Community colleges and their faculty of color: Matching teachers and students

A report to the Community Colleges of California

July 2013

This project was carried out by the California Community College Collaborative (C4)
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Background
This project grew out of two essential sources. The first and the initiator of the idea for the project was the 2007 Advisory Council of the California Community College Collaborative (C4). Their advice to C4 was to determine the reasons for the low number of faculty of color in community colleges, with particular reference to California’s community colleges. The second followed from the first but led to a research investigation on graduate students of color in a research university, which we referred to as Graduate Student Project (GSP). This project led to a Report, *Under-represented minority graduate students at the University of California, Riverside: Prospective faculty?*, and a number of scholarly presentations, papers, and journal articles. That research concluded that graduate students’ attraction to academic work is related to (a) the ways in which students interact with others (i.e., peers, faculty, and mentors) as part of their graduate education; (b) students’ present and past work experiences (i.e., assistantships and external job opportunities); (c) students’ self-assessment of their performance of academic tasks; (d) students’ cultural values (i.e., social commitment); and (e) students’ perception of the profession. That investigation offered one understanding of reasons as to why graduate students of color might not pursue a career as a faculty member at a community college.

Purpose
Our purpose was not only to provide some basic understanding of the low numbers of faculty of color in community colleges but also to explain the experiences of faculty of color in community colleges so that both research scholars and practitioners would have a better understanding of this significant population of faculty.

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Dr. Mark Drummond, Chancellor, California Community Colleges  
Ms. Gerry F. Fiala, National Center on Education and the Economy  
Dr. Jerome Hunter, Chancellor, North Orange County Community College District  
Mr. Scott Lay, President and Chief Executive Officer, Community College League of California Legislative Office  
Professor John S. Levin, Graduate School of Education, University of California-Riverside  
Dr. Sara Lundquist, Vice President, Student Services, Santa Ana College  
Dr. Richard Mahon, Senate President, Riverside City College  
Mr. James F. McKenney, Vice President of Economic Development and International Programs, AACC  
Mr. Jose Millan, Vice Chancellor, Economic and Workforce Development, Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges  
Dr. Mark Rocha, President, West Los Angeles College  
Dr. Salvatore G. Rotella, Chancellor, Riverside Community College District  
Ms. Sandra V. Serrano, Chancellor, Kern Community College District  
Dr. Wayne D. Watson, Chancellor, City Colleges of Chicago  
Mr. Tom Campbell, Dean, Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley  
Dr. Phil Day, Chancellor, City College of San Francisco  
Mr. Paul Elsner, Los Vientos, Inc.  
Dr. Eduardo J. Marti, President, City University of New York, Queensborough Community College  
Dr. Dianne G. Van Hook, Superintendent/President, College of the Canyons
Experiences of Community College Faculty of Color

Community colleges have a critical need for a more diversified faculty. Currently the 1,132 U.S. community colleges educate large numbers of underrepresented minority students including the majority of Hispanic students (56%) and a substantial percentage of students of color, including African Americans (49%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (44%), and Native Americans (42%) undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013). Yet in the fall of 2012, the proportion of community college faculty who were underrepresented minorities was only 18%, a figure that includes Asian/Pacific Islanders and both full-time and part-time faculty. Arguably, this lack of an ethnically diverse faculty body limits opportunities for students of color to engage with someone of their own race or ethnicity, thereby muting their interactions with faculty and jeopardizing both persistence and attainment (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003).

Our project examined the experiences of faculty of color in community colleges with an overarching goal of informing policies and practices that may help to increase the number of community college faculty of color nationwide and sensitize community college practitioners to conditions for faculty of color on community college campuses. We chose California and California community colleges as our research site.

