrate how both institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out affects the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students that results in the cooling-out process. The stories of Kesha, Jessica, and Maria demonstrate the challenges that arise when counselors in community college are overworked and have limited time. These challenges do not only include counselors but professors as well. In the following findings present the obstacles Black and Latino/a/e current and former students experience in their courses.

Professor and Student Interactions. Community college professors play a critical role in teaching a diverse student body that includes those seeking certification, vocational training as well as 4-year degrees. For Black and Latino/a/e community college students, professors play a tremendous role as they additionally serve as mentors within student social networks that lead to their academic success and belonging on campus (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Although community college professors are important, many are adjunct and work at multiple colleges while those that are full time, are often required to juggle multiple responsibilities. Throughout the interviews, Black and Latino/a/e students often described professor experiences as “difficult” due to the high turnover rate, how overworked they seemed, and their lack of interest in student learning. For many students, this instability resulted in an inconsistent learning experience and difficulty in establishing a meaningful relationship with their professors. It is worth noting Black and Latino/a/e students in the study did not leave due to a single challenge with a professor,

however these challenges did present elements of the cooling-out process and impacted their learning and college experience. The following share their stories.

Sean, a current 19-year-old student at Central College, described his experiences with professors as “up and down” because they were simply going “through the motion” when it came to teaching. As an economics major, Sean was required to take several math courses like statistics and calculus. However, he mentioned to have dropped and retaken a few of these courses because of his experiences with professors. In his first year at Central College, Sean was required to take a statistics course which he dropped in the fourth week of the term because the material on the test was different compared to the content being taught. He stated:

The first course I had to drop was a statistics course. And the reason being was I was going to the office hours of the professor and I was putting a lot of work into it, and I was still failing the exams. And I was like, okay, what’s going on? And I asked him, “How come the homework and the materials we’re given doesn’t reflect the test?” He said, “Oh, I don’t know.” And at that point I was like, you know what? I don’t want to strain myself. Let me just focus on my other courses. So I dropped that course and I filled in the time that I had for that course for another skill that I was learning at home.

Sean stated he rewrote and studied his stats notes every day but continued to have a difficult time during exams. And he was not alone. He described many of his peers also expressed the same concerns. Although Sean described this experience with his professor as frustrating. Surprisingly, he did not blame the professor for the situation, rather he blamed himself and the fact he did not have the “right approach” to learning. It is important to note Sean also identified as someone with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; therefore, any academic issues that arose throughout his academic journey he internalized and blamed himself. Despite the fact his professor

displayed a lack of interest in trying to help him understand the material, Sean made the decision to continue with his studies.

In his third semester, Sean enrolled in a calculus course where he experienced another challenge. His professor often looked overworked and would constantly miss course with a substitute often filling in. Although he was trying to do his best and keep up with the work, Sean mentioned to have such a difficult time despite his professor having the best grade distribution compared to other faculty. He mentioned his professor would often miss course and upon his return, he would teach too much content. It was hard to keep up, and several of his classmates dropped the course. Sean stated:

This course was very . . . What's the word? It was always full of surprises. Our math teacher only got around four hours of sleep at night because he has young children that he has to attend to, and he would come into course and it would just be the most dragged out lesson because he was just so out of it in terms of his energy levels. And then he didn't really respond to emails either, so I had to mostly tell him stuff in person. There were times where we had a substitute as well and there was a lot of drops in the very first half. During his calculus course, Sean encountered challenges due to inconsistencies in the course content which were reflected in his early exam grades. Additionally, despite his attempts to communicate with his professor via email, Sean received no response and often relied on in-person communication for help.

Sean noted the professor's inconsistency resulted in a high dropout rate for the course, with Sean having more than four substitute teachers throughout the term. Although Sean struggled consistently throughout the course, he mentioned to have received a C as his final grade. Ultimately, Sean remains committed to his academic pursuits and plans to transfer to a 4-

year university to continue his studies in economics. His experience with professors demonstrates the challenges that emerge with professors who are often overworked and have additional college expectations to uphold.

Silvia, a 45-year-old former student at Banting College who intended goal was to earn an associate's degree, mentioned identical issues to Sean. Silvia returned to school because she wanted to earn a degree and work a better job. She enrolled at Banting College, after being away from any form of higher education since her high school graduation and while she was very nervous to return, she knew at the time it was the best decision for her. After a year at Banting College, she realized coming back to school was easier said than done. Silvia began to encounter issues with her courses and professors that ultimately began to lengthen her time at the college. In one of her science courses, Silvia recalled there being several times where the content being taught did not reflect what was asked for in exams. She mentioned:

I had a professor that, his lectures were amazing, but the test was like someone completely different was giving the test. I would try to meet with him and it was challenging meeting with him. It was also challenging to communicate with him. So I had that experience of just communicating. And I also wonder, because, again, I am coming to school as a grownup and adult, I'm not in my 20s. I am in my 40s, so in my 40s, I feel more comfortable standing up for myself.

Silvia described the course content was great, but she had difficulties with exams because they were very different than the content being taught. Despite this issue, she showed persistence as she decided to meet with the professor during office hours to receive additional help. Silvia mentioned despite the communication issue that comes from language barriers she managed to get a passing grade in the course and was finally able to move forward in her educational goals.

It was in the following semester she experienced another hurdle in her science course. This time she mentioned her professor was always too busy and could not coordinate a time for office hours because they wore too many hats on campus. Silvia said:

Well, we had to change professors. We had this course with this teacher and then halfway through the semester we changed the professor, which was really challenging because the final was made by a new professor and we have never taken a test with her, so that was pretty challenging.

Silvia mentioned her first professor was the coordinator of a student support program and also was responsible for training new faculty on campus. Therefore, the professor often missed classes, and those classes were filled by different substitutes. Halfway through the term, Silvia was assigned a new professor who taught the course in a different manner and changed the format of exams. Silvia described these constant changes with professors did impact her course grades even though she put more time into her studying habits. Even though she managed her courses as best as she could and never once dropped a course, she mentioned her work and course schedule ultimately became too much to handle because of the amount of time she was putting into her studies and the length of time it would take to earn a degree.

Although she did not contribute her challenges with professors as the sole reason to why she left the college, she did mention they contributed to her thoughts about leaving. Ultimately, Silvia was placed in a situation where she was expected to provide for her family and deal with challenges in college. Therefore, encountering instabilities within her home and school environment. Silvia described making the decision to leave as a very difficult choice because she had dreams of becoming an educator but ultimately had to place these dreams on hold in order to financially contribute to her household.

The high turnover rate of professors at Western College also had a negative impact on students, as was the case with Maya, a former student who faced difficulties due to the constant change of professors. Maya had enrolled in Western College with the goal of becoming a nurse to provide a better life for her two young children. However, her experiences with professors in her classes influenced her decision to leave. As a prenursing major, she was required to complete several prerequisite courses such as English and math. However, Maya found it difficult to pass her courses because “it was never the same professor” teaching the course “for longer than a month.” She expressed her frustration as she started Western College as a hopeful nursing student but was unable to keep up with the content and exams because every professor had different requirements. For example, in an English course, professors would teach content through online modalities while others would just lecture and not write any notes on the board. Overwhelmed with the instability in her courses, and all other challenges on campus she experienced, she made the tough decision to leave the college as she was getting “tired of switching professors.” At the time of this study, Maya was a stay-at-home mom and had no plans of returning to college. When asked if she would one day return to college she simply stated, “no way.” Maya’s experiences at Western College demonstrate the precarity in community college courses. These challenges show although a student may experience challenges enrolling in a course, they also experience challenges in the classroom.

The experiences of Sean, Silvia, and Maya, reveal the difficulties Black and Latino/a/e students face in community colleges. Although they attended different colleges in various regions of Southern California, they all encountered similar problems with professors. Due to the high turnover rate of professors and their excessive workload, the students experienced significant challenges. Moreover, the impacts of these situations varied among the students. Sean

chose to remain at his institution but assumed his poor academic performance was entirely his responsibility which is a component within procedural cooling-out as the student internalizes these challenges or their lack of performance as their fault and not the institutions. On the other hand, Silvia was encountering challenges within the institution and in her home as she was a provider in household. Despite trying her best to overcome these challenges, the unstable environment in her courses pushed her to leave the college. Similarly, Maya left her college due to the constant change of professors and learning requirements. In conclusion, the instability of the community college system pertaining to full-time faculty and their obligations undermines the learning experience in the classroom and influences the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e students.

“I Don’t Know Where to Get the Right Information”

Acquiring accurate and timely information is vital for the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. However, students often report receiving insufficient or incorrect information on campus, which fails to guide them properly throughout their college journey. Consequently, while navigating through the requirements and procedures, Black and Latino/a/e students often end up making choices that result in taking incorrect courses, and experiencing educational delays which may influence their decision to leave (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Grubb, 2006). In the study, findings were consistent with procedural cooling-out as it showed most Black and Latino/a/e students were often unaware of which courses to take. Furthermore, students received inaccurate information from different faculty and staff members on campus often resulting in students making decisions based on information they know or find. The following section presents the stories of Black and Latino/a/e students who have struggled with this issue. Their experiences illustrate the critical need for accurate and reliable information

on campus, which can help students make informed academic decisions towards their educational goals.

Black and Latino/a/e students at all three community colleges reported receiving inaccurate information regarding their educational plan. Students described situations where they were given conflicting advice by different counselors, missed enrolling in the correct courses due to incorrect information, or were not informed about the time it would take to reach their educational goals. For example, Roland, a current sociology major at Central College, mentioned he was aware of students staying at Central College for longer periods of time because they received conflicting information regarding their educational plan. He stated:

I'm very vigilant when it comes to checking my courses but I know a lot of students who were confused on what courses to take. They go to counselors and two different counselors say two different things, so then they feel like they're just wasting their time and get frustrated with the process. Then they may leave.

Roland shared he knew of two or three students who had been studying at Central College for more than 4 years due to miscommunication and improper guidance from the college. These students were taking incorrect courses and were often unaware one must take transferrable courses in order to transfer to a university. His peers ultimately became very frustrated with the process and eventually decided to leave the college, despite entering college with high hopes of earning a college degree. Their stories demonstrate such miscommunication and inadequate guidance adds an extra layer of challenges that hinders their educational plans. This lack of information demonstrates its effects correspond to elements of the cooling-out process as they intend to lengthen a student's time in college and ultimately influence their decision to leave.

Black and Latino/a/e current and former students in the study also mentioned to have received misguided information particularly about financial aid. As a result, over half of the participating students stated to have issues regarding FAFSA document submission, partial and late refunds, or lose their financial aid altogether. For instance, Carter, a current student at Western College recalled his experience navigating the financial aid appeal process. He stated:

I didn't reach SAP [satisfactory academic progress] standards so I needed to appeal.

However, I have gotten the wrong information to where someone told me one thing and someone else told me another. It became so complicated that I missed the deadline and I didn't receive financial aid. I still haven't. I just want to graduate so I didn't deal with it.

The satisfactory academic progress (SAP) is a component within financial aid that requires all student recipients to maintain a grade of C or better to remain eligible for financial aid. Carter stated his grades began to slip when he was working full-time to try and make ends meet and as a result, lost his financial aid because of his grades. When Carter went to the financial aid office more than twice in order to gain clarity on how to regain his aid, he mentioned he received inaccurate information that caused a delay in his appeal process. One financial aid counselor asked him to fill out additional paperwork because another counselor had given him incomplete information. Once he had finalized the correct paperwork, it was too late to submit as the deadline had passed.

Carter described the experience with financial aid as “too complicated” and decided to not appeal the process any longer because he was just two semesters away from graduating. His decision to not appeal the process but remain at the community college demonstrates his persistence to obtain a college degree. His story shows while the appeal process is a complicated procedure in itself, the added layer of being misguided throughout the process can cause

detrimental effects by influencing Black and Latino/a/e students to leave. Luckily in Carter's case, he mentioned his family was able to financially contribute to his education.

The present study shed light on the structural and procedural challenges that arise within community colleges, manifesting in various forms of cooling-out. The findings reveal Black and Latino/a/e students encounter challenges with enrollments, institutional agents, and the lack of accurate information. These challenges then lead these students to make constant decisions that impact their academic journey, such as taking inaccurate courses, deferring course enrollment, changing majors, or even leaving the college. In addition, Black and Latino/a/e students also report multiple occurrences of structural and procedural challenges. Therefore, it is important to note students who left based their decision to leave due to the constant potholes along the road. In essence, the instability prevalent in community colleges has a significant bearing on the academic journey of students. Although the present section provides evidence that supports the research questions, the subsequent section will focus specifically on the challenges faced by Black and Latino/a/e current and former community students.

Racialized Challenges as a Form of Cooling-Out

As the purpose of this dissertation was to address the structural and procedural challenges these students face, the second major finding illustrates the need to include a racialized lens in frameworks that study the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e students to deepen our understanding of their experiences. A racialized lens will address the differences between being a community college student and a Black and/or Latino/a/e community college student.

Being a student of color in higher education comes with its own set of challenges that stem from the history of marginalization and exclusion from society (including higher education). Although colleges pride themselves on the diversity of its students, the lived

experiences of students of color on campus often tell a different story. This section provides findings from the qualitative interviews that pertain to the unique challenges of Black and Latino/a/e students. Through a thorough analysis, the findings were no different and answered how the cooling-out process directly affects the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students. It is important to state, that neither institutional precarity or procedural cooling-out are examined through a racialized lens, however, it is crucial to show how community colleges uphold racial inequities through their practices, interactions, and policies. In the interviews, students addressed issues of safety, being questioned for their intellectual abilities, the lack of awareness of the struggles and opportunities of Black and Latino/a/e students, and experiences of anti-Blackness. In the following, I share their stories in hopes that community colleges continue to address inequitable issues concerning race and ethnicity on their campus.

