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Culturally Responsive Library Leadership in the California Community Colleges

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ABSTRACT

Culturally Responsive Library Leadership in the California Community Colleges

by Melanie Aponte Chu

Purpose: The purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study was to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organizations, based on Horsford et al.'s (2011) Culturally Relevant Leadership (CRL) framework.

Methodology: This study identified and described culturally responsive leadership strategies of library leaders at the California Community Colleges (CCCs). As part of a thematic team, the researcher designed an interview protocol in alignment with the four dimensions of the CRL framework: professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and political context. Fourteen participants were identified and selected using criterion sampling, with participants meeting at least three of five criteria. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews, then transcribed, analyzed, and coded the data to identify themes and findings.

Findings: The researcher made seven major findings based on the data collection, coding, frequency counts, and analysis of emergent themes utilized by CCC library leaders. The findings are organized into four dimensions: professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and political context. The findings indicate that culturally responsive library leaders: amplify access to advocate for students, decolonize collections with culturally relevant materials, honor their own personal journeys, create and hold space for diverse lived experiences, continually interrogate policy and practice, center students in the library's story, and collaborate and conspire with strategic partners.

Conclusions: The researcher drew seven conclusions and seven implications for action based on the findings, to provide deeper insight into the culturally responsive leadership strategies of CCC library leaders. Implications for action include aligning with academic counselors to co-create and support students' educational plans, conducting regular and collaborative equity audits, and creating intentional opportunities for intersectionality between academic and student affairs.

Recommendations: Further research is recommended to replicate this study with library leaders of color, and with library leaders from the California State University and the University of California systems. A meta-analysis could be conducted to identify common culturally responsive leadership strategies utilized among the groups of CCC leaders studied in this thematic study.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"I always felt, in any town, if I can get to a library, I'll be okay."
– Maya Angelou (Remembering, 2014)

The mission of the California Community Colleges (CCCs) is simple: putting

students first. As the largest system of higher education and largest provider of workforce

education in the United States, the CCCs strive to reduce income inequality and improve

social mobility for its 1.8 million students at 116 colleges. From associate degrees and

certificates to transferring to a 4-year institution, the CCCs offer educational

opportunities to a diverse student body. Indeed, according to the California Community

Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO, 2023b), nearly 70% of CCC students are from

diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Central to the mission are the services that support students who have been

traditionally marginalized in higher education. The library is critical to the support and

success of all college students. In a *Council on Library and Information Resources*

report, Freeman (2005) maintained the importance of libraries: "No other building can so

symbolically and physically represent the academic heart of an institution" (p. 9).

Today's college libraries provide a complex array of resources, spaces, and services–

including textbooks, tutoring, technology, and teaching information literacy skills–that

help level the playing field for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Yet across the system, library leaders are not representative of the racial and

ethnic diversity of CCC students. Library leaders in the CCCs are predominantly White,

facing increasingly complex and nuanced challenges in delivering culturally responsive

library services. A disconnect with the lived experiences of students of color manifests in

ways both small and large: Do the books on the shelves represent a variety of authors and

perspectives? Are specific behaviors deemed disruptive, thereby penalizing students who may need a place to nap or have a snack? Do policies and procedures inadvertently privilege certain students, like overdue fines or online-only renewals?

Putting students first means library leaders must create safe, inclusive spaces and services for all students. Access does not always equal success for historically excluded student populations. With community college libraries playing a unique role in both academic and student support services, the need to develop culturally responsive library leadership is critical.

Background

California Community Colleges

As the largest provider of higher education in the United States, the impact of the CCCs is profound. Per the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO, 2023a), seven out of 10 nurses, eight out of 10 police officers and firefighters, half of all California State University students, and one-third of University of California students start at a CCC. Even so, the Public Policy Institute of California (2015) estimates that the state will face a workforce shortage of one million holders of college degrees and certificates by 2025. At the same time, the CCCs have a clearly articulated Vision for Success to ensure that "students from all backgrounds succeed in reaching their goals and improving their families and communities, eliminating achievement gaps once and for all" (CCCCO, 2017). There is an underlying urgency for improving student outcomes that is magnified in the CCCs because California has the world's fifth-largest economy and the most diverse system of public higher education.

Community colleges embody the American ideals of access to education and upward mobility. And yet, the community college is an institution whose students have traditionally low rates of retention and completion (Cervantes, 2015). As Topham (2016) noted, the CCC system walks a fine balance, with long-standing open-door policies that fostered "a focus on access over success" (p. 38) contributing to declining degree completion. Ease of access, low or no tuition, minimal admission requirements, and high numbers of first-generation students and students attending part-time contribute to low retention (Fike & Fike, 2008). This tension between student access and achievement arises from being an essential entry point into higher education, particularly for low-income and traditionally underrepresented students.

Per Bailey and Morest (2006), community colleges face a truly difficult task: "They enroll those students who have the most daunting educational, economic, and social barriers to their education, yet they have the fewest resources per student to serve those students" (p. 4). The disproportionate achievement gap led to recent California legislation Assembly Bill 705, requiring CCCs to minimize the number of students in remedial courses and increase those who complete transfer-level English and math courses within 1 year. Since AB 705 was enacted in 2018, related system initiatives include a new student-centered funding formula based on increased student retention and completion, decreased time to graduation and transfer, and a "Guided Pathways" framework to engage students and keep them on a timely, clear path to graduation. According to Rodriguez (as cited in CCCCO, 2021b), the student-centered funding formula aligns with "what we as a set of colleges are doing: increasing college access and equity toward completion, especially for first-generation, low-income, adult learners and

underresourced students and communities'' (p. 11). In other words, the CCCs are operationalizing equity with a financial model that prioritizes the success of diverse students in tangible ways.

The CCCCO refers to its Vision for Success as a "north star" for guiding the system's reforms. In light of an unprecedented pandemic, economic uncertainty, and sociopolitical unrest, the original Vision for Success (CCCCO, 2017) has been clarified by the "Vision for Success Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force" (CCCCO, 2020b), pointing explicitly to the diversity of faculty and staff as a key driver to improve outcomes for historically marginalized students. Further, an "Update to the Vision for Success: Reaffirming Equity in a Time of Recovery" (CCCCO, 2021b) report demanded a restructuring of the CCCs from the ground up as anti-racist, equity-minded institutions, rather than a traditional model with "added-on supports" (p. 10) for students of color. Given these pressures at both state and local levels to address systemic racism in concrete ways, culturally responsive library leaders must develop intentional, inclusive libraries where diverse students can thrive.

The Evolution of Academic Libraries

In the higher education landscape of increased accountability and measurable outcomes, academic support services across the CCCs are essential to bolster student success. From outreach and advising to financial aid and library services, the stakes are high to keep students on track to complete their educational goals. The past 20 years have substantially evolved academic libraries, transforming them from staid, traditional repositories of scholarly knowledge to dynamic, student-centered learning commons with

wraparound support services (Oliveira, 2018; Roberts, 2007). This model has been

critiqued by some. In "The Deserted Library," (Carlson, 2001) noted:

> The shift leaves many librarians and scholars wondering and worrying about the
> future of what has traditionally been the social and intellectual heart of campus, as
> well as about whether students are learning differently now—or learning at all.
> Some librarians are fighting back—with plush chairs, double-mocha lattes, book
> groups, author readings, and even music. (p. A36)

Since the advent of the internet, the value and role of libraries have been debated

in the public consciousness every few years or so. Carlson's (2001) piece decrying the

decline of reading rooms in the rise of electronic resources, and Cochrane's (2002)

counterargument, "Today's Vibrant, Far from Deserted, Academic Libraries," are perfect

examples of this discourse that portends the end of the academic library in the face of

information technology. Surely, if students can access a literal worldwide web of

information from their phones, the demise of libraries must be nigh.

The aforementioned critiques assume that all students have smartphones and

internet access. On the contrary, the pandemic highlighted a persistent digital divide. The

Pew Research Center reported that of American adults in low-income households, 24%

do not have a smartphone, and 27% have internet access only through a smartphone with

no internet at home (Vogels, 2021). Throughout the pandemic, libraries helped provide

reliable internet access, loaning hotspots, boosting Wi-Fi to parking lots, and using

bookmobiles to bring mobile internet to rural communities (American Library

Association [ALA], 2022). Moreover, as "fake news" continues to proliferate, the work

of libraries may be more critical than ever before, in what Herther (2018) referred to as

an "age of information, misinformation, and hyper information" (p. 37). The need for

developing critical thinking and information literacy skills is vital.

Indeed, academic libraries are integral to many of the high-impact practices of colleges today. According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2022), high-impact practices (HIPs) are evidence-based teaching and learning strategies that increase student success, "including and especially those from demographic groups historically underserved by higher education." Academic libraries partner with faculty and other student services to support HIPs such as first-year seminars emphasizing critical inquiry and information literacy; undergraduate research projects, capstone courses, e-portfolios; and writing-intensive courses across the curriculum. In fact, Murray (2015) found a positive correlation between HIPs and library instruction, facilities, and collections. Why is this important? Amidst a complex information landscape, the libraries of the CCCs must also meet the system's demand for increasing the retention and timely completion of all students.

Libraries and Student Success

Mission-driven, student-centered funding formulas amplify the need for academic libraries to support student success in meaningful ways. Leaders must provide clear and compelling evidence of the library's contributions toward the institutional mission (Oakleaf, 2010). Numerous studies show a correlation between the use of library resources and graduation rates (Crawford et al., 2004; Goodall & Pattern, 2011; Haddow & Joseph, 2010; Kramer & Kramer, 1968). However, most of these studies, even those with substantial sample populations, generally focus on a single institution. Several large-scale, comprehensive studies help establish the value of libraries in retention and outcomes-driven assessment; three are highlighted here.

First, in a landmark statistical analysis of over 300,000 responses to a national student engagement survey conducted between 1984 and 2002 at 300 4-year institutions, Kuh and Gonyea (2003) found that library usage correlated positively with student engagement in learning. Importantly, Kuh and Gonyea indicated that students of color use the library as much or more than White students. Second, Mezick (2007) examined 586 institutions from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) 2003 annual trend reports, finding statistically significant relationships among library expenditures, levels of staffing, and student retention.

Third, Brown and Malenfant (2016) documented "Assessment in Action" initiatives at over 200 postsecondary institutions from 2013-2016, across various institutions, from community colleges to tribal libraries and research universities. Brown and Malenfant identified several key findings: library use increases student success; information literacy instruction, particularly in early coursework, improves general education outcomes overall; and collaborative library partnerships and individual research consultations can enhance student learning. Taken together, these studies offer compelling evidence that academic libraries provide meaningful, measurable contributions toward student success.

Although the library's legacy as the symbolic "heart" of campus holds less weight in today's mission-driven institutions, one theory still rings true. Tinto's (1993) *Leaving College* remains an enduring and often cited example of a longitudinal study making explicit connections between the student and their interactions within the academic and social systems of the institution. First introduced by Tinto in 1975, "student integration"

or a sense of belonging, is paramount to retaining college students; this integration can take two forms, academic and social, which in turn are compounded by factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The library, then, exists at this unique intersection of academic and student integration, with a huge potential impact on student success. Academic libraries that provide an inclusive environment outside of the classroom can act as a bridge between the academic and student service "sides" of the institution.

Library Leadership and Diversity

Culturally responsive leaders must align their library organizations with the CCC's updated, equity-minded Vision for Success (CCCCO, 2021b), ensuring that library staffing, services, and resources contribute to the broader systemic efforts of retaining and graduating students of color. Yet, librarianship is sorely lacking diversity. According to Data USA (2021), 81.3% of librarians are White, non-Hispanic, 83.5% female, and an average of 47 years of age (see Figure 1). Similarly, Kendrick and Hulbert (2023) indicated that as of 2022, 81% of 227,000 "librarians and media collection specialists" (p. 6-7) are White. It is worth noting that at the time of writing, there is no statewide data available on the race and ethnicity of California librarians. Although CCC faculty/staff demographics are available by ethnicity and classification (e.g., faculty, staff, administrator), they are not searchable by specific position, such as library dean or director, in the CCCCO DataMart. The national demographic is subsequently referenced because no data published by the CCCCO accurately identified how many library leaders of color work in the CCCs. Given that 69% of CCC students come from diverse ethnic

backgrounds (CCCCO, 2021b), and 81.3% of librarians are White (Data USA, 2021),

library leaders by and large do not appear to reflect the students they serve in the CCCs.

Figure 1

Race and Ethnicity of Librarians
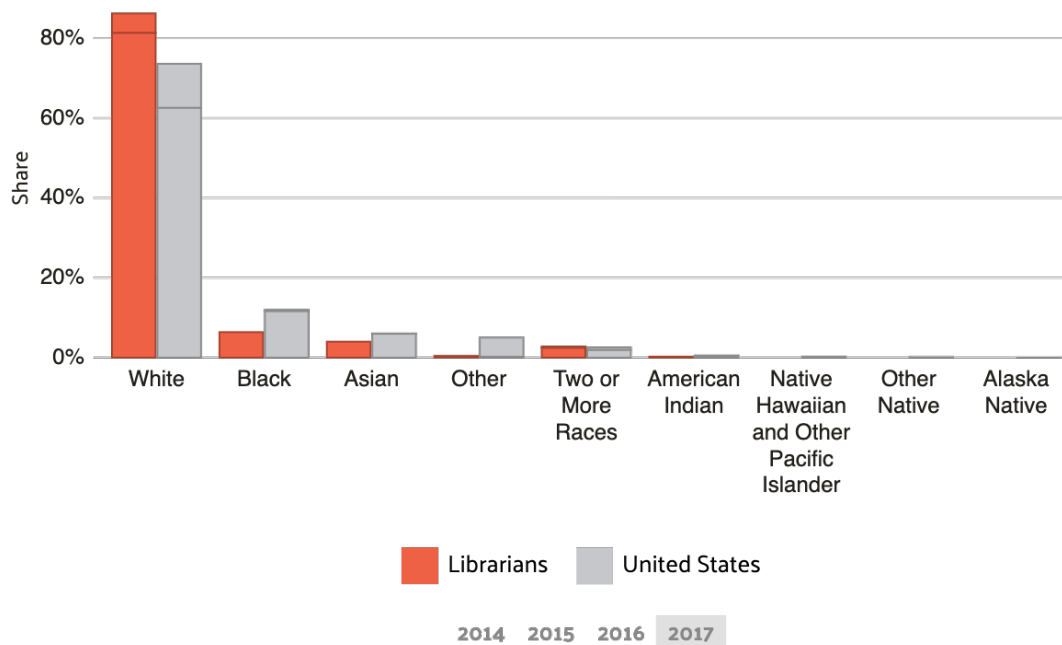
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(https://datausa.io/profile/soc/librarians#demographics). Copyright 2021 by the author.
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Whiteness of Libraries

Looking at libraries through a lens of Whiteness recognizes that services, spaces,

and collections have been designed—whether intentionally or not—in ways that benefit

certain populations at the exclusion of others. Galvan (2015) defined Whiteness as White,

heterosexual, capitalist, and middle class stemming from power and privilege. The

Whiteness of librarianship is compounded by several factors: a professional code of

ethics based on neutrality; a complex, far-from-neutral history; and a lack of graduate

coursework or training to prepare librarians for leading culturally responsive organizations.

The American Library Association's (ALA, 1939) original code of ethics sought to make clear to the general public the values and ethical principles that guide the work of librarians: "Impartial service should be rendered to all who are entitled to use the library" (p. 2). Several scholars have documented the historical Whiteness of librarianship in the United States, from the origins of public libraries as sites for cultural assimilation in immigrant communities (Honma, 2005); to offering differentiated services for immigrant communities compared with Black communities (Chu, 1999); to scenes of civil protest when Black Americans were denied library access even in so-called integrated areas (Hall, 2012). Indeed, which groups are entitled to library usage continues to be negotiated in the ways in which policies are enacted and enforced, which authors are kept on the shelves, and librarians themselves are overwhelmingly middle-aged White women.

Graduate studies in library and information science (LIS), in many ways, continue to perpetuate the values of Whiteness. Most of the top 20 library graduate programs do not introduce students to critical race theory and specific issues of racism in libraries (Gibson et al., 2018). There is a persistent lack of diversity among the faculty teaching and developing the LIS curriculum (Cooke & Sánchez, 2019), and purported diversity initiatives fail to recruit and retain librarians of color placed in predominantly White institutions (Hathcock, 2015). LIS programs espouse a more general and inclusive "multiculturalism" narrative rather than engaging in critical analysis and discussion of racism (Honma, 2005; Pawley, 2006). Given the lack of representation in the field and

LIS curriculum, how prepared are library leaders to meet the needs of diverse students of the CCCs?