In California, one of the most diverse states in the U.S., the community college student of color population is the majority—over 50% are classified as underrepresented minorities and less than 30% of students are classified as White, non-Hispanic (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2013). Full-time tenure/tenure track faculty are classified as 65% White, and just under 30% are categorized as faculty of color, including Asian/Pacific Islanders. Part-time faculty are more than 65% White (See Tables 1 and 2 for faculty ethnicity over time). Our investigation involved site visits to interview faculty of color in four California community colleges to understand their pathways to the faculty and explore influences on their decisions to become community college faculty members. For our project, data were collected from faculty of color. These data included their educational preparation, prior community college experience, factors influencing their decision to become a community college faculty member, and their level of satisfaction as a community college faculty member. Additionally, we collected data on this population’s views of their treatment on community college campuses and their understandings and judgments of campus environments. Data collection began in October 2010 and was completed by April 2011. Data analysis began shortly after the data were collected and concluded in February 2013.
Table 1: Full-time Faculty Ethnicity (2001-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White #</th>
<th>White %</th>
<th>African American #</th>
<th>African American %</th>
<th>Hispanic #</th>
<th>Hispanic %</th>
<th>Asian #</th>
<th>Asian %</th>
<th>Native American #</th>
<th>Native American %</th>
<th>Non-resident alien #</th>
<th>Non-resident alien %</th>
<th>Unknown #</th>
<th>Total #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>14,176</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>1,263</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>2,020</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>1,435</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>11,406</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1,657</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>13,286</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2,039</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>1,424</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1,334</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>11,204</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>1,802</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1,396</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>13,068</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>1,158</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>2,115</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1,501</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1,767</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>12,360</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2,153</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>1,508</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: IPEDS
Note: The number of institutions reporting varies from year to year. In 2001, 109 institutions reported data; in 2002, 85 institutions reported data; in 2003, 111 institutions reported data; in 2004, 94 institutions reported data; in 2005, 112 institutions reported data; in 2006, 104 institutions reported data.

Table 2: Part-time Faculty Ethnicity (2001-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White #</th>
<th>White %</th>
<th>African American #</th>
<th>African American %</th>
<th>Hispanic #</th>
<th>Hispanic %</th>
<th>Asian #</th>
<th>Asian %</th>
<th>Native American #</th>
<th>Native American %</th>
<th>Non-resident alien #</th>
<th>Non-resident alien %</th>
<th>Unknown #</th>
<th>Total #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>27,085</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>1,745</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3,014</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2,462</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>22,582</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>1,535</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2,419</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2,178</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1,082</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>25,007</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>1,687</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2,881</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2,495</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>22,917</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2,743</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>2,459</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>26,942</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>1,828</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3,352</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>2,842</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>25,547</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>1,737</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3,477</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>2,985</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1,948</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: IPEDS
Note: The number of institutions reporting varies from year to year. In 2001, 107 institutions reported data; in 2002, 85 institutions reported data; in 2003, 109 institutions reported data; in 2004, 93 institutions reported data; in 2005, 111 institutions reported data; in 2006, 103 institutions reported data.
Methodology

Research sites were selected based on data obtained from the California Community College Chancellor’s Office regarding numbers of full- or part-time faculty of color currently teaching in a credit program. These data were used to compile a comprehensive ranking of California’s community colleges for faculty diversity at all of the 112 community colleges in California. Three institutions with high numbers of faculty of color and one with low numbers were chosen from the list for a total of four research sites. Because all of the highest-ranking institutions for faculty diversity came from the same regional area (southern California), we modified our institution selection criteria to capture different geographical and regional locations as well as maximizing faculty diversity. Thus, the three high-ranking institutions selected for this study are all within the top 20 of the comprehensive list (as opposed to selecting the top three institutions regardless of geography). Our data were drawn from the following institutions, to which we have assigned pseudonyms: Cosmopolitan City College (Los Angeles County); North Point Community College (Northern California); Water’s Edge Community College (Inland Southern California); and, Oasis Community College (Southern California desert). As well, we considered institutional size and location (i.e., urban, suburban, rural). At two of our colleges, and among the highest ranking in the state, there were 128 and 118 total full-time and part-time faculty of color, excluding Asian faculty. To access the colleges and their faculty, we contacted each college and asked chief executive officers if they would agree to have their college participate in our study, which would include interviews and observations on their campuses carried out by a team of five researchers.