“They Make You Feel Inferior Because of who You Are”

Research has demonstrated a sense of belonging and validating practices are important components for the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e college students (Rendon, 1994). Sense of belonging and validation provides a student with the feeling of security and support from the campus therefore affecting how well they academically perform. Although all community colleges in the study were diverse in terms of racial and ethnic demographics (with Latino/a/e students making the majority), student participants mentioned their college still has “ways to go” in order for them to feel supported, valued, and safe. In this brief section, I discuss Aileen’s story to show how structural challenges interact with racial inequities. The narrative findings follow Aileen’s educational journey for an academic year (e.g., 2 semesters) to highlight the obstacles as a student of color.

After an 8-year break from attending college after high school, 31-year-old Aileen decided to return to Central College in hopes of transferring to UCLA. However, she described her journey as far as “difficult” and “frustrating.” She mentioned before she was a part of a Latino/a/e support program, every counselor suggested she apply to a state university instead. Aileen stated that when she met with counselors, they repeatedly said, “Why don’t you aim a little bit lower or something more achievable?” Aileen mentioned that being constantly questioned about her educational goals and abilities as a college student resulted in her questioning herself and her own abilities. She felt even more disheartened when she mentioned it was women of color who provided this advice and believed they did so because she was low-income and a woman of color. For a few months, Aileen decided to take a break from asking general counselors anything regarding her academic journey. She stated that through this experience she did have thoughts about leaving Central College, however that quickly changed. As the first in her family to attend college, Aileen was reminded she was not only in college for herself but for her family standing beside her. Therefore, Aileen decided to reach out to Latino/a/e student support program on campus and remain at the college.

Following her experiences with counselors, Aileen recalled a situation in the classroom where she felt threatened and uneasy by another classmate despite a professor being in the room. It is important to note that as she was describing this situation, Aileen was very emotional and took time for her to share her story. Thus, demonstrating how much of an impact this situation had in her life. She stated that in a political science class, the topic of abortion was discussed and as she began to express her opinion on the topic another student, who she identified as a 6-foot White male, not only opposed her views but began to shout at her. Aileen stated:

In my political science course, we had a discussion about abortion and one of my course mates got aggressive. He began shouting at me and at one point he stood up and got in my face. I'm from South Central, you don't do that and I'm also a woman. But I think it was the professor's inability to de-escalate the situation that something about this situation just stayed with me. It's still bothering me.

Aileen mentioned even a year after the incident, she still thought about it because the professor did not intervene or address the situation and only one student stood up in her defense. Aileen stated the student was never asked to leave the classroom, and the professor did not discuss classroom agreements or reach out to Aileen personally. She felt the professor failed to uphold his authority and ensure the classroom was a safe space for all students. In addition, she decided not to inform other institutional staff because she believed they would take any action towards the student since her own professor did not do anything.

This lack of intervention left Aileen feeling insecure and anxious in the classroom, which made it challenging for her to participate in course discussions. As a result, she contemplated dropping the course because of the anxiety she felt every time she went to class. Aileen's sense of insecurity was further amplified by the fact she still had 4 weeks left in the term and had to face this student every week. The ongoing anxiety began to affect her exam grades, and she found it difficult to focus on her studies. However, with the support of her peers, Aileen made the decision to complete the course. Overall, this experience with her classmate left her feeling isolated and unsupported, and it contributed to her lack of sense of belonging at Central College.

During the interview, Aileen referred to Central College as a predominantly "White campus" that needs to provide more support to its students of color. Although she appreciated programs like the Latino/a/e program, Aileen mentioned many Latino/a/e students were not

aware of the program, which limits Latino/a/e student participation. Aileen suggested Central College should arrange more conversations about the marginalization of students of color to foster a supportive college environment. In her opinion, the college was not aware of the difficulties faced by students of color. For example, when asked about her experiences as a Latino/a/e student on campus, Aileen mentioned:

Most of my experiences on campus are okay. It just depends where you are. If you're in the social sciences and humanities then its okay because people are actively studying different forms of marginalization and oppression. But if you emerge yourself in another department, where you aren't really required to take those kind of courses, then they don't have that understanding. And to some extent it does cause me to hide a little bit of who I am. So I will just show the acceptable parts of me.

Aileen felt, to make others feel comfortable in this predominately White space, she had to conceal her identity and culture by only showing the parts deemed acceptable. This meant she did not speak about the issues and struggles she faced as a woman, a first-generation student, and a person of color in her art courses.

Although she had hidden parts of her identity in the past, Aileen knew it was not right but only did so to feel accepted in that class. In these spaces, she recalled not being herself as she was often quiet as she did not participate in the class nor identified any classmates, she was able to relate to. Aileen believed it is crucial for nonsocial science departments to engage in conversations about racism and marginalization, so students of color receive the support they need on campus and feel comfortable in the space to share their identity and their struggles. Additionally, Aileen recommended campuses should provide the necessary training for institutional staff in order for them to be aware of their own biases and how they may perpetuate

acts of racism. Ultimately, Aileen hoped the campus could take the necessary steps to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment where students of color feel valued and protected, regardless of their backgrounds and experiences.

Aileen's academic experiences at Central College have been filled with numerous obstacles that have tested her perseverance and resilience. As a first-generation, Latina college student, her story represents one of determination and courage as she encountered several racialized challenges that stem from the history of marginalization of students of color in higher education. Like many Black and Latino/a/e college students, she had her academic abilities questioned by counselors, who often failed to recognize and appreciate her potential. She's felt unsafe in the classroom, which can be an isolating and uncomfortable experience and has hidden her identities to make others in predominately White spaces feel comfortable. Her testament demonstrates Black and Latino/a/e students have a difficult time feeling like they belong on campus because of the racial hostilities they faced. Moreover, these experiences indicate one thing: Black and Latino/a/e students do not only encounter structural and procedural challenges but racialized challenges unique to their backgrounds. Although the previous section provided an overview of the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students, the following excerpts focus solely on the challenges faced by Black students on campus.

“They Called Me out of my Name”

Findings from this study also showed Black students experienced anti-Blackness on their college campus. As the number of Black students entering higher education has increased from 22% in 2000 to 36% in 2018 (NCES, 2020a), it is critical to address how community college spaces perpetuate anti-Blackness despite their diverse demographics. Anti-Blackness is defined as the “beliefs, attitudes, actions, practices, and behaviors of individuals and institutions that

devalue, minimize, and marginalize the full participation of Black people” (Comrie et al., 2022, p. 10). The history of anti-Blackness in the United States was documented in the early 1600s where African slaves were kidnapped from their native land and were exploited for labor (Comrie et al., 2022). During this time, political and intellectual leaders spread the belief among the masses that Africans were naturally inferior to Whites and were better suited for manual labor (Comrie et al., 2022; Wilder, 2013). For this reason, they established the notion Black individuals were unworthy of being in White spaces.

Influential leaders then used this idea to establish the higher education system where Africans were forced to physically use their bodies to build these institutions from the ground and at the same time be excluded from receiving any form of education (Wilder, 2013). Throughout our history, we have also been witnessed to this form of discrimination against Black students, through supreme court decisions like *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and most recently *Students for Fair Admission v Harvard* (2023; Dancy et al., 2018; Pirtle, 2024). Since the establishment of U.S. higher education, it is clear Black students have been at the forefront of exclusion, discrimination, and oppression from the educational system.

Anti-Blackness has not only been shown in predominately White spaces. It is important to note, despite their diverse environment, community colleges have also been documented to perpetuate acts of anti-Blackness on campus (Abrica et al., 2020; Pirtle et al., 2024). Findings demonstrated that as well as encountering structural and procedural challenges, Black students recalled experiences where they were mistreated solely based on their race. The interview analysis from this study found anti-Blackness manifested differently on each campus. Black former and current community college students recalled experiences of feeling marginalized due to direct (or implicit) racial attacks by peers and institutional agents on campus. Most important

to note, Black students who did report these incidents mentioned their respective community colleges did not take any action to address and condemn the matter. The following interviews describe their experience on community college campuses.

Maya, who identified as Black and was a former student from Western College, described her experiences at the college as “hurtful,” “weird,” and “just sad.” When describing her story as Black woman on campus, one repeated situation stood out that left her feeling as if her presence was not welcomed. Maya had previously attended a different community college about 45 minutes west of Western College. She recalled faculty and staff used to greet her every day on this campus. However, when she transferred to Western College the situation had changed. Maya expressed:

I didn’t feel like I belonged at Western College like I did at the other community college. At the other college, as soon as you park and you walk to course, staff and faculty were always welcoming. They would say “Hey, have a good day, do you need any help? Do you know where you are going?” and at Western College no one welcomed me and I think its because of how I look.

Maya stated that in her previous community college, Black staff and faculty would welcome her on campus everyday but at Western College, despite having a large Black student demographic, staff and faculty did the opposite. She mentioned most of her faculty were either White, Asian, or Latino/a/e and never once did they acknowledge her presence on campus.

Maya stated this lack of acknowledgement was due to the color of her skin since the same faculty who did not acknowledge her did acknowledge others who were not Black. Although she tried to ignore the situation, she mentioned it made her feel uncomfortable and decided not to tell anyone because there was no one campus who she trusted or felt comfortable with. Maya

discussed this experience along with her experiences in the classroom influenced her to leave the college altogether. Maya's experience illustrates how the lack of acknowledgement from non-Black faculty on campus perpetuates anti-Blackness by excluding and devaluing her identity as a Black woman while acknowledging students of other races and/or ethnicities. This sent Maya a clear message that her Blackness was not welcomed at Western College. Although Maya's experience describes an implicit attack on Black students, other participants recalled direct racial attacks where they were called derogatory names.

Kevin and Frankie, who identified as Black students, were best friends, and were current students at Banting College, each recalled an experience where they were racially attacked because of the color of their skin. Kevin, a 23-year-old Biology major, stated one day while he was waiting for his friend in the hallway, a Latino male student was walking toward him and said, "Move monkey." Kevin mentioned he moved and did not say anything because he was shocked by the situation. He described it was the first time on campus that someone used a derogatory term to address him. After the situation occurred, Kevin said he felt bad the entire week and was the only thing he thought about. Slowly, it began to affect his participation and assignments in course as his grades began to slip that semester.

However, Kevin stated he relied heavily on his group of friends for academic and personal support and was able to pass his courses. When I asked if he had mentioned the attack to anyone on campus, he stated, "Actually I was very scared. I didn't want to be bullied I also didn't think my voice would be heard if I reported the incident. So I just kept it to myself." Like Maya, Kevin did not feel it was safe to report the situation with anyone on campus because he believed his attacker would know it was him and because he was not comfortable with disclosing this information to staff or faculty. Therefore, he did his best to continue with his education

while not expressing his emotions. Kevin further explained why he did not mention this situation to anyone. Kevin stated:

I see myself as a minority in the school. I'm always conscious of the way I do things and the way I talk, and if I relate to people. I try to blend in with every other guy out there and with every person just to feel among them.

Kevin stated as a Black male on campus he often felt like he had to hide who he really was in order to blend in with others. His words describe the experience of someone who feels like their true identity is not valued and that is a product of anti-Blackness on campus. Anti-Blackness also refers to the devaluing of Black life and their identities, which Kevin experienced through the explicit attack and the need to hide his identity.

Thankfully, Kevin praised his group of friends on campus, who all identified as Black, as the reason he still remained a student at Banting College. His best friend also experienced a comparable situation. Frankie, a 24-year-old physics major, experienced a racial attack on campus, but unlike Kevin, he reported it to college personnel. Frankie mentioned during his second year at Banting College another student racially profiled him. Although Frankie was not comfortable in stating what the student said, he mentioned there was a brief conversation between himself and the White student and the White student began to say derogatory terms of all Black students. Frankie stated it made him feel unsafe and very uncomfortable in the course so he decided to express his concerns to his professor which he responded by saying, "I will take care of it."

However, weeks went by, and Frankie did not hear a word regarding the incident. After, Frankie decided to take matters into his own hands and set up an appointment with his academic counselor to discuss the incident. Although this staff member mentioned they would handle the

situation accordingly, Frankie never heard a response. Months had passed by and no one, not the professor, academic counselor or administrator, reached out to Frankie about the situation. At this point Frankie knew there were no repercussions for that student and Black students were not protected on campus. Having exhausted all options, Frankie decided to move forward despite the campus's inability to address the racial attacks on Black students. Frankie mentioned he was angered by the situation and at some point thought about leaving; however, he stated to have a great support system of friends and family he relied on throughout this time. Frankie urges colleges to take swift actions against attacks on Black students to make them feel safe and heard. Otherwise, Black students will continue to leave the institution if they do not have a support system on campus.

The experiences of Black students in community colleges were highlighted through the stories of Maya, Kevin, and Frankie. These examples demonstrated anti-Blackness cannot be limited to predominately White spaces because all three of the community colleges in the study had a diverse racial/ethnic demographic. It is also essential to understand anti-Blackness does not always have to be a direct attack. For instance, in Maya's case, faculty members failed to acknowledge her or offer her support as they did to other students. Her experience was a form of exclusion by institutional staff that hinders her access to academic resources. Likewise, Frankie and Kevin's experiences also revealed instances of exclusion by using derogatory names to address them. These direct attacks demonstrate how Black students are marginalized and discriminated against on campus yet there is no response from the campus to protect them. The lack of response from the campus displayed an environment that does not welcome nor support the academic success of its Black students. It is important to note, although not all Black students in the study discussed experiences of anti-Blackness, it does not mean they have not experienced

it. Black students may not have felt comfortable to speak about it during our interview. Overall, the analysis demonstrates cooling-out for Black students is not only in the form of structural and procedural challenges but through racialized challenges as well.

Online Analysis Findings

This study focused on analyzing documents to examine how students seek information, what sources they find most important, and how they make informed decisions. The findings from the qualitative interviews revealed the majority of students depended on the internet and other online platforms to seek and stay informed about events on campus. Black and Latino/a/e students relied heavily on their school website's, group chats with support programs, emails, articulation systems like assist.org, and social media such as X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram. Interestingly, only three students relied on printed materials to receive information. Nonetheless, it is important to note the absence of using printed materials does not necessarily imply students do not need them.