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The "Update to the Vision for Success" (CCCCO, 2021b) calls for expanding and accelerating work across the CCCs to identify and close equity gaps. One well-established method of closing educational gaps is through culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. Early research on "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1992), "culturally responsive" (Gay, 1994), and "anti-racist" (Cochran-Smith, 1995) pedagogy challenged the prevailing "deficit" model of marginalized students. Rather than viewing students' racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds as a shortcoming, culturally responsive teachers build upon students' diverse experiences to validate and engage them in a community of learners. Per Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant pedagogy has three key factors: high academic expectations with appropriate support, reshaping and connecting the curriculum to reflect students' lived experiences, and cultivating critical consciousness. Culturally responsive pedagogy is seen explicitly in one of the system's seven commitments: "Pair high expectations with high support" (CCCCO, 2017, p. 3), as well as resonating with the work of academic libraries in supporting the development of students' critical thinking skills.

Critical Race Theory

It is worth noting that culturally responsive pedagogy is rooted in critical pedagogy and critical race theory (CRT). Critical pedagogy, as established by Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, embraces education's ability to empower and liberate people, to raise the critical consciousness of learners regarding oppressive social

conditions to make a change. CRT is a framework that examines the relationship among race, racism, and power to dismantle racist systems and structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As explained by Delgado and Stefancic (2017), CRT has five central tenets: (a) racism is ordinary and embedded in American society; (b) the rights of people of color advance only when they converge with the interests of White people; (c) race is a social construct that maintains hierarchies and disparities; (d) people have no single, essential identity, rather race intersects with other facets of identity in ways that compound discrimination and privilege; and (e) the importance of counter-narratives, the voices, stories, and experiences of people of color. Again, culturally responsive pedagogy and CRT are echoed in the CCCCO's updated Vision for Success (2021b) by acknowledging long-standing inequities that have historically failed students of color and mapping a way forward to rebuild and reform the CCCs as anti-racist institutions.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

One framework that provides insight into how leaders can influence a school or system's educational equity imperative is the work by Khalifa et al. (2016) on culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL). Khalifa et al. established four overarching characteristics of CRSL: critical self-reflection, development of culturally responsive teachers, promotion of an inclusive school environment, and meaningful engagement with the community. In a meta-analysis of over 200 empirical studies, Khalifa et al. (2016) identified the actions that most influence school climate and student achievement, particularly for students of color. The CRSL framework provides numerous examples of the ways in which leaders can apply culturally responsive practices in their organizations. For example, culturally responsive leaders: use equity audits and school data to measure

inclusiveness (Skrla et al., 2004); develop teacher capacity to reform the curriculum and broaden their understanding of the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy, including benefits to White students (Sleeter, 2012); and serve as advocates and activists for both school and community-based causes (Johnson, 2006). Although this research specifically focused on K-12 school leadership practices, many of the same practices can be seen in culturally responsive leadership practices in higher education.

Applied Critical Leadership

In the applied critical leadership (ACL) framework, Santamaría and Santamaría first looked at the practices of diverse leaders in K-12 schools (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012) and then in higher education (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016). The strengths-based ACL framework established nine characteristics of culturally responsive leaders: an ability to have critical conversations, a CRT lens, seeking group consensus, stereotype threat awareness, engagement with academic discourse, honoring constituents, leading by example, developing trust, and a servant leadership style (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). In Santamaría and Santamaría's (2012, 2016) ACL, diverse leaders bring their whole selves to their work, embracing complex identities as a way to enhance their leadership and advocate for their communities. Both the CRSL and ACL frameworks address the barriers faced by leaders from historically underserved backgrounds and the ways in which leaders bring their unique perspectives and experiences to improving outcomes at all levels of the organizations they lead.

Culturally Relevant Leadership

In "Pedagogy of the Personal and Professional: Toward a Framework for Culturally Relevant Leadership," Horsford et al. (2011) presented a useful schema that

brings together the mediating factors that influence and inform leadership in complex and diverse educational settings. Horsford et al.'s culturally relevant leadership (CRL) framework is grounded in culturally relevant, antiracist pedagogy while also recognizing the personal and political contexts in which leaders must navigate. Their framework for CRL identifies four key dimensions for successful educational leadership: professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and political context (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Framework for Culturally Relevant Leadership
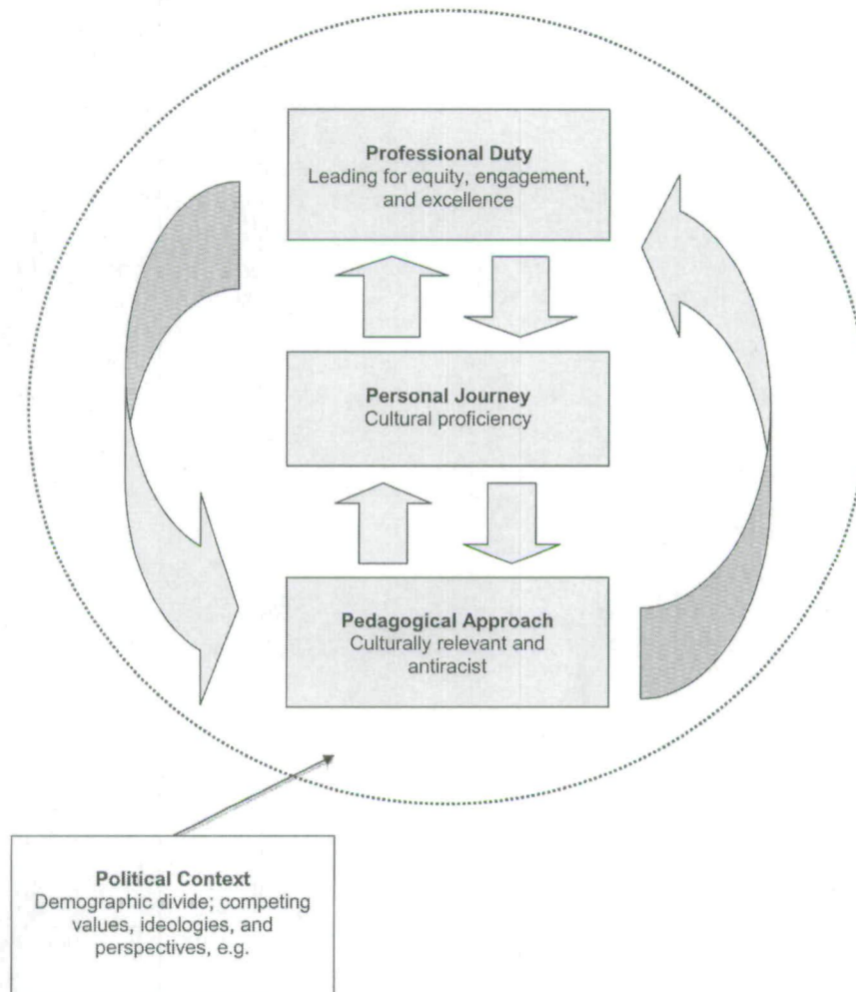
Note. Reprinted from *Journal of School Leadership*, by Horsford et. al, 2011. Copyright 2011 by the authors. Reprinted with permission.

The CRL framework's four dimensions—also known as mediating factors, domains, contexts, or variables—intersect and inform one another to develop one's capacity to lead culturally responsive environments that center on the success of diverse students. First, *professional duty* is defined as "leading for equity, engagement, and excellence" (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 594). This dimension speaks to how educational leaders are trained and supported to thrive in increasingly complex and diverse school environments. To what extent are leaders driven by professional standards or a sense of duty? What strategies do leaders use to cultivate equity-minded organizations?

Second is the *personal journey*, or the leader's own "path to cultural proficiency" (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 597). This dimension prompts educators to reflect on their underlying beliefs and assumptions, as well as how their backgrounds impact their leadership practices. How do the leader's personal lived experiences influence their professional efforts to foster culturally responsive teams? To what extent can they bring their authentic identities to the workplace?

The third dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework is the *pedagogical approach*, looking at how the leader establishes a culturally affirming and supportive school climate. This dimension values the experiences and cultures of students, and in turn, teachers take what they know about their students "to adapt the curriculum to fit their students" (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 591). What approaches does a leader use to develop their team's capacity to serve diverse students?

Lastly, the fourth dimension in the CRL framework is what Horsford et al. (2011) called the *political context*, an overarching variable that impacts the professional, personal, and pedagogical dimensions. The political context addresses the leader's ability

to "both recognize and negotiate the political terrain inextricably tied to everyday education policy and practices" (p. 596). How does a leader build consensus and alliances around culturally relevant policies and practices? In the fourth overlaying dimension in the CRL framework, Horsford et al. recognize the role of the political in the professional, personal, and pedagogical contexts of educational leadership. The framework of CRL serves as the theoretical foundation for this study to explore the professional, personal, pedagogical, and political contexts in which participants lead equity-minded, student-centered libraries in the CCC system.

The four dimensions of the CRL framework by Horsford et al. (2011) take the researcher deeper into the leader's mindset, investigating what mediating factors might be present in their decision-making. What role might the leader's personal journey, professional duty, pedagogical approach, and political context play in their culturally relevant leadership practices? For example, should a leader be of Asian descent, and have deep-rooted traditional values such as not openly challenging authority, a culturally responsive Asian leader may prioritize consensus building and building alliances over top-down decision making.

Statement of the Research Problem

The CCC system is a vast and complex system of 116 individual colleges serving 1.8 million students, 69% of whom come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (CCCCO, 2023b). With its open-door foundation of providing educational opportunity and social mobility for all, community colleges as an institution have traditionally low rates of retention and completion (Cervantes, 2015; Fike & Fike, 2008; Topham, 2016). Indeed, only 48% of CCC students graduate or transfer after 6 years, an achievement gap

disproportionately affecting marginalized populations (CCCCO, 2020b). In the seminal text *Leaving College*, Tinto (1993) argued that student integration, or a sense of belonging in the academic and social aspects of college, is paramount to retention. Of the myriad support services on campus, the college library is uniquely situated to support both the academic and social integration of students.

Extensive research demonstrates that faculty and staff diversity is a key driver in closing the equity gap for traditionally marginalized students (Hurtado et al., 1998; Robinson et al., 2013; Romero, 2017; O. Taylor et al., 2010). Faculty and staff of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds are more likely to engage students in culturally inclusive practices that contribute to campus climate (Mayhew et al., 2006; Parnell, 2016; Quaye & Harper, 2007). Furthermore, significant findings on culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992), culturally responsive (Gay, 1994), and anti-racist pedagogy (Cochran-Smith, 1995) indicate the importance of building on students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences to validate and engage diverse students in a community of learners. Additional studies explore the impact of culturally responsive leadership in schools (Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa, 2012; Khalifa et al., 2016) and in higher education (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016).

Yet, little is known about the role of culturally responsive library leadership in the CCC. Librarians are predominantly White (Honma, 2005; Pawley, 2006); and most graduate programs do not prepare librarians to engage with issues of racism (Gibson et al., 2018). Despite this phenomenon, library usage has been positively correlated with student retention and educational attainment, particularly among nontraditional students (Goodall & Pattern, 2011; Haddow, 2013; Oliveira, 2018; Zhong & Alexander, 2007).

Importantly, several landmark studies found that students who use the library are more likely to persist and that historically marginalized students find the library a "safe haven" that supports and nurtures their academic success (Kuh & Gonyea, 2003, 2015; Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 2009). Building upon Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student integration and retention, Mezick (2007) and Haddow (2013) looked at the role libraries may play in student integration and retention. One might argue that libraries are positioned at a critical nexus of academic and social integration for community college students, given that community colleges provide educational access to the most vulnerable populations. Although research has indicated that faculty and staff diversity is a key driver of student retention, and that library usage is positively linked to student success, the role of culturally responsive leadership in community college libraries had not been explored. Culturally responsive library leadership in the largest system of public higher education, the CCCs, then, offers a rich area for further study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study was to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organizations.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question: *How do community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies?* This question was designed to explore the Culturally Relevant Leadership framework in the lived experiences of library leaders in the CCCs, leading organizations that support and engage diverse students.

Research Sub-Questions

Based on Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework:

1. How does one's sense of *professional duty* influence California Community

   College library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership

   strategies?

2. How does one's *personal journey* influence California Community College

   library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership

   strategies?

3. How does one's *pedagogical approach* influence California Community

   College library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership

   strategies?

4. How do *political contexts* influence California Community College library

   leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies?

Significance of the Problem

This study investigated the lived experiences of community college library

leaders, specifically how they use culturally responsive practices to create inclusive,

student-centered libraries. This study is significant in the following four ways.

First, this study is significant because it expands the published work of Kuh and

Gonyea (2003, 2015). Kuh and Gonyea's landmark studies revealed that library usage

had been linked in numerous studies not only to retention and completion but importantly

to a sense of belonging for students from marginalized communities. Findings from this

study can help library leaders better serve CCC students. For example, this study may

reveal that library leaders must conduct focus groups with diverse student representation

in order to implement targeted services for those from marginalized communities who often do not have a voice.

Second, this study furthers the application of Tinto's (1975, 1993) seminal student integration theory. Although it is widely examined in higher education literature, few studies have connected Tinto's model with the work of academic libraries (Haddow, 2013; Mezick, 2007). For example, this study may indicate that peer mentoring and tutoring in the library support both the academic and social aspects of integration for marginalized students. Therefore, this study will contribute to leaders' ability to articulate the library's role in larger retention efforts on campus.

Next, this study is noteworthy in that it addresses the system-wide call for closing the equity gap in the CCCs. In the 2020 "Vision for Success Diversity Equity and Inclusion Report," the Chancellor's Office has given the directive to increase faculty and staff racial and ethnic diversity because diverse faculty are more likely to implement culturally responsive strategies (CCCCO, 2020b). Because librarians are predominantly White and lack professional training in matters that are "culturally sustaining, and socially responsible" (Cooke, 2018, p. 43), this study investigated how community college librarians engage in culturally responsive leadership practices. Findings may indicate the need for recruitment and retention of diverse library staff in providing inclusive frontline support for students from marginalized populations.

Lastly, this study applied Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework to academic libraries. The CRL framework examines educational leadership through the lens of four intersecting dimensions: professional, personal, pedagogical, and political. However, this study was the first of its kind to apply the CRL frame to community college library

leaders. Findings may provide insight into specific policies and procedures that libraries can implement—for example, removing late fines for overdue materials—to reduce the equity gap further. Faced with the challenges of demonstrating impact on student outcomes and reducing the achievement gap for historically marginalized students in a climate of limited resources and increased accountability, library leaders must apply culturally responsive strategies to all aspects of their organizations.

Definitions

The following are operational and theoretical definitions used in the study:

Anti-Racism: Actively identifying and challenging policies, behaviors, and beliefs perpetuating racist inequities, actions, and ideas. Racism is "any prejudice against someone because of their race when those views are reinforced by systems of power" (Oluo, 2019, p. 26). Further, Kendi (2019) defined an anti-racist idea as one that suggests that "racial groups [are] equal in all their apparent differences—that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group" (p. 20), noting that antiracist policies lead to racial equity.

Bias: An inclination, feeling, preference, or opinion, about a social group that is preconceived or unreasoned and grounded in stereotypes and prejudices.

BIPOC: An abbreviation for Black, Indigenous, people (or person) of color.

California Community Colleges: A 2-year post-secondary education system, also known as "junior colleges." The CCCs is a statewide public education system of 116 colleges and is the largest system of higher education in the country, with more than 1.8 million students (CCCCO, 2023b).

Color blindness: This racial ideology promotes the belief that all individuals should be treated equally, regardless of race, culture, or ethnicity. Color blindness as an approach negates the impact that race and/or ethnicity has had on the lived experiences or identities of individuals and can perpetuate institutional or systemic racism (CCCCO, 2020a).

Community College: "Community colleges in America, originally termed junior colleges or two-year colleges, have their roots dating back to the Morrill Act of 1862 (the Land Grant Act), which essentially expanded access into public higher education" (Drury, 2003).

Cultural Capital: In the context of this study, the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged, such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005).

Culturally Responsive Leadership: A theory and leadership practice that considers race, ethnicity, language, culture, and gender (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016). Characteristics of culturally responsive leaders can include self-awareness, creating inclusive environments, courage to have critical conversations, intersectionality, and operating through a CRT lens.

Culture (institutional, ethnic): Values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, customs, behavioral norms, language, and collective identities shared by a group of individuals that serve as a pattern for interpreting reality (CCCCO, 2020a; Howard, 2019).

De facto segregation: Racial, ethnic, or other segregation resulting from societal differences between groups, such as socioeconomic or political disparity, without institutionalized legislation intended to segregate.

Deficit-Minded: Blaming students for their inequitable outcomes instead of examining the systemic factors contributing to their challenges. Places the responsibility for failure on the student rather than the systemic factors that contribute to these outcomes. Has traditionally been used to describe marginalized student groups (Cabrera, 2018; CCCCO, 2020a).

Diversity: The ways in which people differ, including all the characteristics that make one individual or group different from another—such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, as well as different ideas, perspectives, and values (UC Berkeley, Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2009). For the purpose of this study, diversity is defined with a primary focus on racial and ethnic diversity, while also recognizing the intersectionality of other characteristics in shaping identity and lived experiences.

Equity: Conditions under which individuals are provided the resources they need to have access to the same opportunities as the general population. Equity accounts for systematic inequalities, meaning the distribution of resources provides more for those who need it most. "Equality" assumes even distribution (CCCCO, 2020a).