Data collected for this project consisted primarily of one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. We followed the advice of field methods’ scholars, including Burgess and Seidman (Burgess, 1984; Seidman, 2006) in particular, to ensure a conversational style and not a simple question and answer approach. Data collected included faculty’s educational preparation, professional background, prior community college experience, and level of satisfaction as a community college faculty member, as well as factors that influenced personal decisions to become and to remain community college faculty. Data were collected between October 2010 and April 2011.
All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Faculty were assured that their names and their personal identities would be concealed for protection.

We also collected institutional data from college websites to contextualize interviews. Data from web sites include demographic data, institutional policies, plans, and mission and goals’ statements, and program curricula. Through these data, we developed “vignettes” of each campus.

At each institution, we interviewed between 8-10 faculty for a total of 36 faculty, at four sites, consisting of both full-time and part-time faculty with the majority of them full-time (See Table 3). Faculty came from various program areas, including Auto Mechanics, Business, Counseling, Criminal Justice, Dance, English, Health Sciences, History, English as a Second Language (ESL), Mathematics, Nursing, Engineering, Psychology, Reading, Sociology, and Visual Arts. Potential participants were identified through a gatekeeper (vice-president, dean, and faculty member, known to one of the researchers) at each site. Invitations were sent to those identified via e-mail to faculty of color to solicit their participation in the study. From these faculty, others were recommended (snow-ball sampling) and invited to participate. Participants were identified by gender, department, and contract type (full-time or part-time), as well as racial or ethnic affiliations. For reporting, we used pseudonyms for faculty and their institutions to maintain anonymity as agreed upon with participants.

Table 3: Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Instructional or Counseling Faculty</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Full-Time or Part-Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan City College</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8 Instructional Faculty 2 Counseling Faculty</td>
<td>4 Latino/a 5 African American 1 Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>9 Full-Time 1 Part-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Point Community College</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4 Instructional Faculty 4 Counseling Faculty</td>
<td>3 Latino/a 4 African American 1 Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>All Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water’s Edge Community College</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9 Instructional Faculty 2 Counseling Faculty</td>
<td>4 Latino/a 3 African American 3 Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>7 Full-Time 4 Part-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oasis Community College</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4 Instructional Faculty 3 Counseling Faculty</td>
<td>4 Latino/a 2 African American 1 Native American</td>
<td>All Full-Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We primarily used data from interviews of 31 full-time faculty (See Table 3). Part-time faculty interview data did not address campus issues of diversity or race. Interviews ranged from one to one and a half hours in length, and these were conducted in environments suitable to faculty comfort and choice (office spaces or vacant library study rooms). In a few cases, phone interviews or interviews in more public places were conducted because of scheduling issues or at the request of faculty who were not comfortable talking to us on campus within the vicinity of colleagues or supervisors.

Interview data were analyzed using institutional theory, organizational change theory, cultural identity theory (CIT), social identity theory (SIT), and critical race theory (CRT) as the analytical frameworks for provisional coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Initial codes included topics such as personal and professional identity, socialization, dominant ideologies, and resistance to change. Following the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994), we used secondary coding combined with conceptualizations to reduce the large data set and created coding forms for each participant’s interview transcript. These codes were drawn from concepts in CIT (e.g., positionality, self-authoring) and from CRT (subordination, racism). We relied upon several techniques to generate findings. These techniques included clustering, making comparisons and contrasts, making metaphors, locating intervening variables, and finally making conceptual coherence (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We then synthesized our observations of individual participant interview transcripts to lead us to findings about the group as a whole.

ATLAS.ti software (ATLAS.ti.6, 2011) facilitated a research team coding process by providing a central location where the researchers could see all of the coding for the project, and by providing an efficient way of identifying meaningful areas of overlap or connection between different codes, which enhanced the strength of the coding process. Throughout part of the coding process, members of the research team used concept mapping (Cañas et al., 2005) as an additional way to make sense of the interview data, the analytical frameworks, and the relationships between the different codes in the coding scheme. Concept maps are characterized by the hierarchical organization of concepts that are connected to each other through the use of linking words or phrases. The connections among concepts are aimed to produce propositions (Cañas et al., 2005), and in this investigation to produce or support findings.