There were two major findings from the online analysis of different modalities. First, while students relied on online platforms to gather important information, Black and Latino/a/e community college students recalled the difficulty and frustration on having to find and understand the information. Secondly, on several occasions, confirming accurate online academic information is most effective when there is a college staff to serve as an additional source. Therefore, as findings from this study show, online platforms may exacerbate the cooling-out process as students often cannot find academic information online (e.g., support programs, course catalogues, enrollment dates, campus information) or are misguided by the information they find. In the following, I share the student experience and discuss the differences in information between the community colleges in the study.

Campus Websites

When comparing the usage of websites among all three community colleges, it became evident all students relied on their respective campus website to make important academic decisions. Black and Latino/a/e students most often relied on the website to schedule appointments with their counselors, look through the course catalog, enroll in courses, and stay informed about campus events. As students navigated each website, however, a handful of Black and Latino/a/e students mentioned how confusing it was to navigate to site. For instance, a student at Western College stated: “The website is a little confusing. It is kind of hard to find anything. It took me a minute to find the Register for Courses tab and I had to reach out to a counselor to walk me through the process.” The student mentioned it was also confusing to other students and students decided to either get clarity from the college or make decisions on their own. Additionally, a Central College student commented:

The website used to be a complete nightmare. They just changed it now but it was very confusing because there was no information of what courses to take for your specific major. I think that’s why students stay here for years because its just too hard to understand by yourself and the website didn’t help.

The student at Central College described the experience as much better now but highly encouraged students to meet with counselors to assure they are getting the correct information. The findings from campus websites suggest that sites may be contributing to the cooling out of Black and Latino/a/e as they experience additional challenges. The experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students demonstrate the need for a comprehensive online platform that provides students with accurate information to make informed decisions. Additionally, their experiences

show the need for college staff to serve as additional resources that confirm the information students find online.

When examining all three websites, one can understand why a first-year student or students in general find the information overwhelming or difficult to understand. In the homepage alone, Western College shared student success stories, Promise Program statistics, enrollment application, academic programs, student life, events, more success stories, and an English as second language section for prospective students. At Banting College, their homepage included success rates, campus news and a student services tab. Central College had a less overwhelming homepage compacted into three sections, apply, events, and discover. For students applying to the college, there was a noticeable difference in one college.

Although Banting College and Central College displayed a step-by-step guide to enroll at their colleges, Western College was missing a few important components that assisted students in the enrollment process. As shown in Table 10, Western College did not display information regarding how to review their placement exam and education plan, how to enroll in courses, and how to purchase textbooks. Additionally, it is important to note while all three community colleges provided a step-by-step guide on how to enroll at the college, Central College was the only college that provided a guide on how to enroll for first-time students, returning students, international students, undocumented students, and noncredit programs. Therefore, providing students from different backgrounds a helpful guide to applying at the college.

Table 10*Steps to Enroll in Community College for First-Time Students*

	Banting College	Central College	Western College
Apply	x	x	x
Financial Aid	x	x	x
Orientation	x	x	x
Review Placement		x	
Meet with Counselor	x	x	x
Review Educational Plan	x	x	
Enroll in Classes	x	x	
Book Resources	x		

Note. Data pulled from Banting College, Central College, and Western College websites, April 2024.

As Black and Latino/a/e students mentioned, it was difficult to navigate the website when trying to locate specific information. For instance, while trying to enroll in courses, it was difficult to find the “register in courses” tab unless one selected two to three other options beforehand. In the Western College website, the “register in a course” page was only accessible through the search box. There was no way to locate the page any other way. Additionally, once at the page, I was unable to view the course schedule or the course catalog, as an error message appeared. On the other hand, in the Banting College and Central College websites, one has to click on the academic’s tab and then the course schedule tab to view the “register for course” link on the page. However, one can only manage to get to the page unless they are aware of how to navigate the site.

Regarding counseling appointments, no students reported having a difficult time accessing the page, the issue was their availability. When examining the sites, this was accurate as all three community colleges displayed their counseling services under their respective student support and services page. Another resource difficult to find were support programs. When asked

about these programs on campus, most students said they were not aware of any. This was a result of all three community colleges not displaying any information about the programs on their website. Therefore, limiting crucial educational support information to Black and Latino/a/e students who would benefit from the programs. Overall, websites did provide information for student enrollment, counseling services, and courses, however navigating the site and the amount of information provided can be overwhelming and frustrating. Therefore, Black and Latino/a/e students looking to transfer relied on other online sites to seek accurate information.

Articulation Webpage

All Black and Latino/a/e current community college students relied on an articulation website called assist.org to stay informed about major articulation agreements with universities. The webpage is a student transfer information site that provides students with up-to-date reports that show a list of transferable courses to a California State University (CSU) or a University of California (UC) campus from a community college. Additionally, the site provides a list of required courses to specific universities based on the student's major. For instance, if a community college psychology major wants to transfer to UCLA, the website provides a list of required transferable courses the student must take in order to be considered for admissions.

Although the website displays important information to move forward in the transfer process, in order to use the website accurately, the student must be careful when selecting requirements for a CSU or UC because it may display different transferable courses by 4-year university. Additionally, the student must check the site at least once a semester to make sure a future course is still transferable. For example, despite being told statistics was a required course a semester prior, Sean at Central College realized he no longer had to take the statistics course after checking the articulation site. He stated:

Yes, I was told that I had to take a statistics course for economics but then I looked at the documents on assist.org and the course had disappeared. It was weird because it was there last semester but now it wasn't. I found this information myself too so it wasn't like anyone told me about it.

Sean mentioned a faculty member told him the statistics course was a requirement for transfer, so he had plans to take it. However, Sean always tended to check the articulation website to make sure the course is still transferable. Although the statistics course was required a few semesters ago, it seemed like the articulation agreement between the community college and university he wanted to attend had changed and resulted in the course being removed. Sean discussed that after researching this information, he reached out to a counselor who had confirmed he no longer needed to take the statistic course in order to transfer. It is important to note if it were not for Sean who checked the site, he would have taken a course he no longer needed which would have extended his stay at the community college. Additionally, his experience demonstrates academic counselors and students must be vigilant in course selection in order to move forward in their educational plans.

The articulation site provides students the ability to receive up to date accurate transfer information. When examining the page, there are three different options a student or community college staff can select in the homepage: (a) resources, (b) articulation agreements to specific schools, and (c) general transferable courses split by UCs and CSUs. The resources option provides students and college staff information about the articulation site, major exploration, and a step-by-step guide with videos on how to use the site properly. The general articulation section, which is located in the center of the homepage, provides the opportunity to learn more about the general articulation agreements for a particular college and according to major, the community

college you attend, and the university a student wants to transfer to. This particular section was the part Sean revisits to ensure his planned future courses are still transferrable.

Additionally, the articulation site provides a third section that allows a student or college staff to check general transferable courses to the UC and/or CSU system. It is important to note in every selected page the articulation states “[the site] is best used in combination with seeing a counselor on your campus. It is intended to help students and counselors work together to establish an appropriate path toward transferring from a public California community college to a public California university” (ASSIST, n.d.). Therefore, indicating the importance of speaking to knowledgeable college staff to make informed and timely academic decisions. Overall, Black and Latino/a/e community college students recalled using assist.org but stressed the importance of seeking out to college staff to make the correct decision. Like college websites and assist.org, students also received information about their college through social media accounts.

The Impact of Social Media

In addition to college websites and articulation sites, Black and Latino/a/e community college students relied on social media to stay informed about school resources and events. Although less than three students mentioned Facebook, most students mentioned to receive campus information through social media accounts such as X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram. Former Banting College student Jessica said:

When I was a student there, I got most of my information from social media like Twitter and Instagram. They [Banting College] posted about programs and school events, so I followed their accounts to get information about tutoring and counselors.

Jessica mentioned her classmates also relied on these forms of social media because they could easily send information to one another through direct messages or group chats. Additionally,

Jessica enjoyed the leisure of not having to go to the website or log into her email to view important events as she received direct notifications to her phone whenever Banting College would make a new post on their account.

Like Jessica, students from all community colleges mentioned social media as an important resource to stay up to date about important reminders or events throughout the semester. However, as I examined the accounts, I found differences between the three social media accounts and a lack of information on posts which may contribute to the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

When examining the social media platforms of each school, there were considerable differences in the information they posted along with the frequency of their posts. In X, all three community colleges had accounts with Central College having the most followers at 12,100 followed by Western College at 4,200 and Banting College at 3,900. Additionally, there was difference in the number of posts from each account with Western College having the most at 10,400 posts. Posts from each college ranged from school events, community outreach, course reminders, workshops and more. Central College posted more academic content that assisted students throughout their academic journey. For instance, posting about workshops and events such as navigating the admissions process, applying for graduation, and academic guest speakers.

Although Western College had more posts regarding financial and food security resources for students. This can be a result of Western College being in a predominately low-income community of color with many community members experiencing financial and housing insecurities compared to Central and Banting College. On the other hand, Banting College rarely posted any academic events and had not posted any content regarding the college in more than a

year. Although the three community college X accounts differed greatly in the number of posts and in the content, the lack of academic information provided in this social media platform is a detriment to the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e community college students as they all heavily relied on social media and online media to seek information. The lack of information and lack of content in the X platform is a missed opportunity for community colleges to reach out to Black and Latino/a/e students with important academic information. Furthermore, it contributes to the framework of cooling-out as it gatekeeps information from getting out to students and harms the educational journey of its students.

On Instagram, all three community colleges were consistent in posting academic or interpersonal content. Central College was the most active with 1,746 posts and 16,400 followers followed by Banting College with 1,486 posts and 3,900 followers and Western College with 1,537 posts and 2,934 followers. In their biographies, Western and Central College provided a direct link to their website and enrollment information while Banting College's link was unfortunately not correctly linked. Additionally, Central College added "California's #1 transfer college" and "Top transfers to UCLA, USC and LMU" messages to gather more interest from potential students. Regarding content, Western and Central College placed the same information from their X account to Instagram and Banting College was more active in posting events and workshops that took place around campus.

One difference between accounts is the content. Central College highlights student success with short videos of the students describing their journey at the college. Therefore, allowing prospective students to visualize themselves as students on their campus. Banting and Western College did not provide this perspective. Banting College leaned more towards posting academic workshops, game days, town halls, and academic center information. Western College

posted identical information to their X account. One important information missing from the three accounts, was the lack of information regarding course schedules, enrollments, and course drop dates. Like their X accounts, this is a missed opportunity on a large social media platform that reaches many of their Black and Latino/a/e students. As previously discussed, this lack of information is a component within the cooling-out framework by increasing the likelihood of students receiving a lack of or misinformation regarding their studies. Thus, encountering more challenges along their academic paths.

Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students relied on different online modalities to navigate their respective community colleges. Along with community college faculty or staff, these students found their campus website, articulation sites, and social media to be important sources of information. The advances in technology, particularly after the COVID-19 global pandemic, have made printed information less relevant for these students. It is important to note students did not make decisions to leave their institution solely based on information found online. Instead, Black and Latino/a/e students found online information to stay informed about their college and academic progress. However, it is worth noting misguided information or a lack of information, in this case online information, also contributes to the cooling-out framework.

Although most Black and Latino/a/e current and former community students relied on online modalities, campus websites were difficult to navigate, articulation sites were difficult to understand, and social media accounts lacked information. Most information online was only effective if students confirmed the information with college staff. For example, when a student could not find the register for courses tab on their website, they reached out to counselor for help. Similarly, when another student discovered a previously required course was no longer a

requirement for their major, they contacted their counselor to verify. Therefore, demonstrating online modalities play a critical role in how it informs and influences student decisions.

Conclusion and Summary of the Findings

In this chapter, I provided an analysis of the data collected through one-on-one interviews, websites, an articulation site, and social media accounts. Overall, through a deductive and inductive coding methods, the findings indicate Black and Latino/a/e students face multiple challenges due to the existing structures and procedures in place at their respective institutions, which eventually lead them to cool-out of their college. According to the study, students encountered issues such as the lack of attention from counselors, high professor turnover, and inadequate information to name a few. As a result of this constant precarity on campus, students were often left making critical academic decisions (e.g., course selection, meeting with counselors, or leaving their college). The research also suggests that along structural and procedural challenges, Black and Latino/a/e community college students encounter racialized challenges. Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students reported feeling unsafe on campus, lacked a sense of belonging, and Black students experienced acts of anti-Blackness on campus.

Additionally, it is important to discuss the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e students is not due to one occurrence or one challenge but several structural, procedural, and racialized challenges they encountered throughout their academic journey. This means students faced repeated potholes and challenges along their academic journey which caused them to make constant academic decisions. Additionally, the online analysis revealed Black and Latino/a/e students relied on campus website, articulation sites, and social media accounts to gather information. However, each online modality also contributed to the cooling-out of these students

as they provided complex information, information difficult to find, and at other times lacked accurate information. For this reason, it is important for Black and Latino/a/e students and college staff to work together to make informed decisions. In conclusion, this study shows institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out are present in community colleges, however, they are not the only forms of cooling-out as Black and Latino/a/e current and former students also encountered racialized challenges and challenges gathering accurate and complete information online.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research study aimed to explore the structural and procedural challenges that contribute to the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e students in community colleges. The objective was to gain an understanding of how these students navigate through institutional challenges, gain a deeper understanding of their decision-making process, and how these challenges influence their departure from community college. For this study, I used two frameworks: institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out. Additionally, the study is situated on the concept of micro-decisions to examine the daily academic decisions students made when encountering institutional issues throughout their educational journey. By using these frameworks, I explored the structural and procedural challenges Black and Latino/a/e students face in their academic journey and how these challenges contribute to their cooling-out. Moreover, the study aimed to highlight the decision-making process of Black and Latino/a/e students and share their compelling stories as they confront an unstable and complex community college system.