Gender Identity: Refers to an internal, and personally defined, sense of being a man, woman, both, in between, and/or non-binary (CCCCO, 2020a).

Higher Education: Education beyond high school, traditionally grades nine through 12 in the United States. Also known as higher ed, HE or post-secondary education.

Hispanic or Latino/a: Pan-ethnic labels, often used interchangeably, for people of Spanish or Latin American descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI): Defined as an accredited two or 4-year, post-secondary institution that enrolls at least 25% Hispanic students (Developing Hispanic-serving institutions, 20 U.S.C. § Sec 1101a, 2007).

Inclusion: "Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policymaking in a way that shares power" (CCCCO, 2020a, p. 6).

Institutional Racism: Refers to the ways in which systems of power, institutional structures, policies, and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. "The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as non-white" (Potapchuk et al., 2005, p. 39). Can also be referred to as systemic racism.

Intersectionality: As defined by Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality describes how race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other characteristics converge and compound social inequalities. Intersectionality allows researchers, leaders, and educators to critically examine how multiple identities can uniquely influence lived experiences, inequalities, and power (Barnett & Felten, 2016).

Latinx: "Latinx is a term used to describe people who are of or relate to Latin American origin or descent. It is a gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative to Latino or Latina" (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020).

Leadership: "A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2010, p. 3). Within the context of community colleges, Nevarez et al. (2013) noted that "current leadership theories used to contextualize and resolve dilemmas facing community colleges…are guided by notions of equity, access, diversity, ethics, critical inquiry, transformational change, and social justice" (p. xvii).

Library Leaders: For the purposes of this study, library leaders are academic librarians with a minimum qualification of a master's degree in LIS or a related field, serving in a leadership role at a CCC library. In the CCCs, position titles of library leaders may include but are not limited to dean, director, department chair, coordinator, or head librarian.

Marginalized: Individuals, groups, and communities (including but not limited to ethnicity, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, gender, and age) who have historically and systematically been denied access to services, resources, and power relationships across economic, political, and cultural dimensions as a result of systemic, durable, and persistent racism, discrimination and other forms of oppression. In different contexts, also referred to as underrepresented or underserved.

Mid-level Leader: In the context of higher education, mid-level leaders can be found among faculty, staff, and administrator ranks. Although position titles are not

consistent across campuses, common titles may include but are not limited to Director, Dean, Manager, Supervisor, Lead, Coordinator, or Chair (Amey et al., 2020).

Minoritized: Describes the process of "minortization" whereby individuals are afforded less power and representation based on their social identities. These social identities, such as race and ethnicity, are socially constructed concepts that are created and accepted by society (CCCCO, 2020a).

Pedagogy: The practice of educating, instructing, or teaching; the activities that impart knowledge or skill.

Racial Microaggressions: Within the context of higher education, racial microaggressions are subtle and often unconscious, yet commonplace acts of racism. These acts may take form verbally, nonverbally, and/or visually, nevertheless, all have a negative impact on campus climate and the well-being of the individual target (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Racially Minoritized: Process by which groups of students or individuals are "othered" and thereby disenfranchised based on race by the dominant group (Benitez, 2010; Stewart, 2013).

Student Services: Divisions or departments such as financial aid, counseling, admissions, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), library, food pantry, etc., that provide services and student support in higher education. They aim to support student growth, development, academic success, wellness, and referral to college and community resources during the academic experience.

URM: An abbreviation for underrepresented minority or traditionally marginalized population.

Whiteness: Refers to the way that White people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared (Smithsonian Institute, n.d.). Whiteness as the default also refers to the system of privileges and advantages—e.g., political, social, institutional, and economic—afforded to White people.

Delimitations

Per Patton (2015), delimitations are the boundaries or parameters set by the researcher in order to conduct the study. This research study is bound by (a) the number of CCCs, (b) the number of library leaders in the CCC, and (c) the CRL framework by Horsford et al. (2011). This dissertation is delimited to the 116 CCCs and the application of the four dimensions of the CRL framework, e.g., personal journey, professional duty, pedagogical approach, and political context.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II of this study reviews the research and literature related to culturally responsive library leadership in the context of CCCs. The first section begins with a brief history of public higher education in California, and the role community colleges play in relation to the CSU and UC systems. The diverse demographics of community college students, along with systemic disproportionate achievement gaps, are examined within the context of CCC's equity imperative and call to action, to reduce achievement gaps for students from traditionally marginalized backgrounds and to increase diverse faculty and staff.

The second section provides a comprehensive overview of the value of academic libraries in supporting engagement and retention specifically for diverse students. Then the literature review focuses on the lack of diversity in library leadership, the lack of culturally responsive curriculum in library graduate degrees, and how libraries perpetuate academic values of Whiteness. The third section explores the theoretical frameworks of educational equity, and how teachers can level the playing field for diverse students in the classroom through CRT and culturally responsive pedagogy. Next, culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) and applied critical leadership (ACL) are addressed, presenting transformational, equity-minded strategies for educational leaders to engage and support student-centered organizations. The last section will conclude with CRL's professional, personal, pedagogical, and political dimensions that provide the framework for researching culturally responsive library leaders in the CCCs.

California Public Higher Education

The CCCs are one of the oldest and largest systems of public higher education in the United States (Knoell, 1997). The CCC serves more than 1.8 million students at 116 colleges, approximately one-fourth of all community college students in the country; half of all CSU students and one-third of UC students begin their coursework at a CCC (CCCCO, 2023b). The scope and scale of the CCC are noteworthy both nationally and internationally as examples of open-access postsecondary education. This section will briefly outline the segments of California's tripartite public higher education system—locally-based community colleges, regionally-based state universities, and statewide research universities—through three key pieces of legislation.

California Community Colleges

With the 1907 Upward Extension Act, California became the first state to pass legislation authorizing the establishment of junior colleges. According to Gallagher (2019), to garner support for the bill, Senator Caminetti emphasized "geographical considerations" (p. 6) as a cost-saving measure while also keeping young adults at home under the supervision of their parents. Per Galizio (2019), high school graduates could take classes at the "Collegiate Department of Fresno High School" to be accepted for transfer to UC Berkeley. The 1917 Ballard Act then formalized state and county funding for junior colleges (previously known as "post-high school" or "post-graduate course") as well as expanded their purview to incorporate vocational education (Winter, 1964).

Designed to teach high school graduates lower-division general education, the establishment of junior colleges could then enable universities to focus on upper-division coursework, graduate studies, and research (Galizio, 2019). By 1920, the beginnings of

the CSU had also been set in motion, centralizing the state's "normal schools" for teacher training under the Board of Education as a 4-year postsecondary program (Beach, 2010). At first, a mundane and practical solution for high school graduates to continue their schooling, the Upward Extension and Ballard Acts were the inauspicious beginnings of community colleges. They would set the groundwork for what would eventually become the largest and fastest-growing higher education sector.

California Master Plan of Higher Education

In the decades following the creation of junior colleges, California saw massive increases in students enrolling in higher education at all levels as new campuses proliferated across the state (Callan, 2009). After World War II, colleges and universities reached capacity, as veterans utilized their GI Bill to enroll in college, and Baby Boomers, came of age—at the same time as California was facing its largest budget shortfall since the Great Depression (Douglass, 2010). This confluence of factors led lawmakers and higher ed administrators to establish California's Master Plan for Higher Education, a plan to increase access while maintaining quality and cost-effectiveness. Signed into law in 1960, the Master Plan was effectively a compromise evolving out of the need for educational and fiscal reforms. As Douglass (2010) contended, the Master Plan crystallizes "The California Idea," specifically, that "a postsecondary education was no longer a privilege but a right for high school graduates," that higher education was critical for socioeconomic mobility and the state's economy, and the state should "should devise institutions to rationally and equitably provide for access" (p. 4). The provision for access, then, delineated the three segments of California public higher education by distinguishing between the UC, CSU, and CCC.

Under the Master Plan, the bulk of enrollment would be shifted to the low-cost CCC to allow for increased access to higher education. All Californians would have access to the community colleges to acquire an associate degree or vocational certificate, with readily accessible campuses and open access enrollment. Only the top 33.3% and 12.5% of high school students would be eligible for the CSUs and UCs, respectively. The state colleges, previously dedicated to teacher training, would become the CSU with the authority to grant bachelor's and master's degrees. The UCs, with the most selective admissions and highest overhead costs, could focus on research, advanced graduate studies, and doctoral degrees.

The Master Plan's differentiated segments helped address an "escalating turf war" between the UC and CSU (Douglass, 2010, p. 3). It also established an overarching Coordinating Council for Higher Education to alleviate some of the political pressures for the legislature, regarding the creation and governance of the different segments (Callan, 2009; Douglass, 2010). On one hand, despite its critics and limitations, the Master Plan marks a pivotal moment in the state's efforts to provide open access, high-quality, affordable higher education to all Californians. On the other, some may argue that by segmenting the top and middle-achieving students to the UCs and CSUs respectively, the Master Plan may have unintentionally reinforced structural inequities for the students in the CCCs in terms of lowering expectations for success and persistent achievement gaps.

Assembly Bill 705

Community colleges are described by Koltai (1993) as an accessible entry into higher education for marginalized populations, and by Drury (2003) as the opportunity to "live the American Dream" of social and economic mobility previously afforded only by

more elite universities. Indeed, nearly 70% of students are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and students earning an associate degree or certificate will see an increase in earnings when compared to those with only a high school diploma (CCCCO, 2023b). From the inauspicious beginnings at the Collegiate Department of Fresno High School to currently enrolling one-fourth of all community college students in the United States, the CCC has realized the goal of expanding access. Yet access does not necessarily translate to success.

Despite the system's growth, an achievement gap remains, disproportionately affecting URM students in the CCCs. According to the system's Vision for Success, only 48% of CCC students complete a degree or certificate within 6 years or transfer to a 4-year school). Furthermore, students of color are more likely to be placed into remedial courses when compared with their White peers; and students placed into remediation are much less likely to achieve their educational goals (CCCCO, 2017). This disproportionate achievement gap led to recent California legislation Assembly Bill 705 (2017), requiring CCCs to minimize the number of students in remedial courses and increase those who complete transfer-level English and math courses within their first year. Given low completion rates across the system, meeting the intention of AB 705 requires support from the library and other student services.

Along with AB 705, related system initiatives used to implement the Vision for Success include a Guided Pathways framework—piloted in 2016 and expanded in the 2017-18 California state budget—and a student-centered funding formula adopted in 2018-19. Guided Pathways provides a model to engage students and keep them on a timely, clear path to graduation (CCCCO, 2023c). The student-centered funding formula

is based on increased student retention and completion and decreased time to graduation and transfer, with financial incentives for ensuring the success of students with historically low retention rates. This tension between student access and achievement arises from being a critical entry point into higher education, notably for low-income and traditionally disadvantaged students. With this new funding formula and heightened focus on accountability and completion, faculty, and staff from across campus must work to improve student outcomes, particularly for students of color given the system's demographics. The following section will explore the role of the library in the mission of the institution, with an emphasis on outcomes and achievement for students of color.

Libraries in Higher Education

The Role of Academic Libraries

Libraries have long embodied the symbolic and physical "heart" of institutions of higher learning. A traditional representation of an academic library is one of quiet reading rooms, individual study carrels, floor-to-ceiling stacks of books, and a librarian behind a reference desk. Cox et al. (2019) remarked on the core function of libraries (acting as long-term repositories for the preservation and access of knowledge) as inherently resistant to change. Indeed, information modalities may change from print or microfiche to digital and cloud-based, but the essential services of providing access to information have remained fundamentally the same. Simmons-Welburn et al. (2008) spoke to the nature of library administrators offering so-called solutions that are simply "holding the line" (p. 130). Although having long benefited from the symbolic status of "public good," in a landscape of increased accountability and shrinking budgets, libraries must demonstrate clear and compelling evidence of their contributions to institutional student

achievement goals (Oakleaf, 2010). Making the case for student-centered library services is essential in times of economic downturn.

Virtue (2019) acknowledged the substantial body of research of library impact on student success is largely confined to library science literature. Nevertheless, librarians are called to address a rapidly changing information landscape and demonstrate their contributions to student success (Farkas, 2013). Both Oakleaf (2010) and Virtue (2019) posited the opportunity for cross-departmental partnerships to reduce organizational silos and raise the visibility of the academic library within the organization. For example, Oakleaf (2010) suggested assigning librarians as "research advisors" to provide individualized "just-in-time and just-for-you" student support (p. 7). Library leaders must advocate integrating library services into wraparound academic support services as a high-impact educational practice (Brown & Malenfant, 2016; Roselle, 2008) and find ways to illustrate impact data beyond circulation checkouts and database clicks. New metrics and funding formulas raise the stakes for libraries to demonstrate their contributions to student success in meaningful ways. Oakleaf (2010) called for "systematic, coherent, and connected evidence" to showcase the role of libraries in academic achievement (p. 14). Simply being the proverbial heart of a college is no longer enough for libraries in a climate of assessment and measurable outcomes, particularly given the CCC's equity-centered Vision for Success.

Evolution of Academic Libraries

Historically renowned as silent, hallowed spaces dedicated to independent scholarly studies, academic libraries maintained an architectural form that suited one primary mission, to preserve and store print collections (Oliveira, 2018). Jones and Grote

(2018) noted that in the past 200 years, American libraries have progressed from an architectural icon of a college campus to "centers of the knowledge economy, of collaborative learning, and of creative production" (p. 1). A shifting focus from faculty-centered to student-centered institutions parallels the evolution of information commons (passive access to, and delivery of, knowledge) to learning commons, the active integration and creation of new knowledge (Roberts, 2007). As with many academic support departments, libraries are evolving to provide robust, integrated student-centered services that are relevant to the institutional mission.

Increasingly, in the last 20 years or so, academic libraries have shifted from conventional models of passive study toward dynamic learning commons that support student learning (Blummer & Kenton, 2017). According to Sullivan (2010), "This is a view of the library as a learning enterprise more than as an information repository" (p. 133). Indeed, Freeman (2005) maintained that the academic library must continue to reflect its unique legacy while embracing information technology and new ways of learning, "[to] enhance the excitement and adventure of the academic experience, foster a sense of community, and advance the institution into the future" (p. 9). This trend toward learning commons is noteworthy for community college students given the diverse demographics of the CCC system. The rapidly evolving information, in conjunction with the ever-changing landscape of higher education, requires library leadership that can respond to the diverse needs of students. Although the movement to student-centered spaces has been widely adopted, Ramsden (2018) argued that learning commons could have unintended consequences; flexible, multipurpose spaces may be dominated by certain majority users, which in turn alienates minority users or intimidates others from

using the space. A culturally responsive library leader must develop inclusive library environments where diverse students can thrive.

Libraries and Student Retention

As the focus on accountability and institutional outcomes continues to emerge, researchers have sought to document the role of academic libraries in student retention for much longer. The earliest study is Kramer and Kramer's (1968) study of book-borrowing at Cal Poly Pomona, which found that 73.7% of first-year students who used the library returned the following year, compared to 57% percent of those who did not use the library. Although this is one of several studies to show a statistically significant correlation between library usage and academic success, Kramer and Kramer also indicated that on-campus residency might also correlate with persistence. This finding illuminates some of the challenges in isolating the true impact of libraries.

One study by Crawford et al. (2004) has been cited frequently as an indicator that higher use of library resources may lead to improved graduation rates. Their work built upon an earlier study by Crawford, surveying students about their usage of electronic databases both on and off-campus. The survey went to existing library users (both in-person paper questionnaires and an online questionnaire pop-up on the library website) and asked students to identify specific databases by name. Some of the findings, such as nursing and healthcare students showing both higher database usage and retention, might be linked with other variables, such as class size, student-to-faculty ratios, or average age and gender of students.

Another key work on libraries and retention is Haddow and Joseph's (2010) study titled, "Loans, Logins, and Lasting the Course," a statistical analysis of 8,526

undergraduates enrolled in a large public university in Australia. The 2010 study, as well

as a follow-up study by Haddow (2013), demonstrated that students who log in and

borrow resources are retained at higher rates than those who withdraw and that logins

increase with students' class levels as they progress in their degree. Although the

majority (64%) of students in the 2010 study did not borrow physical library materials,

those students who did borrow items tended to be more "mature," older than 21 years of

age, than those who did not.

Most interestingly, the difference in logins earlier in the semester was

"statistically significant" ($p = .002$ and $p < .001$) between the retained students and those

who withdrew from college (Haddow & Joseph, 2010). In other words, early usage of

library resources may be indicative of persistence, whether that may be the student's own

habits of mind, ease of access, or other external factors. Haddow (2013) indicated library

usage as a key factor in student integration, particularly among nontraditional

populations. Ultimately, library-centric data collection and analysis alone is insufficient.