Data analysis was a group effort and process as four project members reviewed all interviews, conducted data analysis, and interacted to reach consensus on the generated meanings of data. For both the use of Atlas.ti software and concept mapping, an expert guided us in data analysis.

**Findings**

First, we show that faculty of color represent themselves as possessing different understandings of institutional life than their White colleagues and situating themselves in separate spheres from their White colleagues. That is, they view the community college as comprised of divided

“My students are extremely diverse... A lot of them come from the same background that I did: kind of poor, kind of pulling yourself up, not really knowing what to do, needing mentoring.”
worlds. Second, we show that faculty of color view themselves as subordinated to their White colleagues, and in this process the social and cultural identities of faculty of color are suppressed. Third, and finally, we note that faculty of color represent themselves as critical players in community colleges, particularly in the education and development of students.

1. Different Understandings and a Separate World

Faculty of color noted that considerable differences exist between their understandings and their White colleagues regarding the meaning of “student-centered.” To faculty of color, the mainstream faculty population in community colleges understood the concept of “student-centered” or “student-oriented” in a technical way by stressing student learning outcomes or by embracing the teaching function of the community college. In some contrast, faculty of color understood “student-centered” as personal, connecting their own backgrounds with students. These separate understandings of “student-centered” presented the faculty of color with an insoluble dilemma: it was not always possible to identify with both the mainstream or dominant profession of faculty at their college and their own racially or ethnically oriented identification of themselves as student-centered professionals.

Separate understandings of White faculty and faculty of color were also noted by faculty of color in the selection process of new colleagues. That is, in the deliberation and decision process about membership in the professional group, discordant views are shaped by racial identity. Here, there is a contest between professional valuation of formal academic knowledge, academic credentials, and teaching experience on the one hand and personal backgrounds and experiences on the other. “[W]e start with a great pool but we never wind up with the minority hires that we would like to have.” The pattern within the faculty hiring process suggests that racial and ethnic identities, individually and collectively, are of peripheral and marginal importance to the community college, often in the face of expressed concerns for diversity at the campuses we studied.

Faculty of color indicated that the majority of faculty interactions occur within their department or, in the narrower academic specializations, in their academic division in the college. The lack of these extra-departmental interactions proves to be problematical. “Since I’ve been here, I think the thing that is the most challenging for me is that it’s very difficult to have a lot of interaction with faculty from other departments.” As a result of the combination of interacting primarily within academic departments or divisions that consist of predominantly White faculty, faculty of color lack connection to other faculty across campus who share similar cultural identities and backgrounds. “We’re in the Social Sciences division, so you [have] philosophy, religion, economics, sociology, psychology...[T]here are about 48 faculty. There is one other African American male...But it’s predominately White...” This behavioral pattern reinforces difference and marginalization for those faculty who embrace a cultural identity aligned with their ethnic/racial background.
The difficulty for faculty of color in interacting with other faculty of color or engaging in activities that would foster and support racial or ethnic identity is compounded by the expectations placed on these faculty by their college and academic departments regarding their role as teachers and guides of students. On the one hand, full-time faculty of color, similar to other full-time faculty, have considerable teaching loads. On the other hand, they are expected to serve on committees not only as faculty representatives but also as representatives of their race. Furthermore, their racial identity places both institutional and personal expectations on them for working with students of color. Overall, they view themselves as functioning in a different realm from White faculty in their professional obligations, and they suggest they inhabit a separate world.

Moreover, the racial divide understood by faculty of color indicates to them that they inhabit a world separate not just from their White colleagues but also from all colleagues of different ethnicities. “[T]here still seems to be a mentality, and this is my experience with all the ethnicities on the campus, so whether they are white, black, brown, or yellow, there still is a lot of separation based on ethnicity; ...and there’s a feeling of mistrust that exists between them.” Such a climate of mistrust at community colleges further alienates faculty of color from their institutions and from their colleagues.