In this chapter, I summarize the research findings and discuss their implications and significance by connecting them to theoretical frameworks and literature. Additionally, I explore the implications of this study to contribute to the ongoing efforts to reduce the attrition rates of Black and Latino/a/e students in community college and to enhance community college research, practices, and policies. Overall, the implications of this study will provide insights on how to better support the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e students in community college by addressing the structural and procedural challenges in place.

Discussion

In this section, I discuss the study's findings and how they relate to the theoretical frameworks and previous literature. First, I focus on the descriptive analysis of each institution to demonstrate the differences in funding among community colleges. Then, I specifically address the institutional and procedural challenges that perpetuate inequities for Black and Latino/a/e students, which contribute to their educational delays, negative interactions with professors and counselors, and their attrition from community college. I also describe how these challenges influence Black and Latino/a/e current and former students to make importance academic decisions. Lastly, I shed light on additional challenges these students experience (e.g., racialized and technological) and their contribution to the cooling-out process.

The Structure of Community Colleges

As the study focused on the precarity of community colleges, it is important to emphasize the structure of each community college site to understand their complexity. The findings relate to the literature as they demonstrate each community college varied in funding, revenue, and the number of faculty and staff (Linden, 2022; Mills, 2023). Findings in the study showed Western College had the lowest number of enrolled students compared to Banting and Central College; however, they had the largest enrollment of Black and Latino/a/e students (SSM, 2022). As the literature mentioned, differences in enrollment particularly for Black and Latino/a/e students has been attributed to the COVID-19 global pandemic (Bulman & Fairlie, 2021; Khan & Unruh, 2022). Furthermore, Western College held the lowest course success rates for Black and Latino/a/e/ students (61% and 64% respectively) and Banting College had the lowest persistence rates for Black and Latino/a/e students (43% and 55% respectively) compared to other racial/ethnic groups (SSM, 2022).

These components are important to understand as they are incorporated into the state funding calculation known as the student-centered funding formula, which calculates the funding per college based on full-time enrollment status (Linden, 2022; Mills, 2023). The findings relate to the literature as each community college differed in local, state, and government funding and maintained differences in enrollment (Beach & Bruno, 2018; Linden, 2022; Mills, 2023; Mullin & Honeyman, 2007).

The findings from IPEDS (2022) revealed the three community colleges in the study generated the largest revenues from government grants, followed by state and local appropriations, and tuition. For example, Banting College received 51% of its funding from government grants, a higher percentage compared to Western and Central College. These results contrast with the previously reported state data, which indicated California community colleges receive the largest revenue from the state (CCCCO, 2021). It is important to note this study focused only on three California community colleges, while the California Community College Chancellor's Office (2021) examined all 115 community colleges in the state which receive a variation of funding at each government level. This dissertation study contributes to the literature on the complexities of community college funding as each community college received different amounts of funding based on enrollment, completion, and needs. Additionally, it provides insight into the financial differences among the colleges and their impact on the educational outcomes of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. For example, Banting College allocated 39% of its funds to instruction, compared to 22% at Western College (IPEDS, 2022), which directly affected students' learning and faculty experiences by providing more resources in the classroom.

In the interviews, Black and Latino/a/e current and former students recalled numerous occasions where professors seemed overwhelmed. The literature on faculty in community colleges emphasizes they are often undervalued and overworked, particularly adjunct faculty (Barkley & Broderson, 2018; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Furthermore, faculty are not only expected to teach but are also required to dedicate additional time to professional development, committees, institutional governance, administration, and provide campus support (FACCC, n.d.). Data from IPEDS (2022) revealed most faculty at all three community colleges were primarily adjuncts, with a significant 70% at Banting and Central College, and 59% at Western College. As seen in the responses of students from this study, the differences affected the learning experiences of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. For example, at Central College, Sean recalled experiences where his calculus professor arrived to class with very little sleep due to personal and institutional obligations and would often have a substitute fill in to teach the material. At Banting College, Silvia also experienced an inconsistent learning environment as her science professor would often miss class because they were also the coordinator of a student support program and were required to train new faculty. As the findings align with existing literature on faculty in community colleges, this study expands the research on community college faculty as it discusses the effects of overwhelmed faculty on the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students and calls for institutional change pertaining to the personal and academic support of adjunct faculty in community colleges.

In the study, it was also found Black and Latino/a/e students mentioned counseling appointments were not helpful and felt rushed. Similar to instructional faculty, community college counselors are asked to serve additional roles along with providing counseling services to many students (Dang, 2020; Dean & Meadows, 1995; Peterson, 2002). Counselors assist with

academic advising, teaching, orientation, scheduling, and recruitment all in a single day (Coll & Rice, 1993; Peterson, 2002). According to IPEDS (2022) data, over 90% of staff at Banting, Central, and Western College are full-time, but the data does not differentiate how many were academic counselors. Considering the number of total enrollments per college and the number of total staff, it is no surprise staff often have multiple responsibilities to provide student academic and personal support. Findings from the study were consistent with the literature, indicating counseling appointments were difficult to schedule, were fast-paced, and counselors often looked overwhelmed (Dang, 2020; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009). The finding was mentioned by Maria at Central College when the counselor was “not really there” and was trying “to cut the session short” because of the number of students the counselor had to advise. The dissertation study adds to the existing literature of academic counselors in community college by demonstrating the instability within community college counseling departments and highlighting the essential role of counselors in the success of Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

Institutional Precarity and Procedural Cooling-Out in Community Colleges

The focus of this study centered the concepts of institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out and its influence on the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. Institutional precarity refers to the shortage of resources on college campus such as, the counselor to student ratio, the amount of financial aid received, the unpredictability of class enrollment, and much more (Hart, 2019). The shortage of resources then radiates throughout the college structure and affects the educational outcomes of Black and Latino/a/e community college students. On the other hand, procedural cooling-out refers to the requirements put in place such as the institutional procedures that hinders students’ academic success (Anderson, 2015). Reflecting on the literature of these two frameworks, findings from the interviews and

online analysis suggest that institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out contribute to the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e community college students by creating constant potholes of structural and procedural challenges as they navigate community college. Furthermore, their experiences show that Black and Latino/a/e students did not only encounter a single occurrence but encountered a series of challenges along the way.

Previous research studies have focused on institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out separately (Anderson, 2015; Hart, 2019). This dissertation study found the conceptual frameworks working independently and together. First, the findings revealed students faced were frustrated with course enrollment and availability, classroom learning, counseling appointments, as well as the lack of support and guidance from the campus. For instance, Black and Latino/a/e community college students encountered difficulties in enrolling in courses, which hindered their ability to transfer. Limited course offerings and full classes often left Black and Latino/a/e students to question their educational goals. Because course enrollment is linked to academic success (Calcagno et al., 2007), the inability for Black and Latino/a/e students to enroll in courses impacted their dreams of obtaining a 4-year degree. Hart (2019) identified this situation as a form of instability within the community college system as it causes emotional distress, self-doubt, and educational delays which promote the cooling-out of these students (Anderson, 2015).

The study also found institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out working together. This meant Black and Latino/a/e community college students faced difficulties where the procedures in the college and lack of resources were interconnected. Although academic counselors are crucial to the success of community college students (Dang, 2020; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009), many Black and Latino/a/e current and former students reported challenges with counseling services. For example, Kesha, a former student at

Western College, described her experiences with her counselor as “dreadful” because she had to wait weeks for an appointment, and the counselor often confused her with another student. Kesha’s story reflects components of institutional precarity because of the low counselor to student ratio and the lack of accurate information (Hart, 2019). Additionally, the requirements to meet with a counselor reflect the elements of procedural cooling-out (Anderson, 2015). Joined together, the unpredictability within the structure and the requirements created institutional challenges that impeded Kesha’s academic success as she ultimately left the college (Anderson, 2015; Hart, 2019). Therefore, as suggested by Anderson (2015) and Hart (2019), the structural and procedural challenges Black and Latino/a/e current and former students mentioned contribute to their attrition from community college.

Receiving proper and accurate information is critical to support the academic and personal well-being of students as they navigate community college (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Perna, 2006). Therefore, receiving inaccurate information is considered a structural and procedural challenge as it causes students to make wrong academic decisions (Anderson, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Hart, 2019). The findings from the interviews and online analysis demonstrate the effects of improper guidance. Similar to the research on information-based decisions (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Perna, 2006; Person et al., 2006), Black and Latino/a/e current and former students had the most difficult time seeking and gathering accurate information regarding their courses, majors, financial aid, and educational goals. For instance, students like Sean and Jessica, often relied on their school’s website, articulation sites, and social media to gather information and make decisions. However, this did not mean they gathered the right information as they had once enrolled in the wrong courses. Additionally, students who sought information on campus, were often given the wrong information (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Person et

al., 2006). Carter, a current student at Western College, missed the deadline to submit an appeal on financial aid because he received different deadlines by different staff. Therefore, not receiving financial aid for the academic year. How the information flows in community college is an aspect of institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out because students make informed decisions based on the information that is known or provided (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). However, as seen in the study, inaccurate information created additional hurdles for Black and Latino/a/e current and former community college students.

Finally, Black and Latino/a/e current and former students faced various structural and procedural challenges throughout the academic year. As shown in Table 11, the cooling-out process of former students was alarming. All Black and Latino/a/e former community college students encountered a structural or procedural challenge, with all but one experiencing an educational delay. This dissertation study contributes to the existing literature by shedding light on the challenges that lead to the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e community college students (Anderson, 2015; Goldrick-Rab 2010; Hart, 2019). The study highlights the need for more attention on enrollment, classroom experiences, and the impact of inaccurate information on educational delays. Despite legislative efforts on prerequisite courses (Cruz-Atrian, 2022, Shaw et al., 2018), the study revealed Black and Latino/a/e students have continued to face challenges with remedial coursework. Furthermore, the study suggests community colleges should focus on creating accurate and comprehensive online resources where students can seek and interpret accurate information about their studies. Ultimately, the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e community college students demonstrated that they faced numerous academic potholes which contributed to their thoughts about leaving the college.

Table 11*The Cooling-Out Process of Black and Latino/a/e Former Community College Students*

Pseudonym	Enrollment	Counseling Appointment	Faculty Experience	Class Experience	Prerequisites	Inaccurate Information	Educational Delay
Zuri	x		x	x	x		x
Stephanie	x	x			x	x	x
Juan	x	x		x	x	x	x
Mayra		x	x	x			x
Silvia			x	x	x		x
Maya	x		x	x		x	x
Jessica	x	x			x	x	x
Brooke			x	x		x	
Kesha	x	x		x	x	x	x
Laura				x	x		x

Black and Latino/a/e Student Decision Making

The interview data from the study revealed Black and Latino/a/e current and former students engaged in many micro-decisions as they navigated their studies. The literature mentioned community college students often made uninformed, uncertain, or dissatisfied decisions (Clayton, 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). This was reflected in many student responses. For example, Maria, a current student at Central College, shared her experiences of enrolling in the wrong Physics course twice because she was not properly informed on the correct course to take. Similarly, Jessica, a former student at Banting College, opted for an English course simply because her peers were doing so. It is crucial to recognize that the micro decisions of Black and Latino/a/e students were based on the information available to them and the information that they knew (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). It is important to note, as Black and Latino/a/e students encountered structural and procedural challenges, which was often, they were also influenced to make critical academic decisions on course selection, majors, and educational goals with little amount of time.

Institutional agents, peers, and family also influence the learning and decision-making of Black and Latino/a/e students (Barbatis, 2010; Cooper, 2002; Lunberg, 2014). The findings revealed Black and Latino/a/e community college students sought guidance from college staff, peers, and family members when faced with structural and procedural challenges. For example, Sean relied heavily on counselors to make decisions, while Carter turned to his friends, and Maria looked to support from her older sister, who had previously attended the same college. As students encountered challenges, they turned to individuals who they trusted, felt safe with, and knew they were there to help them succeed. In contrast, Black and Latino/a/e current and former students who did not feel supported or have a support system on campus were often left making decisions based on what they knew or the information they found online. This often left Black and Latino/a/e students lack the resources to navigate their educational journeys and were more likely to leave the community college.

The student-decision findings from this study expand on community college literature in many ways. One, it addresses the importance to expand on the work of student decision-making in the community college level. Black and Latino/a/e community college students were constantly making decisions on all aspects of their educational journeys. For this reason, it is critical to further this research. Additionally, it contributes to the work regarding the importance of a support system on the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e community college students as they encounter structural and procedural challenges. Lastly, it calls on community colleges to establish better means of communication with Black and Latino/a/e community college students to reach those who feel like they do not have a support system. This topic will be discussed further in the implication section.

It is important to note Black and Latino/a/e current and former students exhibited persistence as they decided to continue their education despite facing structural and procedural challenges. Research has shown students remain persistent in achieving their goals based on barriers, motivation, and expectations (Nakajima et al., 2012). The study also found Black and Latino/a/e students decided to stay at the community college after facing several challenges. For example, Aileen remained a student at Central College despite feeling unsafe on campus, having her academic abilities questioned, and lacking support for students of color. She was ultimately determined to be the first college graduate in her family. Additionally, the study found Black and Latino/a/e students who left their college stayed for as long as they could. Kesha experienced issues in her advising appointments and with prerequisite courses, but it was the time change and the lack of accommodation from the college (as she lived on the East Coast) that made it difficult for her to continue. These findings contribute to the literature on persistence in community colleges by highlighting that despite the various challenges, Black and Latino/a/e current and former students persisted in a complex higher education system.

Cooling-Out Through a Racialized Lens

The study aimed to demonstrate how the cooling-out process manifest in the structural and procedural challenges that Black and Latino/a/e community college students encounter throughout their academic journey. Although this research study found Black and Latino/a/e students encounter several of these challenges, it also found Black and Latino/a/e current and former students experienced racialized challenges on campus based on their identities. Racialized challenges is not included in the structural and procedural cooling-out framework; however, it is an important concept that needs further examination to fully comprehend the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students in community college.