Per Haddow:

> Certainly, library use data alone says nothing about student progress. By
> analyzing these data in combination with other institutional data, an academic
> library has the capacity to do more than identify trends of use. Such analysis can
> detect aspects of the library service to improve, monitor, and evaluate, and as a
> consequence, contribute to institutional objectives with a greater understanding of
> the library's role. (p. 135)

It is worth noting that despite these studies within library science, a larger

audience and understanding are still lacking. Oliveira (2018) observed that few articles

published in higher education research explicitly call out the library as a key player in

improving retention rates. General education literature remains lacking on the value of

libraries in retention and outcomes-driven assessment. Crawford et al. (2004) concluded

the library needs close partnerships with teaching departments to be successful. Goodall and Pattern (2011) found a positive correlation between library use and educational attainment but nevertheless asked the question, "If we accept that students who use the library do well, what about the fate of the students who do not use the library?" (p. 161). In short, library leaders are called to demonstrate visible, tangible results for students of all backgrounds. This aligns with the equity imperative of the Vision for Success (CCCCO, 2017), which includes, in part, the directive to close the achievement gap for students of color. An abundance of published literature supports the concept that libraries are central to students' success. Moreover, it appears that there are some correlations between student retention and the use of libraries, particularly for students from nontraditional backgrounds. Just as the student population librarians serve come from diverse backgrounds, an equity-minded library requires leadership grounded in culturally responsive skills and practices.

Libraries and Student Integration

Tinto's (1975) early work on "student integration" and subsequent *Leaving College* (1993) remain an enduring and often cited example of a longitudinal study making explicit connections between the student and their interactions within the academic and social systems of the institution. Tinto (1975, 1993) argued that "student integration" or a sense of belonging is paramount to retaining college students; this integration can take two forms, academic and social, which in turn are compounded by factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. College libraries play a critical role in student retention, then, providing a welcoming learning environment outside of the classroom, and acting as a bridge between the academic and student service "sides" of

the institution. The library, then, exists at this unique intersection of both academic and student integration.

Heller and Cassady (2015) found that social and environmental factors are "most predictive for community college student performance outcomes" (p. 448) when compared to the personal and behavioral factors of 4-year university students. This study utilized Bandura's (1986, 2001) social cognitive theory, a model that posits the interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors on student achievement. The environmental context here includes first-generation status and subsequent lack of parental support, having less flexibility with work commitments and childcare, and limited transportation. According to Heller and Cassady, developing and providing access to scaffolded support services in a positive educational environment is critical to promoting academic resilience among community college students.

Similarly, Demas (2005) argued that library space should facilitate "the social dimensions of learning" (p. 22) that which is self-directed and communal in nature. The elements of peer-pressure and peer-support, then, are increasingly finding their way into the intentional redesign of library spaces and services. Likewise, Seabi et al. (2009) established the benefits of mediated learning, collaborative learning, and tutor support on student academic achievement. This suggests that institutions can help students develop relationships with faculty, peers, and tutors to interact and engage with course material to improve outcomes. Indeed, these elements are often found in a library learning commons environment. Library leaders must understand the demands and factors contributing to students accessing support, particularly in an increasingly diverse community college setting.

Libraries and Student Engagement

In a landmark longitudinal statistical analysis of over 300,000 responses to a national student engagement survey, Kuh and Gonyea (2003) found that library experiences of college students correlated positively with educational activities. Kuh and Gonyea conducted a series of regression models on large data sets from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) to address three research questions. To this end, the authors examined (a) how student usage of library resources changed from 1984 through 2002; (b) whether the frequency of library usage contributed to information literacy, critical thinking, and other institutional learning outcomes; and (c) how library usage affected students' educational practices, such as increased contact with instructors or discussing substantive topics with peers. Given the size and scope of Kuh and Gonyea's study, it serves as a benchmark for understanding libraries and student engagement.

Importantly, Kuh and Gonyea (2003) determined through a series of regression models, "Those students who more frequently use the library reflect a studious work ethic and engage in academically challenging tasks that require higher-order thinking" (p. 270). For example, the authors found that students who asked a librarian for help were more likely to engage in behaviors such as judging the quality of information sources. Further, the study found that library usage of historically underrepresented students was as much or greater than other students. Kuh and Gonyea indicated that the library may be a "safe haven" for students of color, a place that "supports and nurtures academic success" (p. 267). It is also worth noting that the size, selectivity, and academic rigor of the institution are linked with library usage—students who frequently use the library are

more likely to report working "harder" to meet faculty expectations. Although it is difficult to isolate any one variable, the library is indeed an important partner in producing a successful student experience.

Numerous publications in library sciences cite Kuh and Gonyea's 2003 and follow-up 2015 study. Some of the most substantive studies exploring student engagement are highlighted subsequently. Mezick (2007) looked at 586 institutions from the ARL and the ACRL 2003 annual trend reports, juxtaposed with library expenditures and fall-to-fall retention rates at those institutions. Mezick concluded that providing both quantity and quality library resources, in addition to sufficient staffing of academic librarians, ensures "better academic performance, and, in turn, leads to student persistence" (p. 564). These findings are consistent with earlier research, including that of Kuh and Gonyea. If the library can strengthen student performance and retention, then what effects might a culturally responsive library leader have on diverse students?

Utilizing methodology comparable to Mezick (2007), Emmons and Wilkinson (2011) also determined that the ratio of librarians has a statistically significant impact on graduation rates (measured over the course of 6 years) compared with fall-to-fall retention rates. Emmons and Wilkinson accounted for the relative elite status of the institutions that can provide considerable library materials and professional staffing: "A welcoming, inclusive environment leads to student persistence; we believe that more library staff per student provides greater opportunities for welcoming interactions" (p. 146). Students who are engaged with the institution have better retention and completion rates, and more library staffing provides more interactions; ergo, the library

supports retention and completion. It has not yet been studied how librarians of color may affect the persistence and library usage of marginalized students.

In contrast, Goodall and Pattern (2011) examined low or non-usage of the library by students enrolled in 700 courses over 4 academic years (2006-2010) at one large university. Low usage was defined as less than five visits to the library, borrowing less than five books, or logging into the library's electronic databases fewer than five times over the course of 1 academic year. Goodall and Pattern's data analysis shows that students with low grades made less use of the library when compared with the usage of students with higher grades and final degree attainment. The findings were consistent across levels (first-year, sophomore, etc.) and disciplinary schools (health science, art, engineering). In other words, students who "read" more, in terms of book borrowing and logging into electronic resources, achieve better grades. The researchers acknowledged the limitations of the data and call for qualitative studies to understand the complex stories behind why students might choose resources other than the library.

The ACRL documented "Assessment in Action" initiatives at over 200 postsecondary institutions from 2013-2016. Across various institutions, from community colleges to tribal libraries and research universities, Brown and Malenfant (2017) compiled assessment data from wide-ranging methodologies including surveys, rubrics, pre/post-tests, focus groups, and statistical analysis. This meta-analysis identifies several key findings: library use increases student success; information literacy instruction, particularly in early coursework, improves general education outcomes overall; and collaborative library partnerships and individual research consultations can enhance student learning. Throughout these studies, the potential to positively influence the

student experience is clear. Given the student demographics of the CCCs, specifically, culturally responsive library leadership should be explored.

Library Leadership and Diversity

Creating inclusive library spaces and services is particularly salient in the CCCs, with most students coming from diverse backgrounds. Recent legislation and system-wide initiatives aim to close equity gaps, particularly for students of color, and CCC has been given the directive to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of faculty and staff in the country's largest system of public higher education (CCCCO, 2020b). Diverse faculty and staff are linked to student retention, and non-White faculty are more likely to implement culturally responsive strategies in the classroom (CCCCO, 2020b). However, library leadership and the library profession, in general, lack racial and ethnic diversity. This section will explore the homogeneity of libraries, from lack of representation in the field to the LIS curriculum, and even to the foundational concepts of libraries.

Librarian Demographics

As mentioned previously, campus faculty and senior leadership are not representative of the students of the CCCs. For example, in 2016-17, 73% of students were students of color, whereas 72% of Academic Senate leaders, 61% of tenured faculty, and 59% of senior leadership were White (CCCCO, 2019). These statistics, alongside the achievement gap for students of color, were sufficient to call for statewide structural changes to recruit, retain, and support diverse faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Although CCC faculty/staff demographics are available by ethnicity and classification (e.g., faculty, staff, administrator), they are not searchable by specific position, such as library dean or director, in the CCCCO DataMart. Due to the lack of

statewide data on California librarians' racial demographics, national statistics are referenced in this study.

According to the ALA (2012) "Diversity Counts" report, of the total 118,666 credentialed librarians in the United States as of 2010, 104,392 identified as White. Within K-12, the percentage of White librarians is 90.3%; in higher education, it is 86.1% White (ALA, 2012). More recently, Kendrick and Hulbert (2023) indicated that as of 2022, 81% of the 227,000 librarians in the United States are White. Similarly, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), Data USA (2021) reported that 81.3% of librarians are White, non-Hispanic, and 83.5% female, with an average age of 47 years old.

Per Kendrick and Hulbert (2023), "Librarianship has been grappling with an underrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) librarians for decades, and while libraries have developed a plethora of recruitment initiatives, the numbers appear to have not changed meaningfully, remaining static over the decades" (p. 2). Given the key directive that diversity drives student achievement in the CCCs, the lack of diversity in librarianship is startling. With 69% of CCC students coming from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, library leaders simply do not reflect the students they serve in the CCCs.

Librarian Vocational Awe and Code of Ethics

The homogeneous demographics of librarianship are further compounded by a sense of "vocational awe," a phrase coined by Ettarh (2018) to describe "the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that results in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore

beyond critique." If librarianship is a profession defined by a sense of moral responsibility, then, it is difficult to call librarians into question. Indeed, the ALA's code of ethics, first adopted in 1939, purported to make clear to the general public the values and ethical principles that guide the work of librarians.

The original code recognized the role libraries play in the democratic freedom of access to information—"an informed citizenry"—indicating that "impartial service should be rendered to all who are entitled to use the library." Galvan (2015) cautioned against the "seductive" concept of libraries as impartial: "neutrality [being] the safest position for libraries because it situates whiteness not only as default but rewards and promotes white cultural values." It is worth noting that in 2021, the ALA finally added a ninth principle to its code of ethics that explicitly addresses racial and social justice.

The addition, in part, to the enduring code of ethics: "We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations" (ALA, 2021). This amendment may be considered long overdue given the role of libraries (particularly public libraries) in many communities of color, although others may find it too partisan for a profession steeped in so-called impartiality. The concept of neutrality, specifically regarding addressing race, and those "entitled" to library access, is explored in further detail subsequently.

Historical Whiteness of Libraries

An awareness of neutrality and the inherent Whiteness of librarianship has been growing in recent years, primarily among librarians of color. In "Not the shark, but the water," Chui et al. (2021) contended:

> Due to a prevalent idea that "libraries are for all," there is a misconception that racial inequity does not affect libraries and requires no real intervention in libraries because people from all races, creeds, and walks of life are treated equally in the space. This idea is a central defense of neutrality; proponents of neutrality state that since we serve everyone, we must allow materials, ideas, and values from everyone. It also bolsters vocational awe, in that it forestalls meaningful critique of the field, particularly critique of its racial dynamics. (p. 51)

In a broader context, Galvan (2015) defined Whiteness as White, heterosexual, capitalist, and middle class stemming from power and privilege. Pawley (2006) remarked, "That librarians are mostly white, and take this whiteness for granted, is hardly news" (p. 150). Further, Honma (2005) asked of librarianship:

> Why is it that scholars and students do not talk openly and honestly about issues of race and LIS? Why does the field have a tendency to tiptoe around discussing race and racism, and instead limit the discourse by using words such as "multiculturalism" and "diversity"? Why is the field so glaringly white yet no one wants to talk about whiteness and white privilege? (p. 1)

In an early piece on race in libraries, finding no references to Whiteness in the library literature, Espinal (2001) argued that librarianship must identify and name Whiteness to uncover and examine the patterns and practices within the profession. Even baseline measures such as collection statistics, widely considered a universal indicator of library efficacy, are not neutral; indeed, circulation behaviors differ by culture, class, and community. Several scholars have documented the historical Whiteness of librarianship in the United States, from the origins of public libraries as sites for cultural assimilation in immigrant communities (Honma, 2005); to how the White female librarian was an ambassador for the "racial, missionary, and 'civilizing' projects of early libraries" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016, p. 667); to differentiated services for immigrant versus Black communities (Chu, 1999); to scenes of civil protest when Black Americans were denied library access even in so-called integrated areas (Hall, 2012).

In fact, Hall (2012) referred to the "purposeful exclusion of blacks and black bodies from altruistic, bootstrap-offering services," as part of a larger "racial theater" that is fundamental to understanding libraries: "To examine the histories of libraries and literacy in this country is to understand that the very act of reading to acquire or disseminate knowledge by blacks has been considered a subversive act" (p. 200). The "bootstrap" mentality is harmful in that it fails to hold libraries accountable for their own history. The whitewashing of diversity—emphasizing tolerance and celebration of individual or cultural differences—obviates critical engagement with the history of race in America; institutionalized, systemic racism; and even race as a social construct. The same whitewashing or sanitization of library history can be seen in the field's graduate curriculum, which in turn affects library leaders' ability to serve diverse students.

LIS Curriculum

Cooke (2018) argued: "Preparing diverse, culturally sustaining, and socially responsible LIS professionals is an essential and urgent endeavor" (p. 43). Many disciplines offer coursework or professional training toward developing culturally responsive skill sets. However, in many ways, graduate studies in LIS continue to perpetuate the values of Whiteness. Pawley (2006) noted that the LIS curriculum favors the more feel-good, inclusive term "multiculturalism" while evading discussions of race or racism: "LIS practitioners and educators tend to avoid the 'R-word,' and in LIS generally, race remains not only understudied but also poorly understood" (p. 151). Similarly, Honma (2005) described LIS discourse as a "benign liberal multiculturalism" that is "empty of critical analyses of race and racism" (p. 13). Nevertheless, the library

science curriculum lacks culturally responsive training to facilitate equity-minded educational environments.

Cooke and Sánchez (2019) spoke to the lack of diversity in the faculty of LIS programs, with librarians of color experiencing microaggressions, othering, tokenism, racial battle fatigue, gaslighting, and more, from their institution, administration, colleague, and library users. Even explicit initiatives to recruit diverse librarians are problematic, Hathcock (2015) argued: "Only an applicant with access to the privileges of whiteness would have the tools needed to engage in the requisite work and volunteer opportunities called for by the diversity program." Elaborate application and job placement formalities inherently reward the unspoken yet coded characteristics of Whiteness and reflect a predominantly White profession that may be ill-prepared to support and retain a librarian of color.

Nearly two decades after Espinal's (2001) piece on Whiteness, Gibson et al. (2018) found that among the top 20 library graduate programs, the vast majority did not introduce students to CRT and related issues of racism in libraries. They contended:

> If LIS is to remain relevant and produce professionals and researchers who can lead in their communities (whether those communities are racially diverse or not), we must assess and improve our engagement with issues of race and racism in all areas of the field. (p. 67)

A professional grounding in culturally responsive practices can help librarians support underserved students more effectively.

Likewise, Cooke (2018) spoke to the homogeneity in librarianship and LIS curriculum as "dangerous, particularly for the diverse communities being served by libraries, who do not see themselves acknowledged, reflected, or celebrated in the libraries' programs, services, and collections" (p. 28). Although neutrality and inclusion

may seem positive on the surface, without having some race-based knowledge and training, leaders further perpetuate Whiteness and cause harm, intentional or not, to students of color. Dunbar (2005) applied a critical framework to how information is documented and archived, raising the question of differing perspectives from both institutional memory and personal narratives. Additionally, Leung (2019) posited that libraries "promote and proliferate whiteness" in their collections, upholding White modalities of writing, speaking, and knowing in collections of institutions of higher education, where most of the materials are written by White authors:

> When most of our collections [sic] filled with this so-called "knowledge," it continues to validate only white voices and perspectives and erases the voices of people of color. Collections are representations of what librarians (or faculty) deem to be authoritative knowledge and as we know, this field and educational institutions, historically, and currently, have been sites of whiteness.

One example of this harm is the longstanding usage of "illegal alien" as a Library of Congress subject heading (Lo, 2019). Imagine a student conducting research on Mexican Americans only to be faced with rows of books cataloged with this outdated and pejorative terminology. The Whiteness of librarianship, in the face of such tragic current events as "Muslim bans" and police shootings of unarmed Black folks, is glaring and out of touch with the needs of diverse communities. In the "Vision for Success Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force Report," the CCCCO (2020b) has directed increasing faculty and staff diversity to increase student achievement and retention. Further, "faculty and staff diversity increases the ability to integrate multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy into teaching practices" and reduces the likelihood of implicit bias both inside and outside the classroom (CCCCO, 2020b, pp. 15-16). Because librarians are predominantly White and lack professional training in "culturally sustaining, and socially

responsible" matters (Cooke, 2018, p. 43), this study investigates how community college library leaders engage in culturally responsive leadership practices.