Finally, while campus policies and formal administrative articulations speak to diversity, such as an inclusive environment, including greater tolerance for difference, as well as an increase in ethnic diversity among faculty, such formal efforts did not, in the view of faculty of color, work. At one college, a diversity initiative that began as a formal movement, and was resisted by White faculty, as part of the college’s attempts to foster diversity discussions amongst faculty, administration, and staff, transformed into an informal network of diversity-oriented activists amongst faculty of color. This informal network did little to alter campus conditions and build a community for faculty of color.

These different understandings of community college experience may speak to or reflect distinct worlds for faculty of color and White faculty—different conceptions of students, different understandings of the profession, and different personal goals for the campus environment (i.e., diversity). These different conceptions, understandings, and goals suggest separate professional worlds for faculty of color.

2. Subordination of Racial and Ethnic Identities

Articulations of professional identity by faculty of color indicate that racial and ethnic identities are suppressed, and thus subordinated to expected norms of behavior and expression embedded within the cultural world of each of the four community colleges. “[This campus] is welcoming and friendly [towards faculty] until you show...your true color, until you show who you are.” Faculty articulated losing their own identities and changing, or not expressing, their views in order to fit the dominant culture. “For me, as a Latina, until my Latina-ness comes out, then they get uncomfortable with that. As long as I'm nice and [compliant] and...friendly, they’re nice and kind and friendly. The subject of race doesn’t come up.”
comes out, then they get uncomfortable with that. As long as I’m nice and [compliant] and...friendly, they’re nice and kind and friendly. The subject of race doesn’t come up.” The implicit association of ethnic identities with agitation on campus places significant identity conflict on faculty of color at the community college.

Norms and structures inherent within community colleges place faculty of color in a subordinated role. Since these structures have been in place for longer than many of these faculty have been in their current roles, changing them becomes difficult, and tension between the professional and racial identities of these faculty of color ensues. “[T]here are norms and expectations and rules that govern how things are done, and most often they do not tend to account [for] the ways that people...understand the world.”

To create a positive sense of self as a community college faculty member, then, faculty of color must negotiate their professional and social identities. This can lead to a state of “double consciousness” where faculty of color choose which groups they identify with and why they decide to choose those particular groups. On the one hand, faculty of color are socialized into their group-based identities—members of a department or program, members of the institution, and members of sub-groups (e.g., committees). On the other hand, faculty can go through a process of acculturation where they adapt their social identities as persons of color to function in a culture different than their initial social identity, which was communicated as a challenge for some faculty of color.

Depending on what was deemed socially appropriate and legitimized by the majority of faculty and those in positions of power at the specific community college, these social identities of faculty of color were either operating in the background of or in direct confrontation with more general aspects of a college’s articulated and overt culture (e.g., claims of institutional diversity, student centered, nurturing personal growth, or promoting a culturally dynamic learning environment). “Well I think it’s difficult to be a person of color...[Y]ou always notice the black dot on the white paper. No one notices the white, just the black dot on the paper. And I believe there’s always a fear...I think it’s...like that for President Obama. I think any place you are, you can’t have the appearance that you are really trying to advance a cause where people of color are concerned...[Y]ou have to have the appearance of neutrality.” For faculty of color, the imperative is for them to be aware of the dominant culture on their campuses; yet, this awareness and the practices that follow do not coincide with their social identities.

In response to the “double consciousness” that faculty of color experience regarding their marginalized place in community colleges with fixed structures, rules, norms, and “Keep your personal, personal and the business, business. You can’t let the two cross or think that because you have personal relationships that [these are] going to be able to completely influence anything professionally.