From a broader perspective, community colleges have historically been overlooked and underfunded, leading to unintended consequences for Black and Latino/a/e students (McCambly et al., 2023; Mills, 2023). The research regarding community college funding indicates the variation of core revenues and expenses vary from college to college and 4-year universities. The literature highlights that community colleges allocate only 26% of funding expenses to instruction, while 4-year universities allocate 46% (NCES, 2020a). So why is it that community colleges with predominately students of color receive the least funding? Researchers have mentioned that it is because community colleges are not viewed of the same level of quality as universities and are often not prioritized compared to UCs and CSUs (Garcia, 2019; McCambly et al., 2023). Despite a large enrollment of students from various backgrounds, particularly Black and Latino/a/e students, community colleges have not been deemed as worthy as 4-year institutions (McCambly et al., 2023). For this reason, these differences in perceptions of CCs and UCs instill inequities within colleges that lead to far fewer resources to support the academic success of community college students. The lack of resources results in fewer full-time faculty, fewer academic counselors, and fewer academic support programs.

The dissertation findings suggest community colleges contribute to inequities for Black and Latino/a/e students through inequity-producing mechanisms such as financial aid and prerequisite courses. Research indicates many students of color in community colleges rely on financial aid, but often encounter challenges during the financial aid process (Graves, 2019; White & Dache, 2020). These challenges occur because the financial aid process institutionalizes race (Graves, 2019). Students of color often face microaggressions from staff, lack resources such as educational support programs, and receive inaccurate information from college staff that hinders their educational goals (Graves, 2019; White & Dache, 2020). For example, Carter who

identified as Black and a current student at Western College, had not received financial aid for over a year due to receiving inaccurate information from staff regarding the appeal process. Carter mentioned to have received two different due dates from two different financial aid counselors and ultimately missed the deadline to submit the appropriate paperwork to receive aid. Since then, Carter has been without aid for two years and has been working full-time to make ends meet. Similarly, prerequisite courses also contribute to inequities (Cruz-Atrian, 2022; Public Advocates, 2020).

Many Black and Latino/a/e current and former students have found remedial courses to be the most challenging aspect in community college as they often experience educational delays. Even though California passed legislation AB705 to eliminate remedial courses, students like Laura, a Latina student previously enrolled at Banting College, was still influenced to leave the college because she could not pass her remedial English course to reach transferrable English classes. Furthermore, the study's findings revealed Black and Latino/a/e students were often placed in remedial courses. All 10 former community college students who participated in the study were placed in remedial coursework. These numbers are consistent with existing literature, as Black and Latino/a/e community college students continue to be disproportionately placed in English and math remedial courses despite legislation efforts (Public Advocates, 2020). This dissertation study expands the work of financial aid and remedial courses in community colleges as it sheds light on how these components reproduce inequities. Furthermore, it demonstrates Black and Latino/a/e community college students experience racialized challenges that influence their cooling-out.

Additionally, findings from this study show community colleges amplify the cooling-out process of Black and Latino/a/e students as they experience mixed feelings of safety, feel

misunderstood, and are racially targeted on campus. As illustrated in Aileen's experience at Central College, Aileen felt her academic abilities were questioned, she did not feel like she belonged on campus, and she expressed the need for equitable training, as students of color often felt the need to hide their true self. These components are all factors mentioned in the literature on men of color in community colleges (Abrica et al., 2020; Garcia-Louis et al., 2020). However, this study found women of color also share similar experiences. Thus, indicating that men and women of color may experience similar situations. Additionally, it demonstrates Black and Latino/a/e community college students often felt as if they did not belong in the college space which has a direct impact on their academic progression and college completion (Rendon, 1994).

Secondly, the dissertation study found Black students continue to face acts of anti-Blackness even in diverse community college environments (Abrica et al., 2020). Most concerning is the fact students like Kevin, a current student at Banting College, report incidents of racism on campus; yet, the college decides to not act upon these racial attacks. This lack of response shows Black students that they are not valued nor protected in the college space. Additionally, these experiences clearly demonstrate community colleges functioned as a system that perpetuates anti-Blackness (Ray, 2019). The experiences of Aileen and Kevin demonstrate Black and Latino/a/e community college students do not only encounter structural and procedural challenges but experience racialized challenges because of their identities. This important finding suggests that the cooling-out framework needs to incorporate a racialized lens as it is an additional component of the cooling-out process for Black and Latino/a/e students.

Online Sources as a Form of Cooling-Out

As accurate and timely information serves as a critical component in the academic success of community college students (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Rosenbaum et al., 2007), it is

equally important to further examine how online sources can create challenges and act as a component of cooling-out. The study found Black and Latino/a/e community college students often turned to online source of information regarding educational support programs, the course catalogue, events, enrollment, and more to make decisions. However, Black and Latino/a/e current and former students reported difficulty navigating college websites, understanding articulation agreements, and finding student programs. One reason for this difficulty was the overwhelming amount of information on the homepage of each college site. As discussed in the online analysis of different modalities, Western and Banting College had events, student success stories, college statistics, academic programs, student life, and important college dates. The large amount of information on the homepage itself can create a lack of structure where information is not properly categorized, can provide too much information that can lead to too many choices, and can make it difficult for students to process and understand the information.

Rosenbaum et al. (2007) mentioned when students struggle with finding information, colleges tend to respond by adding even more information for students to make sense of it. As a result, students are left to handle and interpret large amounts of information by themselves which often creates even more confusion on what is correct and what is not. Black and Latino/a/e current and former students often encountered this situation as they navigated their college site. The overwhelming amount of information they found hindered their academic success (Rosenbaum et al., 2007) by inhibiting them from making accurate decisions and increase levels of stress as they were left to interpret the information alone. For this reason, providing students with too much information can contribute to the cooling-out of community college students.

Secondly, findings from this study, showed Black and Latino/a/e former students make the decision to leave the college because of complex course procedures that caused educational

delays. These set of challenges arise because courses are often changing, and the articulation information found online is not always clear or is outdated. For example, Sean, a current student at Central College, found the course information he needed on the articulation site, but he did not feel fully confident about deciding what course to take. For this reason, he sought guidance from his academic counselor to understand why transfer courses and agreements between community colleges and universities often change. Research has shown that understanding complex information requires additional support from college staff to confirm information and make accurate decisions (Person et al., 2006). However, if the student does not feel comfortable to reach out to anyone on campus, they often make these critical decisions themselves. In addition, course selection can be confusing for Black and Latino/a/e community college students as they are required to take specific courses for completion or transfer, are encouraged to take courses they find interesting, and, at times, are recommended to take courses that count towards overall community college credits but not transferrable credits. As a result of these challenges, navigating complex course information online leads to the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e community college students as they can often be misled to make inaccurate decisions. Consequently, Black and Latino/a/ community college students may decide to switch majors, careers, or leave the college altogether.

Furthermore, college online sources can contribute to the cooling-out of Black and Latino/a/e students by creating barriers to access important academic information (Rosenbaum et al., 2007). College websites, while providing an overwhelming amount of information on the homepage, were difficult to navigate. For example, the online analysis showed that in order to enroll in classes a student must select two to three options beforehand to find the enrollment page. Additionally, while on the page, the course catalogue links were difficult to find as it was

in the case of Western College, whose link did not work. The challenges in course enrollment were one of the most mentioned challenges which can be attributed to the difficulty navigating the site. These enrollment barriers hinder the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e community college students as they prevent students from enrolling in required courses in a timely manner and exacerbate feelings of stress, alienation, and frustration. All components which can lead Black and Latino/a/e students to leave community college.

Additionally, because students mentioned to rely on Instagram and X to stay up to date with their college information, this dissertation study found each social media account missed the opportunity to provide important academic information regarding enrollment dates, drop deadlines, and educational support programs. Social media accounts have a wide-reaching audience, including Black and Latino/a/e community college students who may have other obligations, such as working full-time or being caretakers, that reach students who cannot come to campus. By failing to provide critical information through social media, colleges are hindering the success of many students, particularly Black and Latino/a/e community college by not providing clear communication and missing opportunities on important deadlines, academic support programs, and other opportunities (Person et al., 2006; Rosenbaum et al., 2007). The lack of information on social media accounts acts as a barrier to resources, gradually cooling-out these students and hindering their access to valuable and important academic information. The findings of the online analysis suggest that online information can also act as a component of cooling-out, which is not directly mentioned with the conceptual frameworks, if students are not receiving accurate and timely information. For this reason, the implications of the study will provide recommendations in the following section.

Implications

In this section, I discuss how the findings of this study can be used to increase dialogue and deepen our understanding of the instability surrounding the structure and procedures within community colleges and its impact on the attrition and academic success of Black and Latino/a/e students. Specifically, I discuss the implications for researchers interested in expanding research on precarity and systemic issues within community colleges, as well as the decision-making processes of Black and Latino/a/e students. Also, I provide a discussion on the implications for policymakers who can draw from the voices of Black and Latino/a/e students to inform equitable legislation. Lastly, I discuss the implications for practitioners who are interested in learning and applying practices that support the academic and overall well-being of Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

Implications for Research

The findings from this research study have the potential to impact future research studies in numerous ways. To begin, there has been limited research focused on the collective structural and procedural challenges that community colleges face. Although previous research has highlighted the difficulties Black and Latino/a/e community college students encounter with professors, counselors, and financial aid (Abrica, 2020; Garcia et al., 2020), community colleges should be further examined through a structural lens to emphasize how the instability within the structures and procedures affects the relationships between professors and students, counselors and students, and how information such as financial aid information is delivered to students. By examining the structures within community colleges, we gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that students face in a constantly changing system. Additionally, researchers should also focus on the required procedures, that create an additional layer of challenges that students

must navigate throughout their academic journey. As a result, future studies should focus on exploring how the combination of a precarious structure and complicated procedures disrupts the educational experiences of community college students.

Researchers exploring the precarity of community colleges should also consider the precariousness of these institutions from a broader perspective. In this study, I conducted a literature review on the variability of institutional funding for community colleges at the federal, state, and local levels (Beach & Bruno, 2018; Linden, 2022; Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). I also presented background information on the revenue and expense differences for each community college site, showcasing how each college differs in terms of how they generate revenue and which departments or programs they spend it on. These spending differences can impact the hiring of professors and counselors, as well as the availability of programs and services, ultimately affecting the educational experience of community college students (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Future research should focus on the differences in core revenue and expenses in community colleges and how they directly impact the success of Black and Latino/a/e students. This research is critical to the success of underrepresented students as funding formulas account for performance outcomes and full-time student enrollment (Mills, 2023). Furthermore, this study delved into the challenges of remedial courses in community colleges, as Black and Latino/a/e students described their struggles in taking unnecessary and repeated courses. Although previous research has made significant progress in exploring legislation like AB 705 (Cruz-Atrian, 2022; Shaw et al., 2018), it is essential to continue this work as remedial courses are a major challenge contributing to the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e students.

Similarly, it is important for scholars to conduct studies that help us understand the experiences and perceptions of full-time and adjunct institutional agents in community colleges.

The findings of this study showed Black and Latino/a/e students faced many challenges while interacting with counselors and professors and are aware how counselor and faculty workloads affect these interactions. As institutional agents play a critical role in the academic and interpersonal success of students of color, it is important to examine their perspective (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). By studying how institutional agents deal with the uncertainty in community colleges, researchers can gain insight into how they navigate their roles and labor expectations in a changing landscape. Additionally, researchers can understand how institutional agents define equity and whether they support equitable practices for Black and Latino/a/e students or perpetuate racial inequalities through the existing structure and systems (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). For this reason, future studies should focus on exploring institutional agents' roles, perceptions, and experiences as they serve a critical role for community college students.

It is equally important to study the decision-making process of community college students, particularly with respect to micro-decisions, as the topic is often overlooked in the community college level. Although community college students make significant choices that impact their academic outcomes (Clayton, 2011), it is essential to investigate the decisions they make prior to arriving at these conclusions in order to better support their success. Research findings from this study, along with the literature (Anderson, 2015; Clayton, 2011), indicate Black and Latino/a/e community college students face daily academic decisions regarding their major, courses, and educational goals. For example, students who are unable to receive financial aid may choose to work, resulting in limited options for courses and experiencing educational delays. Therefore, as researchers, we must delve deeper into how these decisions have a ripple effect and impact educational outcomes. Furthermore, examining student decision-making enables researchers to identify areas of need, such as equity and access, allocating resources, and

aiding in the retention and success of Black and Latino/a/e students (Goldrick-Rab, 2010) by removing barriers and providing tailored support.

In terms of racial equity in community colleges, per the responses of Black and Latino/a/e current and former students in the study, researchers should examine the community college structure as a racialized organization (Ray, 2019) to examine the experiences of students of color. Community colleges are often recognized as diverse institutions due to the large representation of marginalized and underrepresented students who enroll compared to 4-year institutions. However, despite their diverse environment, Black and Latino/a/e students continue to experience a lack of belonging on campus, encounter institutional biases, and are at the receiving end of direct racial attacks (Abrica, 2020; Garcia-Louis et al., 2020). As the majority of the literature has placed a focus on historically White institutional spaces like 4-year institutions, it is critical to examine how community colleges also maintain systemic racism and preserve whiteness through an organizational lens. By examining this topic, researchers can identify inequitable practices, advocate for policy changes, and address institutional racism on campus. This, in turn, will improve the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students and reduce their attrition rates in community college.

In community college research, there are two groups of students who are often overlooked: (a) women of color and (b) students who left college without completing their educational goal. The experiences of men of color have been the primary focus of literature in community college settings (Esters & Mosby, 2007; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Xiong et al., 2016). However, it is crucial for scholars to also explore the experiences of women of color. This study found Black and Latina women faced similar challenges to their male counterparts and were less likely to return to college due to their responsibilities as caretakers for their families.

Additionally, they reported feeling unsafe on campus, with Black women experiencing acts of anti-Blackness. Despite the fact Black and Latina women academically outperform their male counterparts (Xiong et al., 2016), it is important to document their experiences with structural and systemic issues throughout their academic journey. Crenshaw et al. (2015) stressed the importance of not overlooking the stories of women of color, as doing so can be detrimental to their academic success by implying women are not at risk. For this reason, there is a need to further research focusing on the experiences of Black and Latina community college women to gain a deeper understanding of their academic challenges and successes.