Theoretical Foundations of Educational Equity

"The school, college and university curriculum marginalizes
the experiences of people of color and of women." – Banks, 1993, p. 4

This section will explore the predominant educational theories related to teaching and leading organizations that serve diverse students and then connects back to the need for diverse leadership in libraries across the CCC system.

Critical Race Theory

CRT is a framework that examines the relationship among race, racism, and power in order to dismantle racist systems and structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT's foundations come from the late 1970s when lawyers and activists sought to understand subtle, even ordinary, forms of racism as to why many advances from the 1960s Civil Rights Era had not gained traction. CRT builds upon critical legal studies and feminist studies, including pioneering work by Bell (1976, 1980) on the desegregation of public schools; Delgado (1983) on what is considered canon in the academy (work by White scholars); and Crenshaw (1989, 1991) on intersectionality, the relationship among power dynamics, discrimination, and socially constructed roles such as race, class, gender, and disability.

As explained by Delgado and Stefancic (2017), CRT has five central tenets: (a) racism is ordinary and embedded in American society; (b) the rights of people of color advance only when they converge with the interests of White people; (c) race is a social construct that maintains hierarchies and disparities; (d) people have no single, essential identity—rather, race intersects with other facets of identity in ways that

compound discrimination and privilege; and (e) the importance of counter-narratives, or the voices, stories, and experiences of people of color. Per Delgado and Stefancic, a hallmark of CRT is activism; unlike other academic disciplines, CRT seeks to not only understand how racism affects social relations but also transform them for the better. Further, Solorzano and Yosso (2001) offered five tenets for CRT as applied in education: (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the interdisciplinary perspective. Utilizing this CRT in education framework, educators can question how existing institutions, structures, and processes reinforce racism and other forms of discrimination.

Consistent with its origins in legal scholarship, CRT in an educational context interrogates systems of oppression and advocates for outcomes that "redress racial inequity" (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018, p. 122). Indeed, education has been central to CRT since the beginning, when legal scholar Bell (1980) examined the desegregation of public schools in his landmark work. In the interest-convergence thesis, Bell challenged the idea of *Brown v. Board of Education* not as a civil rights triumph, but rather as desegregation resulting from middle and upper-class White political interests. This idea of educational spaces for the benefit of some, not all, calls back to the research of Hall (2012) on the purposeful exclusion of library services for Black communities, not White or immigrant ones; after all, libraries reflect broader sociocultural trends.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw's foundational work on intersectionality recognized the interconnected nature of social categories – such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, sexuality, citizenship,

and other characteristics – and how those converge to create and complicate systems of

power and oppression. Crenshaw (1989) argued, "Because the intersectional experience

is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take

intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which

Black women are subordinated" (p. 140). Intersectionality provides a conceptual

framework for understanding how discrimination and disadvantage is compounded by

overlapping identities. In a video created by the National Museum of African American

History and Culture (2017), Crenshaw used the following metaphor of a crash at an

intersection to explain her theory:

> Consider an intersection made up of many roads. The roads are the structures of
> race, gender, gender identity class, sexuality, disability. And the traffic running
> through those roads are the practices and policies that discriminate against people.
> Now if an accident happens, it can be caused by cars traveling in any number of
> directions, and sometimes, from all of them. So, if a Black woman is harmed
> because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from discrimination from
> any or all directions.

Through the lens of intersectionality, researchers and educators can critically examine the

unique influences and lived experiences of students from diverse and disadvantaged

backgrounds (Barnett & Felten, 2016). In the education space, culturally responsive

leaders observe and engage with these complex intersections.

Affirmative Action

On affirmative action in higher education, Moran (2000) noted that the question

of whether or not students of color have adapted to the academic demands of college

persists while failing to consider "whether higher education is successfully adapting to

the demands of a diverse student body and society" (p. 2342). Reframing the

preparedness of *college-ready* students resonates with the CCCs' Vision for Success to

create a college culture that is, instead, *student-ready* and can meet the needs of diverse

students. On diverse faculty in higher education, Harris (1992) spoke to the struggles of

not just surviving in the academy, but "agitating" and making change. Similarly,

numerous scholars call for action and transformation of the pervasive Whiteness in both

the curriculum and the faculty ranks of LIS programs (Cooke, 2018; Espinal, 2001;

Hathcock, 2015; Honma, 2005; Pawley, 2006). Within the CCCs, this call to action is

reflected in the system-wide equity imperative to recruit and retain diverse faculty and

staff as a means to improve educational outcomes for students of color.

CRT in Education

In "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," Ladson-Billings and Tate

(1995) called for a direct application of CRT in understanding school inequities. Their

key work is based on three CRT propositions: first, race continues to be a significant

determinant of educational disparities; second, the ability to "define, possess, and own

property" (p. 53) is integral to the construct of power in America, and with power comes

access to better schools and other privileges; and lastly, the intersection of race and

property is central to analyzing the inequities in education. Interestingly, Ladson-Billings

and Tate juxtaposed these CRT tenets against the efforts of multicultural education, citing

the same critiques of the Civil Rights movement being subverted to benefit Whites.

Multicultural Education

The primary goal of multicultural education, as defined by Banks (1993), is to "is

to reform the school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse

racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality" (p. 3).

Further, Banks cautioned that multicultural education cannot be narrowly conceived as

special days or lessons such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday; rather, the curriculum must be reconceptualized so that students understand how knowledge is constructed, "to look at the nation's experience from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives to comprehend fully its past and present" (p. 37). When examined in this light, multicultural education is comparable to a similar movement in libraries and the LIS curriculum—it is a means to "celebrate" diversity without critically engaging in matters of race and racism in libraries today.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

One method of closing educational achievement gaps is through culturally responsive pedagogy. First, to understand culturally responsive pedagogy, one must acknowledge that culture is central to learning; as S. Taylor and Sobel (2011) stated, "culture and cultural factors are situated in and influenced by social, historical, political, and economic conditions, thereby incorporating the presence of power and privilege" (p. 29). Therefore, understanding culture—of the teacher, student, and system—is integral to effective education and educational leadership.

Culturally responsive pedagogy has its roots in critical pedagogy and Freire's (1970) foundational text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Critical pedagogy embraces education's ability to empower and liberate people, to raise the critical consciousness of learners regarding oppressive social conditions in order to make change (Freire, 1970). Likewise, the professional code of ethics for librarians also speaks to the library's democratic role of educating an informed citizenry: "We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations" (ALA, 2021). Early research on "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1992), "culturally

responsive" (Gay, 1994), and "anti-racist" (Cochran-Smith, 1995) pedagogy eschewed the prevailing "deficit" model of underrepresented students, instead building upon students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences to validate and engage students in a community of learners. Ladson-Billings (1992) argued that culturally relevant pedagogy has three key factors: high academic expectations with appropriate support; reshaping and connecting the curriculum to reflect students' lived experiences; and cultivating critical consciousness. These factors resonate broadly with the work of academic libraries in supporting students' development of information literacy and critical thinking skills.

On the early origins of culturally responsive pedagogy, Gay (1995) cited anthropology studies of observed patterns of teaching Native American children, indicating a "cultural mismatch" between student and curriculum with terms such as "culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, and culturally compatible...that seem to connote accommodation of student culture to mainstream culture" (p. 467). On the other hand, Gay argued that culturally *responsive* conveys a "more dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture" (p. 467). This is an interesting distinction when considering a parallel approach to LIS professional education, moving from multicultural tokenism to a more nuanced and intersectional understanding of race, class, gender, and other categories today.

It is worth noting that culturally responsive pedagogy is not merely celebrating culture. Cochran-Smith (1995) critiqued the fundamental "color-blindness" and "basket-making" (p. 519) of education's response to diverse students. Counter to "color-blind" teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy acknowledges and engages with the cultural and

racial identities of students. Indeed, it concedes a fundamental mismatch between majority White, mainstream instructional practices that result in minority students being underserved or worse, actively alienated in the classroom. Additionally, Sleeter (2012) cautioned against the oversimplification of culturally responsive pedagogy as trivializing and homogenizing, calling for evidence-based research to demonstrate the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy on student achievement. For example, a library may enact Black History and Hispanic Heritage month displays without actively serving diverse students through its policies and practices. Culturally responsive pedagogy must be fostered at all levels of an organization, from the circulation desk to library leadership.

Educational Equity in School Leadership

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

School leadership is essential to recognizing and sustaining culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy in the classroom. An early study on principals by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) looked at transformational leadership practices of school principals in collaborative school cultures, those who recognize and value educators, who share power and responsibility, and importantly, who foster environments that empower teachers to challenge their own assumptions and values. The principal, administrator, or superintendent plays a critical role in establishing school culture and supporting and advocating for the professional development, curriculum, and standards that meet the needs of diverse students. Khalifa et al. (2016) further articulated the responsibility of school leaders:

> Because minoritized students have been disadvantaged by historically oppressive structures, and because educators and schools have been—intentionally or unintentionally— complicit in reproducing this oppression, culturally responsive

school leaders have a principled, moral responsibility to counter this oppression. (p. 1275)

The appeal to morality again harkens back to the ALA's professional code of ethics and its recent amendment calling for librarians to "dismantle systemic and individual biases," and "confront inequity and oppression" in libraries (ALA, 2021). In both, we see an attempt to right historical wrongs through present-day education, advocacy, and activism.

In a meta-analysis of over 200 empirical studies on culturally responsive leadership in schools, Khalifa et al. (2016) identified the actions that most influence school climate and student achievement, particularly for students of color. These behaviors comprise the four overarching categories for CRSL: critical self-reflection, development of culturally responsive teachers, promotion of an inclusive school environment, and meaningful engagement with the community (Khalifa et al., 2016). The CRSL framework is wide-ranging in its examples and applications. These include using equity audits and school data to measure inclusiveness (Skrla et al., 2004); developing teacher capacity to reform the curriculum and broadening understanding of the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy, including the benefits to White students (Sleeter, 2012); and serving as an advocate and activist for both school and community-based causes (Johnson, 2006). Although this research focused specifically on K-12 school leadership practices directed toward minoritized students, many of the same practices will be seen in culturally responsive leadership practices in higher education.

Applied Critical Leadership

Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) first proposed the seminal framework of ACL in 2012, focusing on the "duality" of diverse leaders navigating between their own marginalized identities while providing effective leadership in mainstream K-12 schools.

With its roots in CRT, Santamaría and Santamaría's ACL drew parallels between critical pedagogy and transformational leadership as both "responsive to social contexts and the notion of redistributed power" (p. 4) in a given community, and as a means to address structural equity gaps in education. The researchers found that diverse educational leaders had nine defining characteristics of the strengths-based ACL: an ability to have critical conversations; a CRT lens; seeking group consensus; stereotype threat awareness; engagement with academic discourse; honoring constituents; leading by example; developing trust; and a servant leadership style. Importantly, Santamaría and Santamaría distinguished ACL practitioners either as individuals leading with a CRT lens from their own marginalized backgrounds or as White/European individuals deliberately choosing to lead from a CRT lens. Therefore, ACL embraces leaders' identities and empowers members of an educational community to make a socio-cultural change.

In 2016, Santamaría and Santamaría further explored culturally responsive leadership within academia from a perspective of "interrupting inequities and -isms inherent in higher education" (p. 9) to move ACL from theory to practice. Through a compilation of 29 case studies, Santamaría and Santamaría (2016) identify best practices of diverse leaders transforming higher education while meeting institutional imperatives of access and equity for students from traditionally underserved communities. ACL strategies include challenging existing, often hidden and embedded, processes such as "grow your own" selection of existing managers with more transparent pathways for the development of aspirational leaders, soliciting nominations from faculty and staff, and actively recruiting in different locations on campus (Santamaría et al., 2015). As with the CRSL framework for K-12 (Khalifa et al., 2016), ACL addresses the barriers faced by

leaders from historically underserved backgrounds, and the ways in which leaders bring their unique perspectives and experiences to improving outcomes at all levels of the organization.

Culturally Relevant Leadership

Considering the critical role libraries play in student retention, this study examined the impact of culturally responsive leadership, specifically in academic library spaces and services. How are culturally responsive library leaders responding to the call for closing achievement gaps in the CCC system? Horsford et al. (2011) presented a useful schema to better understand leadership in diverse educational settings. Their framework for CRL identifies four key dimensions for successful educational leadership: professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and political context. Similar to the aforementioned educational equity theories, the framework for CRL is grounded in culturally relevant, antiracist pedagogy while also recognizing the personal and political contexts in which leaders operate effectively.

Professional Duty

The framework's four dimensions—also known as domains, contexts, or variables—intersect and inform one another to develop one's capacity to lead culturally responsive environments that center the success of diverse students. First, *professional duty* is defined as "leading for equity, engagement, and excellence" (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 594). This dimension speaks to how educational leaders are trained and supported to thrive in increasingly complex and diverse school environments. Brooks (2007) urged, "educational leaders, and the people who prepare and train them, to consider how personal history shapes their perspectives and actions in the context of

other histories," including the specific history of race in their school district, school, and college (p. 3). To what extent are leaders driven by professional standards or a sense of duty? What strategies do leaders use to cultivate equity-minded organizations?

Personal Journey

A close corollary to the professional domain is the *personal journey*, or the leader's own "path to cultural proficiency" (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 597). This dimension is based on Terrell et al.'s (2009) text, *Culturally Proficient Leadership: The Personal Journey Begins Within*, prompting educators to reflect on their underlying beliefs and assumptions, and how their backgrounds affect their leadership practices. Further, Lindsey et al. (2020) defined culturally proficient leadership as the capability and willingness to engage in an "inside-out process of personal and organizational change" in which "leaders become students of their assumptions about self, others, and the context in which they work" (p. 1). For the purpose of this study, the researcher sought to understand and document the lived experiences and counter-narratives of library leaders in their work facilitating culturally responsive learning environments for students of color.

Pedagogical Approach

The framework's third dimension is a *pedagogical approach*, one that engages leaders in the work of establishing a culturally affirming and supportive school climate (Horsford et al., 2011). Drawing upon the roots of culturally relevant and antiracist pedagogy, this domain speaks to the educational administrator's ability to continually learn and lead in ways that center the achievement of diverse students. Much like teachers in the classroom, a culturally responsive leader will regularly gather quantitative

and qualitative data as a means of assessing progress and course-correct accordingly. For example, one method from the literature is conducting equity audits to identify and change inequities in the areas of teacher quality, programmatic outcomes, and student achievement (Skrla et al., 2004). This dissertation sought to understand how culturally responsive library leaders engage in practices to develop their organizational capacity to serve traditionally marginalized students.

Political Context

The fourth dimension of the framework for CRL is what Horsford et al. (2011) called the *political context*, an overarching variable that affects the professional, personal, and pedagogical domains. The political context addresses the leader's ability to "both recognize and negotiate the political terrain inextricably tied to everyday education policy and practices" (p. 596). Again, within this domain lies the groundwork of culturally responsive pedagogy. Freire (1970) spoke to the inherently political nature of the "awakening of critical consciousness" (p. 8) and "of education as the practice of freedom" (p. 93). And in *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks (2014) called for educators to: "acknowledge that the education most of us had received and were giving was not and is never politically neutral" (p. 30), a recognition that political perspectives shape the professional, personal, and pedagogical contexts of education.

The purpose of this dissertation was to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies. Given this purpose, the framework of CRL by Horsford et al. (2011) was a useful schema to explore the professional, personal, pedagogical, and political contexts in which participants lead equity-minded, student-centered libraries in the CCC system.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter I of this dissertation provided an introduction and background regarding the purpose and focus of this research. It presented an overview of the study, variables related to the study, the purpose statement and research question, as well as the significance of the study. Chapter II provided a review of the literature outlining each of the variables associated with this study. It looked at the history of the CCCs as an accessible, open-door institution, and the recent system initiatives to reduce the equity gap and improve student success for students of color. The literature review also examined the role of academic libraries in higher education, specifically toward retention and completion. Chapter III focuses on the research methodology that was used to identify and describe the lived experiences of library leaders in the CCCs. This ethnographic investigation will explore how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organizations. The chapter will present the purpose statement, research question, rationale, population, and sample, as well as potential limitations of the research design.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study was to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organizations.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question: *How do community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies?* This question

was designed to explore the lived experiences of library leaders in the CCCs, leading

organizations that support and engage traditionally marginalized students.

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Research Design

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Qualitative Research

Qualitative research examines how people express and give meaning to their

experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Per Patton (2015), qualitative research tends to be

descriptive in nature compared to the predictive nature of quantitative research.

Furthermore, qualitative research takes an inductive, exploratory approach to describing

experiences, paying attention to emerging themes, and discovering the relationships

between phenomena (Patten & Newhart, 2018). A qualitative approach was therefore

deemed appropriate for the purpose of this study, to describe the experiences, challenges,

and strategies of diverse CCC library leaders. Lastly, the selected methodology was a

multi-case study, seeking out the experiences of library leaders from across the CCCs.