That’s what I’ve found here... Interpersonal relationships are one thing; professional views are another. I don’t blur lines. My professional relationships [are] with who they should be with professionally. That’s what they are. And I don’t want it to be perceived any other way because then you give people too much to think about. So I don’t go there.”
institutional cultures, these faculty are left searching for ways to adopt and project a professional identify as a community college faculty member. In so doing, they commonly resort to depersonalization of their identities. Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggest that depersonalization of identity occurs in extreme cases of identity conflict when less drastic measures such as ranking or buffering identities are not enough for an individual to find a positive sense of self. For the faculty in this investigation, this depersonalization occurs when they embrace their roles as professionals and, often consciously, limit more personal issues—such as aspects of their racial or ethnic identities—from affecting their work lives. This can lead to a response where behaviors are denials of social and ethnic identities. “Keep your personal, personal and the business, business. You can’t let the two cross or think that because you have personal relationships that [these are] going to be able to completely influence anything professionally. That’s what I’ve found here... Interpersonal relationships are one thing; professional views are another. I don’t blur lines. My professional relationships [are] with who they should be with professionally. That’s what they are. And I don’t want it to be perceived any other way because then you give people too much to think about. So I don’t go there.” In conditions such as these, faculty of color consciously separate or marginalize the more personal aspects of their identity in order to maintain or negotiate a positive sense of self in relation to their institutions or in their relationships with other faculty. Depersonalization can be viewed as a defense against both minority status and explicit forms of racism. White faculty may not only be unaware of the conditions of faculty of color as minority populations but also insensitive to the feelings of faculty of color.

Our research reveals important information about the construction of professional identities of faculty of color at community colleges. We found in our investigation that social identities shaped professional identities, and, in particular, social identity based upon race shaped faculty interactions. “[T]here still seems to be a mentality, and this is my experience with all the ethnicities on the campus, so whether they are White, Black, Brown, or Yellow, there still is a lot of separation based on ethnicity. Which you would think as an institution of higher education that would not exist because you’re dealing with intelligent people, right? You would think but it’s just the opposite. People are still separated by their ethnicity and there’s a feeling of mistrust that exists between them.” The conflation of professional and social identities—African American business instructor, African American history faculty member, Latina psychology faculty member—is not only problematical in confounding the personal or social and the professional but also a method of separation of professional groups.

3. Critical players in the education and development of students

Interacting with students is the social and institutional location where the faculty of color articulated the most positive identification with their racial or ethnic identity. When asked what keeps them at their particular community college, nearly all faculty referred to their connections with students. Leticia, a full-time self-described Chicana faculty at North Point Community College, indicated her feeling of connection to her students because of shared backgrounds. “My students are extremely diverse...A lot of them come from the same background that I did: kind of poor, kind of pulling yourself up, not really knowing what to do,
needing mentoring.” It is this intimate connection with the students, many of whom share similar backgrounds with the faculty of color, that provides a rationale for faculty of color to view themselves as both professionals and members of an ethnic or racial community. Thus, through students, faculty of color develop positive identities, ones that they negotiate in their college interactions. By emphasizing students, these faculty find a social location within the community college where they can embrace their racial or ethnic identity, even if in a general way, without jeopardizing their status as professionals. It is this profoundly strong connection with the students, many of whom share similar backgrounds with faculty of color, that appears to be the driving force that keeps faculty of color in institutions that otherwise marginalize their racial and ethnic identities.

Faculty of color also identify positively with student-oriented diversity programs on their respective campuses. One faculty member talked about representation of minority groups in the curriculum and in public places such as the library. “You go to the library, there’s an Asian/Pacific Study room, there’s a Latino Heritage room, there’s an African American Heritage room...[where] they talk about the Tuskegee pilots...They’re rooms that each community generated money and had the rooms dedicated. And those monies went to ongoing scholarships.” Another spoke positively of a student-oriented program that emphasizes literature from people of color. “Students have discussions and debates and they talk and they present, as well as there’s a major guest speaker that comes as well...It’s well publicized and faculty are encouraged to bring their students to different activities as part of their regular class time to support the students, but also to get the information to them.”

While efforts to increase diversity amongst faculty in the college can be highly contested and therefore an area that creates sharp conflicts between the institutional and racial or ethnic identities of faculty of color, these examples illustrate that promoting diversity with students is less contested. It appears that supporting students, even if that support is charged with specific racial or ethnic identifications, is an activity accepted (or at least not overtly rejected) by the larger professional, student-oriented professional discourse present in community colleges. This means that faculty of color can safely embrace their racial or ethnic identities in the classroom or when advocating for student-oriented programs because the institutional discursive identity also embraces serving the students.