Similarly, I recommend scholars examine the experiences of students who leave community college without completing their academic goal. In this study, over 2,500 former students were emailed, and only 10 confirmed availabilities. Collecting data from former students was very difficult as the institution did not have any information on their whereabouts. Thus, taking over a year to complete data collection. Despite the challenges, researching the experiences of students who left their community college could provide critical information on the factors that led to their decision to leave, as well as insight into the challenges they faced. This research could also help in removing educational barriers and improving workforce development for students who decide to enter the workforce directly. Therefore, studies focusing on students who left community college without transferring or completing a degree or certification is an important area of research that can improve educational outcomes for Black and Latino/a/e students.

Lastly, researchers using the theoretical frameworks of procedural cooling-out and institutional precarity should consider incorporating a racialized lens to examine the effects on underrepresented and nontraditional students in community colleges. Studying this form of

cooling-out could help understand how higher education systems are (un)intentionally influencing historically marginalized and nontraditional student groups to leave their college institutions. Additionally, research through a racialized lens can provide a comparative approach and shed light on the preservation of whiteness and the traditional college student.

Implications for Practice and Policy

This dissertation study also provided important implications regarding institutional practices and legislation. First and foremost, community college administrators, staff, and students alike should create a student equity committee that meet periodically and discuss the structural and procedural challenges that community college students face. Coming together as an institution to discuss these challenges can provide administration and college staff the ability to be aware of these institutional barriers that contribute to the attrition of Black and Latino/a/e current and former students. The student equity committee can establish an opportunity to come together with students and create practical initiatives, such as housing security, credit mobility, and other uncertainties, that will assist with the retention of students and find ways to diminish barriers to their academic success.

As many Black and Latino/a/e former and current community college students dealt with issues of having more credits than needed and the inability to transfer courses from one institution to the other, it is important for community colleges to establish better practices surrounding credit mobility. In the dissertation study, credit mobility issues arose because of the complex transfer process, failing to recognize specific courses, and changes in the course content. To assist with this issue, community colleges should establish better communication practices with sister colleges, colleges in the district, and 4-year universities where their students transfer to the most. Community colleges must establish strong partnerships with other

institutions to create and update articulation agreements, align course curriculum and content to recognize credit courses, and assess course transferability processes to ease the transition to other colleges. By establishing better practices, community colleges can protect their students from dealing with challenges regarding transferring courses from one institution to the other and having to learn complex articulation agreements every semester.

Community colleges should also offer ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty and counselors to promote awareness surrounding systemic racism and the inequitable opportunities for Black and Latino/a/e students. This support is essential to ensure institutional staff recognize and understand institutional biases and the structural and systematic challenges faced by Black and Latino/a/e students on campus. Additionally, it provides a space for professors and counselors to engage in discussions related to diversity and inclusion and to incorporate teaching methods and practices that provide tailored support for these students. Therefore, community college professional development should address issues of systemic racism on campus and provide support to institutional staff to address these issues accordingly.

As the study found Black and Latino/a/e community college students recalled racialized experiences, it is critical for community colleges to establish procedures in place that address systemic issues on campus. As Aileen, Kevin, Maya, and Frankie shared experiences of safety, belonging, and direct racial attacks, their stories should not be taken lightly. The lack of response from community colleges to their experiences, discourages students of color from reporting these attacks, increases a lack of belonging on campus, and instills an environment where they are not protected. Community colleges need a course of action when a student of color calls on institutions for better training on equity and inclusion, when they come to institutional staff disclosing a racial attack, and when they are attacked in the classroom. Establishing a

standardized process and creating practices that address issues of exclusion and marginalization of Black and Latino/a/e students will promote a safe and inclusive environment that fosters their academic success and personal growth.

Similarly, community colleges should consider establishing procedures that create better access to accurate and timely information through different online modalities. For example, colleges can simplify their websites usability to ensure students are able to enroll in classes, search the course catalogue, find support programs and more. Additionally, colleges can offer further assistance as students navigate the website by providing live chat and phone assistance plus an in-person help desk to ensure students are getting access to correct information. Through social media accounts like Instagram and X, community colleges should regularly update their pages and post updated information with enrollment dates, drop deadlines, workshops, and academic support programs in order to reach students who cannot come to campus to receive this information. Enhancing the usability and providing more up to date information through different online modalities like their campus websites and social media accounts can provide clear communication and expectations from colleges to students.

Community colleges should also place a focus on making data-driven decisions to implement practices that identify gaps among institutional staff and Black and Latino/a/e students. In this study, I found Black and Latino/a/e current and former students expressed better interactions with counselors if they were a part of an educational support program, however, only a small number of students are eligible to participate in these programs due to their requirements. This equity gap demonstrates support programs are indeed helpful but only reach few students. By using data to make decisions, community colleges can monitor and address attrition rates, identify students who are at risk of leaving the college, allocate resources to students in need, and

address institutional concerns. Furthermore, data-driven decisions can foster an inclusive and supportive campus that increases a sense of belonging for all students, faculty, and staff.

As many students discussed the overwhelming workload of professors and counselors, it is critical for community colleges to assess the labor expectations of full-time and adjunct professors and counselors. This means community college administrators should account for the student's voice when setting institutional requirements for faculty and staff. In addition, community college administrators should involve professors and counselors in making college-wide decisions that affect not only student educational outcomes but also their responsibilities and expectations in providing support for student success. This approach will help create a welcoming environment for staff and students and ultimately reduce the attrition of students of color in community colleges by focusing on supportive efforts.

To further support full-time and adjunct professors and counselors, community colleges should ensure they are receiving equitable and fair pay. Equitable wages can provide professors and counselors the ability to feel supported and valued in the workplace which can affect the quality of education for students by avoiding burnout and turnover. Furthermore, it can assist with the retention of experienced professors and counselors while recruiting new institutional staff. To ensure fair salaries and benefits, college administrators can benchmark salaries and the cost of living and compare them to peer and sister colleges. Additionally, colleges should provide professors and counselors with clear information on how their salaries are determined while adjusting their salaries regularly to remain equitable. Lastly, college administrators should advocate for funding from the state and local government by raising awareness of the importance of investing in community college faculty and staff.

Policymakers should also consider the voices of students, faculty, and staff when making important legislation. For example, several Black and Latino/a/e students recalled challenges regarding remedial courses. After the passing of AB705, community colleges have made several strides in pushing students to complete or transfer; however, Black and Latino/a/e students are often still not placed in transferable courses compared to their peers (Conway, 2010; Levin & Calcagno, 2008). In turn, the lack of placement in these courses affects their educational outcomes. Furthermore, policymakers should also consider developing a more comprehensive application to receive funding like financial aid. Financial aid remains one of the most inconsistent processes that directly affect the academic success of Black and Latino/a/e students (Broton, 2019; Goldrick-Rab, 2010) due to their complicated requirements in the verification and appeal process. Policymakers should then offer other sources of funding if students are not eligible for financial aid but need financial support.

Lastly, policymakers should reconsider the allocation of public funds to community colleges. As shown in this study, how a community college is funded directly impacts the stability of the college. Proper allocation of funds allows for more educational resources, higher salaries for faculty and staff, and an expansion of student service programs (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Linden, 2022). All components which impact the educational outcomes of its students. Additionally, policymakers should serve as advocates to secure funding to community colleges and invest in college renovations, infrastructure, and student learning.

Conclusion

This dissertation study provided an understanding of the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e current and former students throughout their cooling-out process in community colleges. Additionally, this study provided insight into the micro-decisions these students had to

make throughout their educational journey. Through a narrative qualitative approach, the study conducted 20 interviews with 10 former students who left the community college system without transferring and without a degree and 10 current students who had current thoughts about leaving the college. Also, through an online analysis of different modalities, it was found students relied heavily on school websites, articulation sites, and social media to receive college information which also contributed to the cooling-out concept. Lastly, I used the conceptual frameworks of institutional precarity and procedural cooling-out to guide the data analysis.

The study revealed the cooling-out process is present in community colleges and manifests in structural and procedural ways. Black and Latino/a/e students recalled experiencing challenges with complicated procedures, a lack of information, and negative interactions with counselors and faculty. Furthermore, Black and Latino/a/e former and current community college students mentioned that their academic abilities were questioned, and experienced issues with safety and lack of belonging, with Black students recalling experiences of anti-Blackness on campus. Due to these challenges, Black and Latino/a/e community college students experienced the effects of cooling-out through delays in financial aid, retaking prerequisite courses, receiving inaccurate information, and waiting semesters to take courses they needed. As a result, students were often left to make important academic decisions on their own which many concluded in making the decision to leave college altogether. Black and Latino/a/e former and current students expressed their frustration with the community college structure and emphasized the need for campus-wide training on cultural biases and awareness, more academic and personal support, and a comprehensive way to receive accurate information. Altogether, the study uncovers how the cooling-out process is not only present in the structure and procedures but also through racialized experiences and online modalities. Furthermore, it calls for researchers, practitioners,

and policymakers to focus on community colleges in order to simplify its process and stabilize its structure. Addressing the challenges faced by Black and Latino/a/e community college students requires attention at all levels in order to strive for systemic and structural changes that create an inclusive and equitable space that supports their academic success.

APPENDIX A: SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

FORMER STUDENTS

Are you a former student at [College Pseudonym]? Do you identify as Black and/or Latino/a/e, are over the age of 18, are English speaking, and withdrew from [College Pseudonym]? If so, please consider sharing your experiences as part of a new research study!

To learn about this UCLA research study or if you would like to participate, please click [HERE](#) [insert link]. Participation is voluntary and you will receive \$30 for your time.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [Insert Email]

CURRENT STUDENTS

Are you a current student at [College Pseudonym] Do you identify as Black and/or Latino/a/e, are English speaking, and are over the age of 18? If so, please consider sharing your experiences as part of a new research study!

To learn about this UCLA research study or if you would like to participate, please click [HERE](#) [insert link]. Participation is voluntary and you will receive \$30 for your time.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [Insert Email]

APPENDIX B: INTEREST FORMS

FORMER STUDENTS

Thank you for your interest in participating in this UCLA research study. The goal for this research study is to examine the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e students' who left [College Pseudonym] without transferring or graduating.

Participation is voluntary. If you are interested in participating in this research study, please fill out the questions below. These questions will determine your eligibility to participate in the study. All questions will only be viewed by me—the research lead—and they will remain in a password locked location. The questionnaire should take less than 5 minutes. If you are eligible to participate in this study, I will follow up with an email to schedule a date and time for the interview.

Interviews will last 60-90 minutes and will be conducted by myself, Liza Chavac. You will also receive \$30 of monetary compensation for your time. If you would like to continue, please submit this interest form.

Thank you,

Liza

1. Full Name:
2. Preferred Pronouns:
3. Age:
4. Email Address:
5. Phone Number:
6. Preferred Method of Contact:
7. What is your gender identity?
8. Do you speak English?
9. What is your racial/ethnic identity?
10. Did you attend [College Pseudonym]?
11. Did you receive a certification from [College Pseudonym]?

12. Did you receive an associate degree from [College Pseudonym]?
13. Did you transfer from [College Pseudonym]?
14. How long did you attend [College Pseudonym]?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for expressing interest in this UCLA research study. If you are eligible, I will reach out to you as soon as possible to schedule an interview.

CURRENT STUDENTS

Thank you for your interest in participating in this UCLA research study. The goal for this research study is to examine the experiences of current Black and Latino/a/e students' at [College Pseudonym].

Participation is voluntary. If you are interested in participating in this research study, please fill out the questions below. These questions will determine your eligibility to participate in the study. All questions will only be viewed by me—the research lead—and they will remain in a password locked location. The questionnaire should take less than 5 minutes. If you are eligible to participate in this study, I will follow up with an email to schedule a date and time for the interview.

Interviews will last 60-90 minutes and will be conducted by myself, Liza Chavac. You will also receive \$30 monetary compensation for your time. If you would like to continue, please submit this interest form.

Thank you,

Liza

1. Full Name:
2. Preferred Pronouns:
3. Age:
4. Email Address:
5. Phone Number:
6. Preferred Method of Contact:
7. What is your gender identity?

8. Do you speak English?
9. What is your racial/ethnic identity?
10. Do you currently attend [College Pseudonym]?
11. How long have you been at [College Pseudonym]?
12. Have you received associate degree from [College Pseudonym]?
13. Have you received a certification from [College Pseudonym]?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for expressing interest in this UCLA research study. If you are eligible, I will reach out to you as soon as possible to schedule an interview.

APPENDIX C: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

Liza Chavac, a PhD student, and Dr. Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, PhD, from the Higher Education and Organization Change Division of the Department of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study.

You were selected as a potential participant in this study if you identify as a Black or Latino/a/e student who is a current or former student at [College Pseudonym] and is over the age of 18. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

This qualitative study seeks to examine the experiences of Black and Latino/a/e current and former students at [College Pseudonym].

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the research lead will ask you to complete a one-time 60-90 minute interview, you will also be asked to verify your answers to the interviews and look over the findings of this study to assure that we are capturing your lived experiences as current or former students at [College Pseudonym]. Interviews will be recorded for data analysis purposes and will be secured properly to maintain confidentiality in the study.

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation for the interview will take 60-90 minutes. I will then follow-up with you after interviews are transcribed to check for accuracy. This will be done through email communication or a quick 10-15 minute via Zoom. Participation in the complete study should take no longer than 90 minutes.

When will I receive my payment?

Participants that complete the interview will be compensated \$30 for their participation. Participants will receive this payment at the end of the study through Venmo or an Amazon gift card.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There may be interview questions that you may be uncomfortable answering or to which you simply prefer not to respond to. Since you are volunteering, you are not obligated to answer every question. You may skip any questions you would not like to answer. Your identity will also not be disclosed to anyone at [College Pseudonym] or with others that are participating.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You will not benefit directly from your participation in this study. Results, however, may contribute to research and practice in the community college field. Through research, it expands the literature on decision-making strategies of Black and Latino/a/e students'. Through practice, it can enhance equitable practices for Black and Latino/a/e community college students.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Confidentiality will be maintained as only the research lead will have access to all data related to this study. Your data, including de-identified data may be kept for use in future research. Interviews along with any data containing sensitive information will also be stored in a password-required folder which only the lead researcher will have access to.