Ethnography

An ethnographic approach was chosen for this study based on the nature of the

purpose statement and research question. Per Patten and Newhart (2018), an ethnography

is appropriate "when the focus is cultural, and the approach is immersive" (p. 165). A

central question of ethnographic research is: "What do people in this setting have to know

and do to make this system work?" (Wolcott, 2010, p. 74). Because the researcher is also

a community college library leader, an ethnographic approach allowed for semi-

structured interviews with participants, the narratives of which were utilized to identify

any patterns or themes in their lived experiences. The ethnographic approach seeks to

capture a detailed accounting of a lived experience, "how they perceive it, describe it,

feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others"
(Patton, 2015, p. 115). Ethnographic interviews with library leaders provided rich
qualitative data to explore their culturally responsive leadership practices in their
organizations.

Further, a critical ethnography seeks to understand issues of power, privilege, and
inequity from an advocacy perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was grounded
in the CRL framework by Horsford et al., (2011). An ethnography was deemed
appropriate to the key components of the framework, specifically: personal, professional,
pedagogical, and political contexts in which leaders foster culturally relevant educational
environments. Ethnographic interviews with library leaders provided insight into their
unique lived experiences and culturally responsive leadership through the lens of these
contexts.

Population

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the research population is the
total group to which the study results can be generalized. Similarly, Patten and Newhart
(2018) described a population as the unit of analysis appropriate to the research question.
For the purposes of this study, the population was library leaders in the CCCs. At some
CCCs, organizational oversight of the library may fall under the purview of an
administrator, such as the Vice President of Academic Affairs or Dean of Instruction.
However, community college libraries must be "under the supervision of academic
personnel" (California Education Code § 78103); and the minimum qualification for a
community college librarian is "possession of a master's degree in the faculty member's
assignment" (California Code of Regulations § 53410). There are 116 community

colleges in California, and as such, there are at least 116 library leaders in the CCC system. Some library leaders may be identified as a library dean or director, library lead or department chair, or head librarian. Therefore, the population of this study was the 116 librarians who hold leadership positions at each of the CCC libraries.

Sample

A sample is the group of subjects in a study from whom the researcher collects data. Based on the population of 116 library leaders in the CCCs, a sample of 14 library leaders was interviewed. In qualitative research designs such as ethnography, sample sizes are generally smaller than in surveys in quantitative studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Per Creswell and Poth (2018), an ethnographic study may have anywhere from five to 25 participants. Furthermore, a qualitative sample size may be determined by the resources available or the study's objectives. Qualitative sample sizes may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 2015). Table 1 summarizes the breakdown of the population and sample for this study.

Table 1

Population and Sample

Population	Sample
116 library leaders in the California Community Colleges	14 library leader participants

Sampling Procedure

Criterion sampling was used to identify specific library leader participants for this study. According to Patton (2015), criterion sampling involves the study of all cases that meet predetermined criteria or attributes which provide for a comparison with cases that

do not meet the criteria. For this study, only participants who were currently serving in the role as library leader (with titles ranging from dean, director, lead, department chair, coordinator, or head librarian) at a CCC were considered. The first 14 participants who responded to the invitation to participate and met three of the following five criteria were selected for an interview:

1. A master's degree in LIS or related field

2. Possess 7-10 years of experience working in higher education

3. Possess 3-5 years of experience as a library leader within the CCCs

4. A published, peer-reviewed author

5. Experienced presenter or workshop facilitator on LIS, Educational Leadership, Culturally Responsive Leadership, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), or related field.

A secondary proposed sampling procedure is snowball or chain sampling. This approach is useful for identifying "information-rich key informants or critical cases" by asking participants for additional referrals, thus generating new information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). Because this study focused on culturally responsive library leaders, which may reveal sensitive, deeply personal lived experiences, it was possible that some of the initial sample might not have been willing to be interviewed. Therefore, the researcher had the option to use the snowball sampling technique as the method for locating a colleague who fit the criteria but may have had less concern about participating. During the initial recruitment, if any respondent expressed concern about participating, the researcher asked for additional references, seeking permission from the individual to connect and introduce potential further participants.

Instrumentation

This ethnography explored the lived experiences of culturally responsive library leaders through qualitative interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. As such, the researcher was considered the primary instrument in the collection and interpretation of the data. The researcher's unique identity and attributes contributed to their ability to conduct meaningful, information-rich interviews so long as safeguards were taken to minimize the potential for bias (Pezalla et al., 2012). In the following section, the researcher will establish the expertise necessary to gather and interpret the data accurately.

Researcher as an Instrument of the Study

The researcher identifies as a BIPOC library leader in the CCC system, and this positionality offers the researcher access to other library leaders. A familiarity with the shared professional norms helps to balance the "power asymmetry" inherent between interviewer and interviewee (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 173). Further, an ethnography focuses on "a deep understanding of the targeted theme" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 344). Some participants who identify as BIPOC may have felt more comfortable in sharing their culturally responsive leadership experiences with a fellow librarian of color in a natural setting.

Similar to participants in the study, the researcher has successfully earned tenure at two public institutions of higher education, CSU San Marcos and Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC) and is familiar with the culture and shared norms of the CSU and CCCs. The researcher has previously conducted an ethnographic case study, published in a professional peer-reviewed journal, of a Chilean academic library. In that

context, the researcher was an "outsider" in a library setting while objectively observing the environment and conducting in-depth qualitative interviews.

Because the researcher is the instrument of study, there was a potential for bias. In order to limit such potential bias, the researcher has designed several safeguards against bias. For example, an expert panel was formed so that content specialists could validate interview questions. Also, a second researcher double-coded 10% of the data to ensure inter-coder reliability.

Interview Protocol

A series of semi-structured interview questions was developed in alignment with the CRL framework by Horsford et al. (2011). The framework consists of four dimensions—the personal, professional, pedagogical, and political—in which the leaders foster culturally relevant educational environments. An example of an interview question aligned with the framework is as follows: "How does your personal lived experiences inform your work as a culturally responsive leader?" This question is aligned with the "personal" dimension of the Horsford et al. framework. See Appendix B for the complete interview protocol.

Validity

Validity is the level of confidence placed in the researcher's ability to collect and analyze data to represent the lived experiences of the participants accurately (Neuman, 2009). Further, per McMillan and Schumacher (2010), validity in qualitative research refers to the "degree of congruence" (p. 330) between the researcher and participant's description and interpretation of events or phenomena. For the purpose of this study,

validity was established by forming and consulting with an expert panel to minimize the potential for bias on the part of the researcher.

Expert Panel

An expert panel of content experts was formulated to review the interview questions for consistency alignment with the research question and purpose of the study. The panel was recruited from subject matter experts who met at least three of the following criteria:

1. A doctorate degree in Educational Leadership or related field

2. Seven to 10 years of experience working in higher education

3. Three to 5 years of experience as an administrator within higher education

4. A published, peer-reviewed author

5. Experience with qualitative, ethnographic, or mixed methods research design

6. Experienced presenter or workshop facilitator on LIS, Educational Leadership, Culturally Responsive Leadership, DEI, or related field.

Three experts that met at least three of the criteria served on this panel to validate the interview questions, protocol, and alignment of the study with the literature. The expert panel provided feedback on the consistency and relevance of the questions, checking for potentially biased language, as well as the appropriateness and flow of the follow-up questions. The panel members were not interviewed as participants in the study itself.

Pilot Interview

After receiving and incorporating feedback from the panel and revisions to the interview questions, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with a qualitative content

expert. This expert had experience designing and conducting qualitative research design, along with doctoral-level coursework on qualitative methodology or peer-reviewed, published journal articles utilizing qualitative methods. For this pilot interview, the expert researcher provided guidance on improving interview techniques such as pacing, eye contact, and appropriate follow-up questions. The expert researcher had the opportunity to suggest additional revisions to the questions and validate the interview protocol as qualitative instruments. The pilot interview provided an opportunity for the expert to validate the researcher's interview skills.

Reliability

According to Patton (2015), reliability depends on the consistency and rigor of the researcher conducting the qualitative research methods. For the purpose of this study, the researcher worked with experts to validate the interview questions and field test the interview protocol. Additionally, the interview questions were grounded in the four dimensions of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework: professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and the political context in which the leader operates. The interview questions were designed to elucidate the participants' lived experiences with cultural proficiency, antiracist pedagogies, and leading for equity.

External Reliability

External reliability is important when a study's findings are expected to be generalized to the larger population. Generalizability is not an issue in qualitative research, which tends to focus on "in-depth understanding of specific cases" (Patton, 2015, p. 53). Although the in-depth nature of ethnographic interviews enabled the researcher to gather insights regarding different library leaders and their personal lived

experiences, it was difficult to draw correlations to all other libraries and library leaders in the CCC system as a whole. Any patterns identified in the findings based on interviews will not be broadly generalizable to the wider field of libraries which can vary greatly in type, size, and services provided.

Intercoder Reliability

To ensure consistency of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation, the researcher employed several triangulation strategies to strengthen the internal reliability of this study. Triangulation is the process of examining multiple perspectives, identifying common themes, and cross-validating data from various sources (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Interview transcripts were reviewed by an independent coder, to lend credibility to content analysis and demonstrate intercoder reliability (Lombard et al., 2004). The intercoder was a fellow doctoral candidate asked to code and interpret approximately 10% of the data collected from the interviews, observations, and artifacts performed by the primary researcher. The intercoder had experience with qualitative research and coding, as well as familiarity with the purpose of the research study. This method helped to ensure accuracy of themes from the coding, reducing the potential for bias as the researcher was the instrument of study, which in turn furthers the reliability of the study.

Data Collection

This ethnography explored the lived experiences of library leaders through semi-structured interviews, informal observations, and examination of relevant artifacts. Triangulation is the process of examining multiple perspectives, identifying common themes, and cross-validating data from various sources (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Prior to inviting library leaders to participate in the study, an application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Massachusetts Global for review and approval. The IRB ensures that safeguards are in place to protect research study participants. Additionally, the researcher completed a training course in Protecting Human Research Participants offered by the National Institutes of Health (Appendix C).

Following receipt of IRB approval (Appendix G), an email was sent to each study participant. The email included an informational letter on the scope of the study (Appendix D), participant Bill of Rights (Appendix E), and the informed consent form (Appendix F). Per the participant Bill of Rights, participation in the study was voluntary, participant identities were kept anonymous, and no incentives for participation were offered. Interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom, and the Zoom transcriptions were cross-referenced with the researcher's notes from the interviews.

Types of Data

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) qualitative research designs utilize methods of gathering data on "naturally occurring phenomena" (p. 23) with most of the data in the form of words rather than numbers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit participants' lived experiences, to identify and describe the culturally responsive leadership strategies that library leaders utilize in their organizations.

Interviews

The researcher designed semi-structured interview questions in preparation for data collection. Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to prepare questions in advance while also allowing some flexibility to adapt during the interview—for example,

clarifying and re-wording questions, or asking for additional information if the participant's initial response is brief (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Before conducting the interviews, the researcher consulted with an expert panel to validate the interview questions, protocol, and alignment of the study with the literature. As the primary method of data collection, the interview questions aligned with the personal, professional, pedagogical, and political dimensions of the CRL (Horsford et al., 2011) framework. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to prepare questions in advance while also allowing some flexibility to adapt during the interview—for example, clarifying and re-wording questions, or asking for additional information if the participant's initial response is brief (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Questions were open-ended to yield rich descriptions of participants' experiences and strategies in leading culturally responsive libraries.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as state and institutional guidelines and restrictions, were followed to ensure the safety and well-being of the participants and researcher during interviews. As a result, all interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for emerging themes. Transcripts were reviewed closely and shared with participants for accuracy and clarity. Once verified, the researcher notated the transcripts for emerging ideas. These ideas were described and classified into themes, then cross-referenced with a sentence frame to ensure alignment with the research question. Lastly, the researcher utilized an NVivo software application to code themes.

Data Collection Procedures

This ethnographic study explored the culturally responsive leadership practices of library leaders in the CCCs. Information-rich sources provided detailed anecdotes, challenges, and strategies of culturally responsive library leaders. To this end, the researcher took the following steps to ensure that rich qualitative data was gathered after the IRB reviewed and approved of the study.

Recruitment

The researcher recruited 14 participants with position titles including dean, director, chair, and lead librarian out of the estimated 116 library leaders in the CCC system. The researcher emailed library leaders to explain the scope and purpose of the study. The email included an informational letter on the scope of the study (Appendix D), participant bill of rights (Appendix E), and the informed consent form (Appendix F). Once library leaders agreed to participate, the researcher followed up to set up a mutually beneficial date and time for the Zoom interview.

Interviews

Upon successful recruitment of participants, the researcher met with each participant at a mutually agreed upon date and time for the Zoom interview. Ideally, the interview was held in a location to allow the participant to feel comfortable in their natural environment and able to speak freely. Per the interview protocol (Appendix B), the researcher began by reviewing the purpose of the study, the participant bill of rights, and the fact that participation is voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. To best understand the lived experiences and culturally responsive strategies of library leaders, the researcher took the following steps:

1. The researcher emailed target library leaders requesting participation in the study, conducted in Spring and Summer 2022.

2. The researcher sent a follow-up email if a response was not received within 1 week of the initial email.

3. Upon acceptance to participate in the study, the researcher emailed to discuss the interview logistics.

   a. The researcher encouraged the participant to pick a convenient day and time for the Zoom interview, which could include early morning or late evening times per the participant's preference.

   b. The researcher also encouraged the participant to consider scheduling the Zoom from a location where they felt comfortable and free from distractions.

4. Prior to the scheduled interview, the researcher sent the interview questions (Appendix A), along with the participant bill of rights (Appendix E) and a reminder to complete the informed consent form.

5. The researcher provided her personal phone number in case the participant had any questions or concerns prior to the interview.

6. The researcher sent a reminder email 24 hours prior to the scheduled interview time to confirm.

7. The researcher began with an introduction per the interview protocol.

   a. The researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and the rights of the participants, including their right to stop and/or take a break at any time.

b. Participants were given a copy of the Bill of Rights and their Informed Consent form.

c. The researcher confirmed the participants' willingness for the Zoom interview to be recorded and transcribed.

d. Participants were reminded that there are no incentives or costs to them to participate in this study.

e. Each participant was informed that the researcher would protect the confidentiality of each participant. Identifying information was redacted, interview audio and visual recordings were kept in a password-protected computer file, and all research materials were kept in a locked file drawer available only to the researcher.

f. Per the informed consent form, the audio and visual recordings were kept only for transcription, to ensure the accuracy of data collection.

g. Upon completion of the study, all recordings, transcripts, and field notes taken by the researcher were destroyed.

8. The researcher conducted a 60-minute interview using open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview format to allow for follow-up questions, when necessary (recorded with permission).

9. Zoom transcriptions were reviewed and edited in line with the recordings and the researcher's own notes.

10. Transcriptions were shared with participants to review for clarity, accuracy, and feedback. Any edits for clarity and accuracy were confirmed with the participants.

11. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. All related interview recordings, transcriptions, field notes, and artifacts were created and stored securely on the researcher's secure computer and backed up on a password-protected hard drive.

12. Preparations were made to code the data from the interviews.

Data Protection and Control

The researcher made every reasonable effort to protect the welfare of all participants, minimize the potential for any risks or harm, and keep data secure. Each participant had access to adequate information concerning the study, and steps were taken to redact identifying information and protect participant confidentiality. Lastly, each participant was provided with copies of the interview questions (Appendix A) and participant bill of rights (Appendix E) and completed the informed consent form (Appendix F).

Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth (2018) identified three steps of processing qualitative data: organizing and preparing the data, reading and reviewing the data, and coding the data into themes. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the phases of qualitative data collection and analysis are "interwoven and occur in overlapping cycles" (p. 329). The researcher used multiple methods of data collection: recording and transcribing interviews, gathering field notes during interviews, sharing transcriptions with participants to verify the accuracy, and double-coding 10% of the data to ensure intercoder reliability.

Patton (2015) stated: "Distinguishing signal from noise (detecting patterns and identifying themes) results from immersion in the data, systematic engagement with what the data reveal, and judgment about what is meaningful and useful" (p. 552). The researcher first reviewed the transcripts closely for accuracy, reading through each one in its entirety several times. The transcripts were shared with the participants to confirm accuracy and provide clarification as needed. Next, the researcher notated emerging ideas across the ethnographic interviews. Per Creswell and Poth (2018), this data analysis process is akin to a "spiral" with several iterative phases, including organizing, "memoing" (p. 187) emergent ideas, describing and classifying, assessing interpretations, and representing the data.

These ideas were roughly described and classified into themes, which the researcher cross-referenced with a sentence frame to ensure alignment with the research question: "How do community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies?" The researcher then entered the themes and transcripts into the NVivo software application to begin coding. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) indicated that the researcher should look for individual occurrences, behaviors, or participant perspectives that lend themselves to developing themes within the data. The themes were refined and categorized as the researcher moved through the coding process. Coding, along with intercoder reliability, was conducted with 10% of the interviews.