Finally, faculty of color, without emphasizing their own personal importance, noted that students of color sought them out for counsel. One African American male faculty member relates his intense experience with a Latina student who needed his personal help. He acknowledges the importance of helping students academically, but he notes that academic guidance alone will not suffice. “I...recognize there’s some deep, deep unmet need that goes far beyond...curricular. It’s being supportive, it’s all these things that are inherent for faculty of color, but then are enhanced because the number of students who need that at the community college are at a...high level.”
Conclusions

We identified faculty of color who view themselves as marginal to the mainstream actions and behaviors of their institution. They were subordinate to normative structures and power configurations that dominated the institution. We also identified faculty who lived a double life—acceding to the will of the dominant faculty and administrative groups and masking their personal preferences and judgments. In both situations, faculty of color are arrested in their development as professionals and their contributions to their institutions are muted as a result of their positions of subordination.

Yet, even under these conditions, faculty of color expressed a high level of commitment to their institutions and particularly to their students. It was their assertion that faculty of color were imperative for students of color—as teachers, as role models, as advisors, and as mentors—
that enabled them to maintain a professional identity, yet one that was characterized by their ethnic/racial identities.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the findings of our research investigation.

1. **Colleges and state systems need to recognize that faculty of color can contribute to the development and educational attainment of students of color.**

   Students of color gravitate to faculty of color, and the lack of faculty of color can stymie the personal and academic development of students. In considering student outcomes improvements, colleges and state systems must factor in faculty-student relationships, or the lack of them. This may mean that colleges and state systems work toward increasing numbers of faculty of color. In the U.S., with 46% of community college students and only 18% of community college faculty designated non-White, there is a substantial disconnection in the ethnic/racial makeup between the two populations.

2. **Colleges need to work towards a critical mass of faculty of color, including greater distribution of faculty of color across program areas.**

   The community college problem of a surfeit of part-time faculty (70% of total faculty employees) contributes to the lack of full-time faculty of color [Levin et al., 2011]. Qualified candidates for faculty positions will opt for full-time positions and ignore part-time ones, where a large proportion of full-time faculty begin their community college career. Faculty of color need to be recruited deliberately and strategically; but first, full-time positions must be made available. This provision of full-time positions may require targeted funding on the part of the State, to offer an incentive to colleges to hire faculty of color. In order to ensure a pool of faculty of color as candidates for positions, search committees need to be comprised of faculty of color, not just one member but also a significant proportion of the membership.

3. **Institutional leaders must act**

   Those in positions of leadership must act to ensure that their actions both alleviate and do not aggravate conditions for faculty of color. This refers to their development and enactment of policies, such as hiring policies, as well as to their own practices of working with and interacting with faculty of color. Diversity initiatives and articulations as well as multi-cultural and ethnic emphases of campuses must have substance and depth, not function as superficial or token solutions to tensions or aspirations. In hiring practices of senior leaders, efforts are required to increase both administrators of color and administrators who are culturally competent and sensitive.

4. **Conversations on campus**

   There are distinct spheres of interaction and interests among faculty and especially between faculty of color and White faculty and between generations of faculty. For the benefit of
students and in order to establish a coherent and cohesive professional workforce, faculty must have, what at one college was called, “courageous conversations” about race. Furthermore, all faculty must determine ways in which to function as a community of peers, including part-time faculty. A faculty body that is not a coherent one and a body where there are two or more social classes do not bode well for an effective professional labor force. Furthermore, when one part of the faculty—faculty of color—are constrained personally from enacting their social values, then there is inefficient use of labor and limits on the self-actualization and self-efficacy of individual faculty.

Final Comment

With a growing student population and one constituted by ever-increasing numbers of underrepresented minority students—in California, this population is the majority, with over 50% classified as underrepresented minorities and less than 30% of students are classified as White, non-Hispanic—faculty of color have an increasingly significant role. Given the emphasis placed upon community colleges nationally and in states to train a workforce and to provide access to baccalaureate degree programs, the progress and academic development of students are imperative.

Presentations, Papers, and Publications

Levin, J. S., Jackson-Boothby, A., & Walker, L., Institutional change in the community college: an impossible task. Keeping Our Faculty of Color VI Symposium, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, April, 2013.

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References for the project