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

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and remain in the study.
- Interviews will be audio recorded and you will be able to review, edit, and erase the recordings of your research participation.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

You can contact the research lead Liza Chavac at [Insert Email] or the faculty advisor, Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, at [Insert Email].

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):

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

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE 1

FORMER STUDENTS

1. Please begin by telling me when you first enrolled at [College Pseudonym] and why you decided to enroll in this specific community college?
2. Please describe where you were raised (e.g., city) and what high school you attended?
3. Tell me about your experiences at [College Pseudonym]. For example:
 - a. What were your experiences enrolling in courses?
 - b. What were your experiences in the classroom with faculty?
 - c. What were your experiences with staff?
 - d. What were your experiences as a student of color on campus?
4. What are your educational goals? Where do you feel you are now in relation to these goals?
5. Tell me more about enrolling in academic courses at [College Pseudonym]?
6. Please describe the process of meeting with a counselor at [College Pseudonym]?
7. Tell me more about your decisions to take specific courses at [College Pseudonym]
8. What or who made you feel academically engaged at the community college? What about socially engaged?
9. What or who made you feel less academically engaged at the community college? What about less socially engaged?
10. What type of financial aid did you receive to attend the community college (grants, scholarships, promise program?)
11. Please describe how financial aid may have contributed to your decisions to stop attending [College Pseudonym]?
12. How did you stay connected to [College Pseudonym]? (e.g., get information about college, contact professors, staff, or learn about events)
13. What were your perceptions of the procedures, such as enrolling at the college, contacting counselors, enrolling in courses, at [College Pseudonym]?
14. Please describe when your thoughts of leaving [College Pseudonym] began and how they progressed over time.
 - a. What experiences caused these thoughts to progress?

15. Please describe your life outside of [College Pseudonym]?
- a. How many people live in your household?
 - b. Do you work? If so, what is your position and how many hours a week?
 - c. Does your household financially depend on you? Please describe.
16. How did your life outside of [College Pseudonym] influence your decision to stop attending the institution?
17. What would [College Pseudonym] need to do in order for you to re-enroll at the institution?
18. Please tell me about some of the other reasons you decided to stop attending [College Pseudonym]

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE 2

CURRENT STUDENTS

1. Please begin by telling me when you first enrolled at [College Pseudonym] and why you decided to enroll in this specific community college?
2. Please describe where you were raised (e.g., city) and what high school you attended?
3. Tell me about your experiences at [College Pseudonym]. For example:
 - a. What were your experiences enrolling in courses?
 - b. What were your experiences in the classroom with faculty?
 - c. What were your experiences with staff?
 - d. What were your experiences as a student of color on campus?
4. What are your educational goals? Where do you feel you are now in relation to these goals?
5. Tell me more about enrolling in academic courses at [College Pseudonym]?
6. Please describe the process of meeting with a counselor at [College Pseudonym]?
7. Tell me more about your decisions to take specific courses at [College Pseudonym]
8. Tell me more about your decisions to select a major at [College Pseudonym]
9. What or who makes you feel academically engaged at the community college? What about socially engaged?
10. What or who makes you feel less academically engaged at the community college? What about less socially engaged?
11. What type of financial aid do you receive to attend the community college (grants, scholarships, promise program?)
12. Please describe how important financial aid is to you in order to remain at [College Pseudonym]
13. How do you stay connected to [College Pseudonym]? (e.g., get information about college, contact professors, staff, or learn about events)
14. What are your perceptions of the procedures, such as enrolling at the college, contacting counselors, enrolling in courses, at [College Pseudonym]?
15. Please describe if you have had any thoughts about withdrawing from [College Pseudonym]

- a. What experiences caused these thoughts?
16. Please describe your life outside of [College Pseudonym]?
- a. How many people live in your household?
 - b. Do you work? If so, what is your position and how many hours a week?
 - c. Does your household financially depend on you? Please describe.
17. Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences at [College Pseudonym]?
18. What would [College Pseudonym] need to do in order for you to stay at the institution?

REFERENCES

- Abrica, E. J., García-Louis, C., & Gallaway, C. D. J. (2020). Antiracism in the Hispanic-serving community college (HSCC) context: Black male collegiate experiences through the lens of settler colonial logics. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 23(1), 55–73.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1631781>
- Acevedo, N. (2020). “Hopefully I can transfer”: Cooling-out postsecondary aspirations of Latina/o/x students. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 53(4), 465–481.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1791281>
- Allen, J. M., Smith, C. L., & Muehleck, J. K. (2013). What kinds of advising are important to community college pre- and posttransfer students? *Community College Review*, 41(4), 330–345. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552113505320>
- Anderson, J. A. (2016). *Invisible influence: New forms of cooling-out in community colleges* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/594554>
- Applebee, A. N. (1978). *The child's concept of story. Ages two to seventeen*. University of Chicago Press.
- ASSIST. (n.d.). *Frequently asked questions*. <https://assist-resource-center.azurewebsites.net/FAQ#:~:text=ASSIST%20is%20best%20used%20in,to%20a%20public%20California%20university>
- Bahr, P. R. (2008). Cooling-out in the community college: What is the effect of academic advising on students' chances of success? *Research in Higher Education*, 49(8), 704–732. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-008-9100-0>

- Bailey, T., Jeong, D. W., & Cho, S. W. (2010). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(2), 255–270. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.002>
- Baker, R. (2018). Understanding college students' major choices using social network analysis. *Research in Higher Education*, 59(2), 198–225. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-017-9463-1>
- Baker, D. J., Edwards, B., Lambert, S. F. X., & Randall, G. (2021). *The politics of community college districts: A national overview and implications for racial gerrymandering in Texas*. Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis. <https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/politics-community-college-districts-national-overview-and-implications-racial-gerrymandering-texas>
- Bakley, A. L., & Brodersen, L. A. (2018). Waiting to become: Adjunct faculty experiences at multi-campus community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 42(2), 129–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2017.1279090>
- Barbatis, P. (2010). Underprepared, ethnically diverse community college students: Factors contributing to persistence. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 33(3), 16–20. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ942872.pdf>
- Berk, L. (1980). Education in lives: Biographic narrative in the study of educational outcomes. *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 2(2), 88–153. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002>
- Boland, W. C., Gasman, M., Nguyen, T. H., & Castro Samayoa, A. (2018). The master plan and the future of California higher education: Assessing the impact of state policy on

- minority-serving institutions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 55(6), 1369–1399. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218787463>
- Bonilla-Silva, E.(1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, 62(3), 465–480. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657316>
- Bonner-Thompson, C., Mearns, G. W., & Hopkins, P. (2021). Transgender negotiations of precarity: Contested spaces of higher education. *The Geographical Journal*, 187, 227–239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12384>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Brint, S. G., & Karabel, J. (1989). *The diverted dream: Community colleges and the promise of educational opportunity in America, 1900–1985*. Oxford University Press.
- Broton, K., & Goldrick-Rab, S. (2016). The dark side of college (un)affordability: Food and housing insecurity in higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 48(1), 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2016.1121081>
- Broton, K. M. (2019). Rethinking the cooling-out hypothesis for the 21st century: The impact of financial aid on students’ educational goals. *Community College Review*, 47(1), 79–104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552118820449>
- Bryant, A. N. (2001). ERIC review: Community college students recent findings and trends. *Community College Review*, 29(3), 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009155210102900305>
- Bulman, G., & Fairlie, R. (2021). *The impact of COVID-19 on community college enrollment and student success: Evidence from California administrative data*. Annenberg Institute, Brown University. <https://doi.org/10.26300/gqkp-3g10>

- Calcagno, J. C., Crosta, P., Bailey, T., & Jenkins, D. (2007). Stepping stones to a degree: The impact of enrollment pathways and milestones on community college student outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 48, 775–801.
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/impact-enrollment-pathways-milestones.html>
- California Community College Chancellor’s Office. (n.d.-a). *Commonly used community college budget and fiscal terminology*. <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/College-Finance-and-Facilities/Budget-News/Budget-Workshop/workshop-glossary-cffp-a11y.pdf?la=en&hash=A8E8568D74482326281C6EF5F0C1CA74C6CC0214>
- California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. (n.d.-b). *Key facts*.
<https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Key-Facts>
- California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. (n.d.-c). *Student demographics*.
<https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Digital-Innovation-and-Infrastructure/research-data-analytics/data-snapshot/student-demographics>
- California Legislative Analyst’s Office. (2009, November 12). *Introduction to California’s master plan for higher education*.
https://lao.ca.gov/2009/edu/master_plan_intro/master_plan_intro_111209.aspx
- Campaign for College Opportunity. (2021). *The state of higher education for black Californians*.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED618539.pdf>
- Carreira, P., & Lopes, A. S. (2021). Drivers of academic pathways in higher education: Traditional vs. non-traditional students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(7), 1340–1355.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1675621>

- Casanova, S., McGuire, K. M., & Martin, M. (2018). “Why you throwing subs?”: An exploration of community college students’ immediate responses to microaggressions. *Teachers College Record*, 120(9), 1–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811812000901>
- Chen, X., & Simone, S. (2016). *Remedial course taking at U.S. public 2- and 4-year institutions: Scope, experience, and outcomes*. Institute for Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016405.pdf>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Caine, V. (2013). Narrative inquiry. In A. A. Trainor, & E. Graue (Eds.), *Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences* (pp. 166–179). Routledge.
- Clark, B. (1960). “The ‘cooling-out’ function in higher education.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 65, 569–576. <https://doi.org/10.1086/222787>
- Cleary, M., Horsfall, J., & Hayter, M. (2014). Data collection and sampling in qualitative research: Does size matter? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 473–475. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12163>
- Cohen, A. M., & Brawer, F. B. (2003). *The American community college*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Cohen, A. M., Brawer, F. B., & Kisker, C. (2014). *The American community college*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Community College Research Center. (2021). *Community college FAQs*. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/community-college-faqs.html#:~:text=In%20the%202020%2D2021%20academic,and%2039%25%20of%20White%20undergraduates>.
- Community College Review. (2022). *Average community college financial aid*. <https://www.communitycollegereview.com/financial-aid-stats/national-data>

- Comrie, J.W., Landor, A., Thompson Riley, K., Williamson, J. (2022). *Anti-Blackness/colorism. moving towards antibigotry: Collected essays from the Center for Antiracist Researcher's Antibigotry Convening*. Boston University. <https://www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/files/2022/06/Moving-Towards-Antibigotry.pdf>
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2–14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002>
- Compton College Website. (2022). *History of Compton College*. <https://www.compton.edu/about/campus-history.aspx#:~:text=History%20of%20Compton%20College,completed%20on%20the%20present%20site>
- Conway, K. M. (2010). Educational aspirations in an urban community college: Differences between immigrant and native student groups. *Community College Review*, 37(3), 209–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552109354626>
- Coll, K. M., & Rice, R. L. (1993). Role conflict among community college counselors. *Community College Review*, 21(1), 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009155219302100108>
- Cooper, C. R. (2002). Five bridges along students' pathways to college: A developmental blueprint of families, teachers, counselors, mentors, and peers in the Puente Project. *Educational Policy*, 16(4), 607–622. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904802016004008>
- Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). Black girls matter. *Ms. Magazine*, 25(2), 26–29.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cruz-Atrian, L. (2022). *Addressing racial equity gaps in mathematics at the community college level: A policy analysis of Assembly Bill 705* [Doctoral dissertation, University

of California, Los Angeles].

https://escholarship.org/content/qt6xh697xw/qt6xh697xw_noSplash_adeebb127a9f5b1fa1b2cfc033c68737.pdf?t=rfd90b

Curry, M. W. (2012). In pursuit of reciprocity: Researchers, teachers, and school reformers engaged in collaborative analysis of video records. *Theory Into Practice*, 51(2), 91–98.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2012.662858>

Dancy, T. E., Edwards, K. T., & Earl Davis, J. (2018). Historically white universities and plantation politics: Anti-Blackness and higher education in the Black Lives Matter era. *Urban Education*, 53(2), 176–195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918754328>

Dang, T. G. (2020). *The effects of the work environment on California community college counselors' professional self-care* (Order No. 28090987) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pacific]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/effects-work-environment-on-california-community/docview/2444587445/se-2>

Darling, F. (2020). *AB 705 and its unintended consequences*. Faculty Association of California Community Colleges.
https://www.faccc.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&year=2019&month=12&day=18&id=6:ab-705-and-its-unintended-consequences

Davidson, J. C. (2015). Improving the financial aid process for community college students: A literature review of FAFSA simplification, information, and verification. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 39(5), 397–408.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2013.820157>

- Dean, L. A., & Meadows, M. E. (1995). College counseling: Union and intersection. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74, 139–142. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1995.tb01838.x>
- Deil-Amen, R., & Rosenbaum, J. E. (2002). The unintended consequences of stigma-free remediation. *Sociology of Education*, 75(3), 249–268.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3090268>
- Dodgson, J. E. (2019). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 35(2), 220–222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334419830990>
- Dowd, A. C., & Bensimon, E. M. (2015). *Engaging the “race question”: Accountability and equity in U.S. higher education*. Teachers College Press.
- Dowd, A. C., Pak, J. H., & Bensimon, E. M. (2013). The role of institutional agents in promoting transfer access. *Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas*, 21, 1–40.
- Dorson, R. M. (1976). *Folklore and fakelore: Essays toward a discipline of folkstudies*. Harvard University Press.
- EdSource. (2021, October 26). *Community colleges are still wasting Black and Latino students’ time*. EdSource. <https://edsource.org/2021/community-colleges-are-still-wasting-black-and-latino-students-time/663838>
- Esters, L. L., & Mosby, D. C. (2007). Disappearing acts: The vanishing Black male on community college campuses. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 24(14), 45.
- Faculty Association of California Community Colleges. (n.d.). *Why faculty matter*.
<https://www.faccc.org/assets/docs/PolicyPapers/Faculty%20Research%20Paper.pdf>