Limitations

Qualitative research has the potential for limitations related to the researcher's biases, time constraints, geographical location, and self-reported data (Patton, 2015). Further, Wolcott (2010) stated, "There is nothing wrong with boundedness in a study; it

is an essential quality that sets limits on what we can handle." The researcher has identified some limitations inherent in the study and steps to mitigate their potential impact. First, the target population was library leaders in the CCCs. Any patterns identified in the findings based on interviews, observations, and artifact analysis will not be generalizable to the broader variety of size and type of libraries.

Similarly, the sample size of 14 library leaders is small and not representative of all librarians. The researcher intentionally selected an ethnographic research design to identify and document the lived experiences and leadership practices of information-rich sources. Despite these limitations, findings will be informative to the development and application of culturally responsive leadership practices at other community college libraries.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Chapter I of this dissertation provided an introduction and background to the research study. Chapter II reviewed the literature on each of the variables associated with this study, including public higher education, the CCC system, culturally responsive leadership, and the role of academic libraries in student success. Chapter III described the qualitative methodology used to collect data for the study. This chapter presents a description of the participants involved in the study and a detailed summary analysis of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study was to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organizations.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question: *How do community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies?* This question was designed to explore the lived experiences of library leaders in the CCCs, leading organizations that support and engage students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined population as a group of individuals who met specific criteria and to which we seek to generalize the results of the research. For the purposes of this study, the population was all library leaders in the CCCs. Per California Education Code § 78103, each community college library must be "under the

supervision of academic personnel." Further, per California Code of Regulations §

53410, the minimum qualification for a community college librarian is a master's degree

in the faculty member's subject assignment. There are 116 community colleges in

California; therefore, the target population was 116 library leaders in the CCCs.

Sample

A sample is the group of subjects in a study from whom the researcher collects

data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative sample size may be determined by the

resources available or the study's objectives (Patton, 2015), and ethnographic studies

tend to have smaller sample sizes due to the in-depth nature of the research. According to

Creswell and Poth (2018), an ethnographic study may have anywhere from five to

twenty-five participants. Based on the population of 116 library leaders in the CCCs, a

sample of 14 library leaders was interviewed.

Criterion sampling was used to identify library leaders that met at least three out

of five predetermined criteria: a master's degree in LIS or related field; 7-10 years of

experience in higher education; three to five years of experience as a library leader in the

CCCs; a published, peer-reviewed author; and/or experience facilitator on topics related

to the research question. The first 14 library leaders who responded to the email

invitation to participate, and who met at least three criteria, were selected for an

interview.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant Number	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Years in Current Role	Years in Higher Education
01	White	Female	5.5	11
02	White	Female	1	20
03	Asian, Hmong	Female	2	10
04	Hispanic, Latinx	Female	15	25
05	Asian, White	Female	16	24
06	Hispanic, Latinx Huichol	Female	1.5	17
07	White	Female	15	15
08	White	Female	8	15
09	Hispanic, Latinx	Female	1.5	20
10	White	Male	5	21
11	White	Female	11	13
12	Black/African American	Female	8	15
13	White	Male	10	10
14	White	Female	7	9

Demographic Data

The sample of 14 participants was interviewed one-on-one by the researcher. The study sample was 85.6% female, 60.71% White, and 39.28% Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The average number of years in a CCC library leadership position was 7.5 years. The geographic distribution of participants was four from Northern California,

three from Central California, and seven from Southern California. Of the sample,

participants came from small, medium, and large community colleges based on full-time

equivalent students (FTES), from both rural and urban campuses. Table 3 details the

sample participants by race/ethnicity, gender identity, years in current role, and years in

higher education.

Table 3

Themes, Sources, and Frequency Counts

Dimension (Count)	Theme	Sources	Frequency
Professional Duty (65)	Routinely amplify access to advocate for students	14	50
	Decolonize collections with culturally relevant materials	11	15
Personal Journey (136)	Honor impact of one's own personal journey	14	70
	Create and hold space for diverse lived experiences	14	66
Pedagogical Approach (126)	Continually interrogate library policy and practice	14	69
Political Context (136)	Center students in telling the library's story	13	67
	Collaborate and conspire with strategic partners to make change	14	69
	Total Frequency Count		463

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

The findings presented in this chapter are the result of 14 hours of ethnographic interviews. The data collected in this ethnographic study was analyzed to investigate how CCC library leaders are culturally responsive in their leadership strategies. Seven themes emerged, with a total of 463 frequency counts organized into the four dimensions of the CRL framework by Horsford et al. (2011).

Professional Duty Dimension

Based on Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework, the dimension of professional duty is defined as "leading for equity, engagement, and excellence" (p. 594). Research sub-question 1 asked: "How does one's sense of *professional duty* influence CCC library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies?" To what extent are leaders driven by professional standards or a sense of duty? What strategies do leaders use to cultivate equity-minded organizations? The first theme that emerged within the domain of professional duty is participants routinely amplifying access to advocate for students. This theme had 14 sources with a frequency count of 50 occurrences.

Theme 1: Routinely Amplifying Access to Advocate for Students

Table 4

Routinely Amplifying Access to Advocate for Students

Theme	Sources	Frequency
Routinely amplifying access to advocate for students	14	50

During semi-structured interviews, participants were asked how their sense of professional duty influences their ability to be culturally responsive as library leaders.

The data revealed that participants utilized their positions within the library and across campus to bring attention to the needs of students. One aspect of a library leader's professional duty is using their position to advocate for students, particularly when campus administration may not be aware of students' basic needs in the way that librarians see.

All 14 study participants shared how they lead in a culturally responsive fashion by focusing on the professional duty aspect of their job. Although this concept appeared 50 times in the data, a few experiences highlight the importance of this theme. One example is the response from Participant 03, the Hmong American library leader at a rural community college. Her family came to the United States as refugees from the Vietnam War. Participant 03's community college serves students from a large geographic region with three satellite campuses. Students attending this college travel great distances and oftentimes cannot attend the in-person library hours. Additionally, many of these students are agricultural workers, further limiting their ability to access the library. When Participant 03 realized this challenge, she felt that it was her professional duty to make the library more accessible. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, she offered library services via Zoom because of the rural nature of her community demographics. The advocacy for students can be seen in the following response by Participant 03:

> Students would have challenging times coming to the library, where either the bus route would be too late, or they didn't have a car to come to campus. And so, I was offering appointments via Zoom. And students are like, whoa, that's even a thing. Often, I tell them, yeah, it's totally an option, if you don't mind, even if you don't have a camera, if you just want to hear my voice, I can completely do that. And I can share a screen with you and show you how to navigate the library website and the library databases and so forth.

Important in what Participant 03 shared is the reaction from one student, who said, "Whoa, [accessing the library through Zoom], that's even a thing?" This modality of amplifying student access may seem commonplace because the pandemic forced libraries to go digital, but Participant 03's innovative approach helped close equity gaps for students seeking library services.

Another example of how community college library leaders are culturally responsive by focusing on their professional duty can be seen in the experiences of Participant 04, a Latina library leader in southern California. Like Participant 03, she begins by evaluating the needs of the students and follows up with a differentiated approach to serving the students. Recognizing that all students have unique needs, she feels that part of her professional duty is to build rapport with the students who come to the library. Once she gets to know the students more personally, she begins her librarian duties. For example, when she learned that some students might not know what they don't know, she quickly figured out how to open the door for new resources for the student, empowering them to seek a wider array of resources actively. This approach to routinely amplifying access to advocate for students can be seen in her response:

> To me libraries mean, I know it sounds cliché, but I remember not having a lot of options when I was growing up. So where was I? In the library. The library opened up everything for me. And so, here I am now, I've been working in libraries most of my life, all my life. And I think it's from the people that you meet in the libraries, they see you coming back all the time, and it's like, oh, let me introduce them to something new. Let me open up their eyes a little bit more by sharing resources. I think that's what I like to do here with our students and our staff and our student workers. There's stuff out there for us.

Participant 04 noted, "Not all students can afford the textbooks, not all students have a safe space to study," and that students were using the library to charge their devices and free Wi-Fi. Perhaps the most significant part of her response is her vision of, "let me open

up their eyes a little bit more by sharing resources." Connecting people with resources to support their lifelong learning is one of the fundamental tenets of librarianship.

Participant 05, an Asian American library leader at an urban community college, remarked, "Faculty always complain about how underprepared students are for the first day of class." Seeing that the bookstore and the library were not open before classes began, Participant 05 advocated that the administration "should open the library a week early so that students can come in, use the reserve textbooks, use the computers so that they can check their syllabi, they can log in to the open campus." After negotiating for extending staff contracts and changing material loan periods until after the end of the semester, Participant 05 was able to see the fruit of her labor in expanded services at one library in her three-college district, and faculty saw better-prepared students at the beginning of the term.

Participant 13, a White male library leader from a Northern CCC, described a decades-long project to get funding for a system wide library services platform (LSP):

> You look at the disparity in funding with the colleges, between colleges that have the highest spending on resources versus the lowest. It's really stunning. The disparity of funding and so the quality of resources and tools that students have available to them really depends on where they are getting their community college experience. And if that's not an equity issue, I don't know what is.

To advocate for the implementation of this LSP, Participant 13 leveraged his position to amplify access across the CCCs:

> Since its inception, and no matter what group we were addressing, we would take this around, we would go to conferences, to school board conferences, to the Vice President of Instruction leadership group. We were regular attendees to their meetings. We were at the council in Sacramento regularly, whenever we had an opportunity to speak about this project, equity was part of the message in that.

Participant 13 also took a similar approach to dealing with the rapid shift to online library services, stating, "One of the things that we did, right out of the gate, in the first semester of the pandemic, every class, every single section, no matter what the subject, was assigned a librarian." More than generating a particular response rate from students, per Participant 13, this persistent and widespread outreach strategy was to develop good working relationships with faculty and promote future student-centered initiatives.

Of the 14 participants who cited examples of routinely amplifying access, library leaders pointed to a strong sense of professional responsibility. Participant 11, a White female library leader at a large urban community college, said, "Every time they have some sort of event in the quad, the library's out there with our tables. We're always out there.... I'm like, absolutely, what can we do?" As department chair and actively involved in committees across campus, Participant 11 sees gaps in student support services and how the library may fill those gaps. For example, when the college reopened for hybrid classes, she anticipated that students would need places to participate via Zoom in between face-to-face classes other than their cars. Although the common area of the library is typically quiet, Participant 11 advocated for additional tables and carrels with outlets for students to plug in their own devices. She elaborated on the professional duty of librarians:

> So that's where I feel the library fits now: we provide for the cracks that other people can't see, because we're the first line. It's not the counselors, it's not admission, it's the library. When a student doesn't know where else to go or what else to do, they come to the library. And that we need to take that seriously as our role as librarians because we are information merchants, right? But that information should not be relegated to just research. It needs to be providing information on how to make their lives better, how to improve their lives. That's our goal, not just to have them succeed in the one class or the writing of whatever paper.

To better advocate for students, Participant 11 shared a mental "filter" she uses to check

if her motivations and actions align with "who I want to be as a librarian" and her

professional duty. She said, "I run it through my filter of 'who is this for?' Is this for me?

This is for the students, it's for the faculty, for the institution." Unlike librarians who

operate from more conventional backgrounds (e.g., "the library *should* be this"),

Participant 11 attributes her customer service experience outside of libraries as a guiding

principle:

> What can libraries be? Where can we be in the future? And over the years here, I've proven it to those folks that work here, the benefit of being where the institution needs us and to being where the students need us.

Showing up, saying yes, and building allies with students, faculty, staff, and community

stakeholders are themes that will surface throughout this chapter.

According to Participant 02, a White library leader at a small HSI in Northern

California, shared: "And that professional duty, it's bedrock for me. Everything I do

comes back to what is equitable, what is just." Advocating for additional resources can be

challenging in a chronically underfunded system of public higher education, and yet that

is what culturally responsive library leaders must do. Participant 02 stated:

> This is why we need funds to buy new things and to expand our collections and expand the horizons that we're able to access. Because as you're well aware, the erosion of our budgets has been extraordinary with subscription costs for electronic materials, and we just don't have the purchasing power that we used to. That's a big deal.... if you don't give us an incremental cost-of-living, increase adjustment to our library materials, we're gonna wither and die on the vine, and not be able to promote social justice and ensure student success.

Amplifying access by library advocacy often means leaving your "library bubble"

outside of our own silo, as Participant 07 openly acknowledged:

> When I first got there, they just assumed that everybody loved the library and that everybody was going to come and find out what they were doing. And I don't

agree with that. I think we have to go and do the outreach. We've got to do the flex professional learning sessions, do everything we can to make our information available.

Participant 07, a White library leader at a large community college in Southern California, does this through participatory governance. She said she leads by example, serving on numerous committees and encouraging her faculty to do the same despite the contractual requirement to only serve on one committee. This echoes the institutional climate in which "people just step up," according to Participant 07:

> My campus has really helped me become more equitable and able to listen better and see things and be more responsive to social justice issues.... My community has been just invaluable to my knowledge and my learning, and my understanding of how to serve my community better.

Showing up, being visible and accountable, is part and parcel of a librarian's professional duty. Additionally, having representation at different tables enables librarians to amplify their voices:

> It's just always, always looking. It's what we do, it's who we are. When things happen in the world, we have special spaces for students to come, faculty and classified professionals to come, and speak and be and hear and listen. It's wonderful. And so, we try to do the same thing in our library, right? We try to make sure that we are also being responsible and being responsive to the things around us.

This notion of "being responsible and being responsive" speaks to the equity-minded professional work library leaders are engaged in across the CCCs.

Theme 2: Decolonizing Collections with Culturally Relevant Materials

Table 5

Decolonizing Collections with Culturally Relevant Materials

Theme	Sources	Frequency
Decolonizing collections with culturally relevant materials	11	15

Within Dimension 1, another theme, professional duty, emerged in response to the research sub-question "How does one's sense of *professional duty* influence CCC library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies?" The second theme that occurred within the domain of professional duty is participants decolonizing library collections with culturally relevant materials. This theme had 11 sources with a frequency count of 15 occurrences. Although this theme had fewer counts than the previous theme, it is noteworthy in the context of library leadership.

The data from the semi-structured interviews indicated that participants had a sense of professional duty when maintaining their library collections. Indeed, per the ALA's Code of Ethics (1939/2021), librarians, "as members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information," are charged with the ethical "selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information." Furthermore, CCC librarians are responsible for selecting and managing educational materials to support student learning. Eleven participants referred to current, proposed, and ongoing plans to weed collections of outdated, inaccurate, and inappropriate materials and fortify their libraries with current and relevant materials that would resonate with students and their information needs. Many participants also referenced using thematic book displays to highlight culturally relevant materials both in the library and online.

Participant 09, a Latina library leader at a small, rural community college in north central California, spoke of her collection development librarian as being "very intentional" in purchasing books that "help expand and broaden and start conversations about social justice themes" and creating prominent displays at their two library

locations. Her own experience as a teenager emigrating from Mexico facing domestic violence and racism informs her professional duty to foster safe spaces for students: "Those experiences have really informed the type of environment that I want to foster." Books on the shelves or highlighted on display are one way to signal to students that they are welcome here. Under her leadership, Participant 09 shared that as a library team, they also worked to highlight aspects of the collection using the website and social media.

Participant 10, a White male library leader at a large, urban community college in the Los Angeles region, echoed that sentiment. He said that all librarians on staff have collection development responsibilities and conduct those duties with an inclusive approach.

> We're trying to be available and accessible and to have the materials that we can support every kind of student on campus. Is there a structured program as such? Not really, it's that we just do our traditional library duties with that diversity in mind.

In this case, although it is not a definitive or programmatic effort, the importance of library materials that students can connect with is evident.

Participant 01, a White library leader at a rural community college, shared that their library was currently undergoing a "major weed" despite having two other weeding projects in her career there. Like other library leaders across the CCC system, Participant 01 is compelled to remove outdated and "offensive" materials: "I want students to come in and see themselves reflected in the books that we offer, or the ebooks, or the periodicals that we have." When students of color see themselves represented in the curriculum, instructional materials, and extracurricular programs on campus, they are more likely to persist and succeed.

Similarly, Participant 02, a White library leader at a small HSI in Northern California spoke of the need for students and faculty to "see themselves in the collection." Participant 02 referenced the larger movement within the library profession, nationally and internationally, "to diversify our collections and remove materials that are not culturally relevant or are often downright offensive." Part of her strategy was to develop a 5-year plan for assessing library materials and changing the collection development policy to be "explicit about what it is that we collect and what we don't, and evaluating materials that are by, for, and about minoritized communities."

A clear collection development policy is a valuable tool in maintaining, updating, and weeding materials, yet applying an ongoing and critical lens to each and every book on the shelf and electronic subscription is a daunting task for any library. Participant 03, an Asian library leader at a rural community college, identified an additional core element of culturally relevant collections. She said,

> It's important to listen to not only what our professional field is telling us, but also listen to what our students are telling us, right? What type of resources and materials they would like to see in their library because really, this is their library.

A person of color and immigrant, Participant 03 sees herself in her students who are seeking to achieve an education despite discouraging personal, social, and economic circumstances.