- Felix, E. R., & Gonzalez, Á. (2022). Using institutional planning to support men of color in community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 46(4), 257–271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2020.1841043>
- Galotti, K. M., & Mark, M. C. (1994). How do high school students structure an important life decision? A short-term longitudinal study of the college decision-making process. *Research in Higher Education*, 35, 589–607. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02497089>
- García-Louis, C., Sáenz, V. B., & Guida, T. (2020). How community college staff inflict pervasive microaggressions: The experiences of Latino men attending urban community colleges in Texas. *Urban Education*, 58(10), 2378–2406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920963594>
- Gilbert, K. (2001). *The emotional nature of qualitative research*. CRC Press.
- Given, L. M. (2008). Narrative inquiry. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n275>
- Gloria, A. M., Castellanos, J., & Orozco, V. (2005). Perceived educational barriers, cultural fit, coping responses, and psychological well-being of Latina undergraduates. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 27(2), 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986305275097>
- Goldrick-Rab, S. (2010). Challenges and opportunities for improving community college student success. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(3), 437–469. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654310370163>

- Goldrick-Rab, S. (2018). Addressing community college completion rates by securing students' basic needs. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2018(184), 7–16.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20323>
- Graves, D. L. (2019). *Cooling-out in the verification process: A mixed methods exploration into the relevance of racism in community college students' financial aid experiences* [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles].
<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8g27x3pt>
- Greene, T. G., Marti, C. N., & McClenney, K. (2008). The effort—outcome gap: Differences for African American and Hispanic community college students in student engagement and academic achievement. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), 513–539.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2008.11772115>
- Grubbs, S. J. (2020). Does cooling-out still apply? Community colleges and educational expectations. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 44(10–12), 819–834. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2020.1724573>
- Hart, B. A. (2019). Hanging in, stopping out, dropping out: Community college students in an era of precarity. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 121(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811912100105>
- Hart, C. M. D., Xu, D., Hill, M., & Alonso, E. (2021). COVID-19 and community college instructional responses. *Online Learning*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v25i1.2568>
- Heller, D. E., & Rogers, K. R. (2006). Shifting the burden: Public and private financing of higher education in the United States and implications for Europe. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 12(2), 91–117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2006.9967162>

- Hern, K., Snell, M., & Henson, L. (2020). *Still getting there: How California's AB 705 is (and is not) transforming remediation and what needs to come next*. Public Advocate.
- Hillman, N. W., & Orians, E. L. (2013). Community colleges and labor market conditions: How does enrollment demand change relative to local unemployment rates? *Research in Higher Education*, 54(7), 765–780. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24571744>
- Huerta, A. H., Rios-Aguilar, C., & Ramirez, D. (2022). “I had to figure it out”: A case study of how community college student parents of color navigate college and careers. *Community College Review*, 50(2), 193–218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00915521211061425>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Integrated postsecondary education data system*. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=112686>
- Juszkiewicz, J. (2014). *Community college students and federal student financial aid: A primer*. American Association of Community Colleges.
- Juszkiewicz, J. (2020). *Trends in community college enrollment and completion data*. American Association of Community Colleges.
- Kahlenberg, R. D. (2015). *How higher education funding shortchanges community colleges*. The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/report/how-higher-education-funding-shortchanges-community-colleges/>
- Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review*, 74(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400101>
- Kantrowitz, M. (2011). *Reasons why students do not file the FAFSA*. FinAid.org. <http://www.finaid.org/educators/20110118nofafsareasons.pdf>

- Kamanzi, A., & Romania, M. (2019). Rethinking confidentiality in qualitative research in the era of big data. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(6), 743–758.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219826222>
- Kelly, R. R., & Hatcher, T. (2012). Decision-making self-efficacy and barriers in career decision making among community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 37(2), 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2011.585114>
- Khan, S & Unruh, K. (2022). *Beyond equity at community colleges: Bridging theory into practice for justice and liberation*. Routledge Press.
- Kolesnikova, N. A. (2010). Community colleges and economic mobility. *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, 92(1), 27–53. <https://doi.org/10.20955/r.92.27-54>
- Legislative Analyst’s Office. (2009). *California master plan*.
https://lao.ca.gov/2009/edu/master_plan_intro/master_plan_intro_111209.aspx
- Leppel, K., Williams, M. L., & Waldauer, C. (2001). The impact of parental occupation and socioeconomic status on choice of college major. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 22(4), 373–394. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1012716828901>
- Levin, J. S. (2000). The revised institution: The community college mission at the end of the twentieth century. *Community College Review*, 28(2), 1–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/009155210002800201>
- Levin, H. M., & Calcagno, J. C. (2008). Remediation in the community college: An evaluator’s perspective. *Community College Review*, 35(3), 181–207.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552107310118>
- Linden, R. (2022). *Understanding the student-centered funding formula*. [Research brief]. UC Davis Wheelhouse, Center for Community College Leadership and Research.

- https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/wheelhouse_research_brief_vol_7_n_3_final.pdf?1663872636
- Lopez, S., & Hill, C. B. (2022, March 30). *Underrepresentation of Black and Latino undergraduates at America's most selective private colleges and universities*. Ithaka, <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.316615>
- Long, B. T., & Kurlaender, M. (2009). Do community colleges provide a viable pathway to a baccalaureate degree? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(1), 30–53. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373708327756>
- Lundberg, C. A. (2014). Peers and faculty as predictors of learning for community college students. *Community College Review*, 42(2), 79–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552113517931>
- Maldonado, C. (2019). “Where your ethnic kids go”: How counselors as first responders legitimate proper course placements for community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 43(4), 280–294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2018.1463303>
- Martinez, E., & Elue, C. (2020). Academic advising and the community college baccalaureate: Implications for research, policy, and practice. *NACADA Journal*, 40(1), 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-18-16>
- Martinez, M., & Fernández, E. (2004). Latinos at community colleges. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2004(105), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.116>
- McDonough, P. M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social course and schools structure opportunity*. SUNY Press.

- McDonough, P. M. (2004). *The school-to-college transition: Challenges and prospects*. American Council on Education.
- McDonough, P. M., & Antonio, A. L. (1996). *Ethnic and racial differences in selectivity of college choice* [Paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
- McDonough, P. M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social course and schools structure opportunity*. SUNY Press.
- McGuinness, A. (2016). The states and higher education. In M. N. Bastedo, P. G. Altbach, & P. J. Gumport, (Eds.), *American higher education in the 21st century: Social, political, and economic challenges* (4th ed., pp. 238–280). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- McKinney, L., & Roberts, T. (2012). The role of community college financial aid counselors in helping students understand and utilize financial aid. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 36(10), 761–774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2011.585112>
- Mendelson, T., Sheridan, S. C., & Clary, L. K. (2021). Research with youth of color in low-income communities: Strategies for recruiting and retaining participants. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, 17(6), 1110–1118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.08.011>
- Mendoza, P., Mendez, J. P., & Malcolm, Z. (2009). Financial aid and persistence in community colleges: Assessing the effectiveness of federal and state financial aid programs in Oklahoma. *Community College Review*, 37(2), 112–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552109348045>
- Mills, Jr., G. G. (2023). Impact of California community colleges student centered funding formula on first-generation college students at minority serving institutions: An

- exploration of the perspectives of student services professionals [Doctoral dissertation, California Baptist University]. ProQuest.
- Monarrez, T., & Washington, K. (2020). *Racial and ethnic representation in postsecondary education*. Urban Institute, Center on Education Data and Policy.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606027.pdf>
- Moogan, Y. J., & Baron, S. (2003). An analysis of student characteristics within the student decision making process. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27(3), 271–287.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877032000098699>
- Mullin, C. M., & Honeyman, D. S. (2007). The funding of community colleges: A typology of state funding formulas. *Community College Review*, 35(2), 113–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552107306409>
- Nakajima, M. A., Dembo, M. H., & Mossler, R. (2012). Student persistence in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 36(8), 591–613.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920903054931>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Financial aid key facts*.
<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=31>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020a). *Community college data*.
<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=112686>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020b). *University of California data*.
<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=110662>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *College student employment*.
<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ssa/college-student-employment>

- Ortagus, J. C., Kelchen, R., Rosinger, K., & Voorhees, N. (2020). Performance-based funding in American higher education: A systematic synthesis of the intended and unintended consequences. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 42(4), 520–550.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373720953128>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 42(5), 533–544.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Perez, N., & Farruggia, S. P. (2022). Pathways to early departure from college: The interrelated and precarious role of finances among Black and Latinx students. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 25(2), 155–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2021.1890561>
- Perna, L. W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education* (pp. 99–157). Springer.
- Person, A. E., Rosenbaum, J. E., & Deil-Amen, R. (2006). Student planning and information problems in different college structures. *Teachers College Record*, 108(3), 374–396.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2006.00655.x>
- Peterson, L. M. (2002). *Community college counseling: Present realities; perspectives for the future* (Order No. 3061856) [Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/community-college-counseling-present-realities/docview/305513387/se-2>
- Phillippe, K. A., & Sullivan, L. G. (2005). *National profile of community colleges trends and statistics* (4th ed). ERIC Clearinghouse.

- Pirtle, W. N., Brock, B., Aldonza, N., Leke, K., & Edge, D. (2024). "I didn't know what anti-Blackness was until i got here": The unmet needs of Black students at Hispanic-serving institutions. *Urban Education*, 59(1), 330–357.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859211044948>
- Preston, D. (2017). *Untold barriers for Black students in higher education: Placing race at the Center of Developmental Education*. Southern Education Foundation.
<https://southerneducation.org/publications/untoldbarriers/>
- Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. SAGE Publications.
- Rendon, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education*, 19, 33–51.
- Romano, R. M., & Eddy, P. L. (2017). Community colleges and social mobility. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 49(6), 55–62.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2017.1399041>
- Rosenbaum, J. E., Redline, J., Stephan, J. L. (2017). Community college: The unfinished revolution. *Issues in Science and Technology*, 26(4). <https://issues.org/rosenbaum/>
- Saenz, V. B., & Ponjuan, L. (2009). The vanishing Latino male in higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 8(1), 54–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192708326995>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications.
- Sandoval-Lucero, E., Maes, J., & Klingsmith, L. (2014). African American and Latina(o) community college students' social capital and student success. *College Student Journal*, 48(3), 522–533.

- Savin-Baden, M., & Niekerk, L. V. (2007). Narrative inquiry: Theory and practice. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 31(3), 459–472.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260601071324>
- Sewell, W.H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1–29. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2781191>
- Shaw, L. A., Rice, S., & Wada, K. (2018). AB 705: Where we’ve been, and where we’re headed. *CATESOL Journal*, 30(2), 77–84.
- Schriener, S., & Weiss, M. (2009). *More guidance better results? Three year effects of and enhanced student program at two community colleges. Building knowledge to improve social policy*. MDRC. <https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/more-guidance-better-results>
- Scott-Clayton, J. (2011). *The structure of student decision-making at community colleges*. Community College Research Center, Columbia University.
- Smith, A. A. (2019). *More California community college students entering, passing transfer-level math and English as result of landmark law*. EdSource.
<https://edsources.org/2019/more-california-community-college-students-entering-passing-transfer-level-math-and-english-as-result-of-landmark-law/617999>
- Stratton, S. J. (2021). Population research: Convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 36(4), 373–374. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X21000649>
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2011). Traits, commitments, and college satisfaction among Black American community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 35(6), 437–453.

- Strayhorn, T. L., & Johnson, R. M. (2014). Black Female community college students' satisfaction: A national regression analysis. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 38(6), 534–550. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2013.866060>
- Stuhlmiller, C. M. (2001). Narrative methods in qualitative research: Potential for therapeutic transformation. In K. R. Gilbert (Ed.), *The emotional nature of qualitative research* (pp. 63–80). CRC Press.
- Summers, M. D. (2003). ERIC review: Attrition research at community colleges. *Community College Review*, 30(4), 64–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009155210303000404>
- Terriquez, V., & Gurantz, O. (2015). Financial challenges in emerging adulthood and students' decisions to stop out of college. *Emerging Adulthood*, 3(3), 204–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696814550684>
- Tollefson, T. A. (2009). Community college governance, funding, and accountability: A century of issues and trends. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 33(3–4), 386–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920802580481>
- Tovar, E. (2015). The role of faculty, counselors, and support programs on Latino/a/x community college students' success and intent to persist. *Community College Review*, 43(1), 46–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552114553788>
- Trainor, A., & Bouchard, K. A. (2013). Exploring and developing reciprocity in research design. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(8), 986–1003. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2012.724467>
- Underwood, C., & Hammons, J. O. (1999). Past, present, and future variations in community college organizational structure. *Community College Review*, 26(4), 39–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009155219902600404>

- Warren, P. (2019). *Coordinating California's higher education system*. Public Policy Institute of California.
- Wei, C. C., Berkner, L., He, S., & Lew, S. (2009). *Web tables: Undergraduate financial aid estimates by type of institution in 2007–08: (551782009-001)* [Data set]. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e551782009-001>
- White, J. A., & Dache, A. (2020). “A lot of inner-city kids”: How financial aid policies and practices reflect the social field of color-blind racism at a community college urban campus. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 44(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2019.1649220>
- Wilder, C. S. (2013). *Ebony and ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Xiong, S., Allen, C., & Wood, J. L. (2016). The role of community college counselors as validating agents on men of color student success. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 40(6), 558–561. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2015.1096222>
- You, E., Hillman, N., & Colston, J. (2022). *Financial equity among California Community Colleges*. Student Success Through Applied Research.
- Zitko, P. A., & Schultz, K. (2020). The adjunct model as an equity crisis in higher education: A qualitative inquiry into the lived experience of “part-time” community college faculty in Northern California. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*, 8, 1–19. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1292069.pdf>