Participant 12, a Black library leader at an urban community college in the Los Angeles region, articulated a comparable student-centered philosophy:

> If it doesn't seem like it lands with the students if they don't seem like they're receiving that, I feel like I'm not a surgeon, I'm not operating on anyone. If I make a mistake, no one's going to die. So, I'm going to keep changing this display around until somebody likes something I put on it.

Her response is both practical— "I'm not a surgeon"—and powerful. Participant 12 will

persist through trial and error until she finds what materials resonate with students.

Personal Journey Dimension

The second dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework is the *personal*

journey, or the leader's own "path to cultural proficiency" (p. 597). Research sub-

question 2 asked: "How does one's *personal journey* influence CCC library leaders'

ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies?" To what extent do their

own personal journeys affect leaders? How do they reflect on their own identities,

critically assess their worldview, and incorporate their lived experiences into their

leadership practices? The first theme that emerged within the domain of personal journey

is participants honoring the impact of their own lived experiences. This theme had 14

sources with a frequency count of 70 occurrences.

Theme 3: Honoring the Impact of One's Own Lived Experiences

Table 6

Honoring the Impact of One's Own Lived Experiences

Theme	Sources	Frequency
Honoring the impact of one's own lived experiences	14	70

During semi-structured interviews, participants were asked how their personal

journey influences their ability to be culturally responsive as library leaders. The data

indicated that participants reflected upon their lived experiences and represented those in

their leadership practices. One aspect of a library leader's personal journey is being

cognizant of their identities and what they bring to the table. All 14 study participants

shared how they lead in culturally responsive ways by honoring their personal journeys.

This theme appeared 70 times in the data, the highest frequency count of any other theme. A few of their experiences are highlighted here to illustrate the resonance of this theme.

Participant 06 is the library leader at a large community college in Southern California. She identifies as a Latina woman, a Dreamer (recipient of the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals or DACA program), an undocumented student, and a first-generation college student. All these personal identities greatly inform her work as a library leader. She felt she had to hide her identity— "If you've been in that position, you know if you say something, that's it. Somebody's not gonna like it and call *la migra*."— and struggled with her own light-skinned privilege— "I remember they would say, where are you from? What is that accent? You don't look Mexican." Even after getting a green card and becoming a U.S. citizen, Participant 06 said it took a long time to feel comfortable being open about her background. Given her personal journey, Participant 06 drew upon her own lived experiences as a librarian, always mindful of the students she serves in the CCCs.

With age, education, tenure, and citizenship, Participant 06 recognized: "My dad being dark, my mom being light, we all come from different perspectives and ethnicities whether we're here or from other places." At this point in her career and with her position, Participant 06 is a passionate and outspoken advocate for students:

> Now I feel comfortable enough that I can voice out and be that support, not just to the undocumented students, the Dreamers ... not just that specific population, but anybody that doesn't feel welcome, I want to be that support system for them and be able to voice out. Because I know what that can be like when they get scared. So, I make sure if we're gonna be there, that they know we want to be there for them, supporting and giving a voice to them.

Notably, Participant 06 emphasized, "Because I know what that can be like when they get scared." This interrelatedness with students, understanding the genuine barriers for them, is an example of honoring the impact of one's own personal journey and using that experience to empathize and connect with students.

Another example of culturally responsive leadership in this domain can be seen in Participant 09's lived experiences. Professionally, she is a library leader at a small, rural community college in central California. Personally, Participant 09 identifies as a Hispanic woman who moved to the United States as a teenager to escape a violent home life in Mexico. She described this time as a "difficult transition," attending a predominantly White and anti-immigrant high school where she would hear, "go back to where you came from," and "you Mexicans only come to get pregnant and get on welfare," in the hallways and classrooms.

> Had I not been an immigrant from Mexico faced with racism in high school, I would be oblivious to the emotional scars that leaves. And if I had not been an English language learner, my approach to teaching would be completely different. And the other aspect is poverty, had I not experienced that, I would make assumptions very easily.

Participant 09 reflected on how her personal journey shaped her deep sense of professional duty "to make it easier for students as they walk through their academic journey."

> Ever since the point where I first became a librarian, I was in charge of a small branch, and I realized the great power that comes with leadership, and also the big responsibility. Wow, I get to shape this, I get to decide what type of programs we offer, I get to decide really who to serve. And I think, whenever anyone undergoes any type of experience, it has the opportunity to make you very compassionate or to harden you.

Recognizing the impact of her difficult personal journey, Participant 09 has chosen to become more compassionate and open in her work. It was not without its tribulations, however:

> There was a point, or a period of time rather, where I felt utterly ashamed of who I was. And, again, hearing people say, "Oh, you're taking a White man's job, you shouldn't be in this position, because you shouldn't even be here." No. I do have experience. There is a place for me and I am here. Coming to embrace my experiences and allowing them to guide my work was a transition and has been really kind of empowering.

Participant 09 affirmed the emotional labor and spiritual work it took to bring a more holistic view to reconciling and embracing the various parts of her identities: "I've done a lot of work personally, to get to the point where I have come to embrace my experiences and to allow those experiences to really inform my leadership." This level of reflection and commitment to continual growth as a human and a leader is exceptional.

Participant 12 is a library leader at a Los Angeles area community college. As a Black woman, her work as a library leader is intrinsically linked to her personal journey. Growing up, Participant 12 had internalized many of the implicit and explicit racial messages perpetuated in American society: "You can see even within our own communities, colorism, how it impacts us, light-skinned, dark-skinned, good hair, bad hair." One pivotal moment was when a Black high school teacher pulled her aside and said, "Look, we're not allowed to teach certain stuff, but if you want to know, this is what you do. You go to the library; you look at these books. She provided us with the resources to learn about ourselves." Indeed, Participant 12 linked this teacher with an awakening of sorts: "That's when I started to take root in my Blackness. That's when I started to realize that Black is beautiful." Coming at a time as an adolescent when she was struggling personally and academically, this teacher's impact is evident, and planted

a seed of librarianship: "She provided us with the resources to learn about ourselves." It was the beginning of a cultural and political awareness that continues to inform her identity.

> Everything I do, personal and professional, stems from who I am and how I grew up. How I finally had to learn how to love myself. To love Blackness and not think about the stereotypes that are portrayed about us and all the other negative portrayals in media, on television, wherever you may see something. And now with social media, of course, it's even worse. It's everywhere, right? There were days that weren't on social media so a lot of things kind of went unknown. But now a lot of people's nasty opinions of us are very, very apparent.

With the pandemic and civil unrest the last few years, it was difficult for Participant 12. She reflected on her college's campus closure as a mixed blessing. Before the closure, she had been struggling with a dysfunctional work environment and "toxic" leadership; some of her projects and ideas had been taken and misattributed by her direct supervisor. She was feeling frustrated with the institution and disconnected from colleagues to the point of nearly quitting:

> The pandemic, I know, it was a terrible, terrible thing. Folks were dying, or they were sick. But for me, it actually saved my life, because I was really spiraling prior to it. I came to work, I did my job, of course, and I just did my job.... I didn't really engage with colleagues, I didn't engage with students.... And I didn't think I could survive. It wasn't genuine. It wasn't authentic. It wasn't me.

Working remotely during the pandemic was an opportunity to "re-set," as Participant 12 described:

> I didn't have to see the toxic folks. I didn't have to be in a toxic environment. And I could focus on projects I wanted to focus on, and that just felt like the elephant had gone off my chest.

Participant 12 still feels like she is finding her equilibrium as face-to-face services have resumed, now with more authority in her position and a willingness to speak up in the face of some of the previous issues, toxicity, isolation, and discrimination.

Several other participants offered specific examples from their personal journeys that affect their ability to lead in culturally responsive ways. Participant 04, a San Diego area library leader, recalled:

> I remember being in college. Because I didn't want to go back to Imperial Valley, and I knew my parents, they were doing what they could. I remember eating off the dollar menu or buying those 99 cent cups of noodles and stuff, and just living off of that.

A Latina librarian, Participant 04 shared the profound realization that a long, hard day at work was nothing to complain about, thinking of her father doing "back-breaking" work in the lettuce fields and in construction. Her experience with food insecurity and its related stigma informs how she promotes library services today, connecting students with textbooks, WIFI, and the campus food pantry.

Participant 11, a White library leader at a large urban community college, spoke about two deeply impactful aspects of her own personal journey. The first was navigating academia as a neurodivergent person with learning disabilities, dyslexia, and attention-deficit hyperactivity (ADHD). Struggling with spelling and pronunciation led to shyness and imposter syndrome in college and grad school, worrying that people would think she wasn't smart enough. Rather than coming from a place of shame, Participant 11 now readily shares her struggles with students: "I find that opening up with my reality and my truth to students opens them up as well." Students said that seeing somebody in a position of leadership talk about their dyslexia as a strength boosted students' own sense of academic self-confidence.

Another critical awakening has been raising a non-binary child who first came out as gay and then trans, which has "launched this desperate sense of equity" for Participant

11. Seeing the world through her child's eyes has directly affected how this participant leads:

> It's not just about pronouns, it's about recognizing that this person has needs. It's not just about a preferred name, they need that recognition that who they feel they are, is valued. And that has become my mission on this campus is to share these experiences with people.

One tangible example of this is improved signage pointing to the library's inclusive, all-gender bathrooms. A more complex example is supporting students whose identities may be shifting:

> How do we get them their books, so that they can learn and feel like they're not alone, provide resources and things like that, without them feeling like they're going to be outed by checking it out or carrying it around? ... We're talking about preferred pronouns; we need to have that. But we also need to have education in place. We don't need someone outing somebody with preferred pronouns, right? We can do harm as well as good. So, we need to talk about this, make sure we're not just throwing in, hey, let's have these preferred pronouns because that's what everybody's talking about. This is not just a trend. This is people's lives. It's very important.

Advocating for a loved one from the trans community has brought insights into the challenges students face. Something as seemingly positive as establishing preferred pronoun policies in libraries may have unintended consequences. Drawing upon personal experience can have potentially transformative impacts on leading a culturally responsive library.

Theme 4: Facilitating Vulnerable, Critical Conversations

Another theme that emerged from the ethnographic interviews with library leaders was a willingness to engage in, and hold space for, difficult conversations. This theme was referenced by all 14 participants with a frequency count of 66 references.

Table 7

Facilitating Vulnerable, Critical Conversations

Theme	Sources	Frequency
Facilitating vulnerable, critical conversations	14	66

Participants were asked how their personal journey influences their ability to be culturally responsive as library leaders. Reflecting on their journeys during semi-structured interviews, participants identified their willingness to have difficult conversations as an integral part of their decision-making and equity work. A White library leader at a Central Valley community college, Participant 01 shared her path to becoming the outspoken advocate she is today. Raised in a conservative Christian household in a rural community, Participant 01 had not questioned her worldview or beliefs until she returned to community college after having two children. She acknowledged higher education having "much more meaning as an adult student than it would have had I just continued going right out of high school." Being an adult learner really influenced who she is as a library leader today: "It shaped me to be socially aware, looking at social justice issues in ways that I had never thought about before." Participant 01 recalled taking a California history class and learning about disproportionate access to education based on race. This challenged her understanding of California public education as being openly accessible and a great equalizer to all, regardless of race or background: "To find out that I had been lied to made me so angry," and this class "spark[ed] a fire" within her that continues today.

Another challenge occurred when one daughter came out as queer in college. After initially not responding well ("It just went in the face of all of my Christian

sensibilities"), Participant 01 realized, "I either got to know who she is as a person, or I lost her as a daughter. And that wasn't acceptable to me. So, I got to know who she was." Participant 01 described this experience as "liberating" for both of them:

> My daughter was always pushing envelopes, pushing boundaries, and I would hit those boundaries and then push through them. I'm now 62 years old, and I feel like I am just beginning. I have so much more awareness, and I can see areas that I can affect change. I can see ways that I can empower people. I have this wisdom from this journey that I've gone through, over the past 25 years. So, I feel like there's a lot to do.

This awakening and learning process was not always easy. Participant 01 described a "pivotal" moment when her daughter was dating a Black man. At this point, Participant 01 had been doing a lot of social justice reading and personal growth work. She was excited to sit down with him to "talk about racism and what we could do to solve these problems."

> And he looked at me square in the eyes. And he goes, "Why?" He said, "What are you going to tell me about racism that I don't already know?" He said, "You need to be talking to your own people." ... It was just a watershed moment for me. So, I started talking to my family and friends, and I was horrified. I thought people would be like me, "White privilege, oh my gosh, you're right. We need to do something about this." But of course, that's the whole premise of White privilege, like "I don't need to do anything about racism. That's something for Black people to resolve."

Participant 01 reflected on how this started her growth as a culturally responsive leader who is willing to have critical conversations about race. "When I am in rooms, Zoom rooms, rooms on campus, I have no problem talking about issues of race. I've gotten way past that."

Tracing this willingness to engage and be uncomfortable back to the conversation with her daughter's boyfriend, Participant 01 said,

I'm willing to step up to the plate and be that person who calls folks out. And my thought is that hearing it from a White person is gonna land a lot differently than hearing it from a person of color.

Nevertheless, she struggles to find the balance between speaking up and "not elevating the White perspective and the White voice but giving an opportunity for the BIPOC voice to also rise to the top." Participant 01 said a Latino colleague advised her, "Don't worry about it [speaking up]. Just do it. You'll probably mess up, you'll make mistakes, and that's OK. Because it's better to do that than to do nothing." Indicative of this, Participant 01 determined she needed to put aside wanting to be a "good White person," that she needed to "get over" herself, just do the "hard work" with an open mind and stay committed to learning.

Participant 01 admitted that it's difficult to "hold space" for those who view people of color "as less than," realizing that people are being killed because of this attitude, to listen and value their humanity and lived experience: "Yet people don't change their minds because I present a long list of data, or because I shame them into thinking differently. And so, it has to come from a place of shared humanity.... It's hard." She said she finds renewal in conversations with like-minded people when "we're co-conspirators, and it gives me hope that things can change for the better." Clearly, the examples shared by Participant 01 are emblematic of this theme, consciously having vulnerable conversations about topics that matter.

Participant 09, a Latina library leader at a small, rural community college in north central California, draws upon her training and experience as a spiritual director— "the basis of which is being able to listen and to hold space for others"—navigating interpersonal relationships. During her time as a library leader, Participant 09 has had

several incidents that required her to mediate grievances related to race, gender, and discrimination between staff in her department, in response to student complaints, and at faculty meetings. She described the importance of sitting with difficult emotions and conflicting perspectives:

> It's hard to listen when incidents are brought forth, they are impacting someone's life at a great level, and whether it's just the perception, it very much affects your view of yourself, your identity. So, it's not done lightly, and it took one of the staff members a while after [this] incident to actually talk about it. This person sat in this pain before saying something, what do you do with that? You just have to hold space and allow them to share this story. It's hard. And then you have to also hold space for the other person involved and give them the same level of respect and attention.

There were several components of having conscious, vulnerable conversations in this story. It was emotionally sensitive for the person bringing the incident forward after some time had passed. It was a high-stakes issue related to the workplace and professional reputation. The college Title IX officer became involved, further raising the situation's gravity.

Participant 09 shared a "me, we" framework for communication and conflict resolution she has brought to staff training toward creating a "culture of openness and affirmation" in the library. The idea of "me, we," according to Participant 09, is that "all the work has to be with us before it can move to the team and then to the larger community as a college." She facilitates her staff development accordingly with time for personal reflection, small group discussion, and providing tools to explore further and address topics such as bias. Participant 09 said, "the sages have always said it really starts with us. If we want to see change, we need first to make it happen with us."

Knowing that not everyone is ready, and "the majority of people resist change," Participant 09 said:

> We as leaders can make the invitation and can allow them to envision what it could be if we do decide to do the work... What does it look like in our day-to-day interactions and conversations? What does that look like when we serve students? And then developing our identity as a team around that, going from us to "out there," to the world, or the college in our case.

This "me, we, us" framework by Jarden and Jarden (2016) is taught in professional wellness training in a variety of settings, such as businesses, hospitals, and non-profit organizations. It serves as a useful scaffolding in communication and conflict resolution, as it looks at personal responsibility, responsibility to one's direct contacts, and then outwards to a broader sense of community.

> Furthermore, Participant 09 firmly believes,

> the issues that are coming up within our staff and faculty are a microcosm of what society or the wider world represents. We need to learn to communicate with one another, but it starts with that. We need to know more about what that means and what it looks like for us.

For Participant 09, growing up in a home with domestic violence meant she learned to be a good listener almost as a survival mechanism ("first it was a way to protect myself, to keep myself safe"). Now, her experience—being able to observe behavior closely, listening to what is said and left unsaid, and "just talking about the elephant in the room"—serves her well in being a culturally responsive library leader. Active listening and making others feel seen and heard are vital to having critical conversations.

Another participant connected the work of philosopher Martin Buber to culturally responsive communication strategies. Participant 10, a White male library leader at a large, urban community college in the Los Angeles region, referenced Buber's (1923) philosophy of dialogue. Buber's philosophy, as described by Participant 10, is three essential components of being in communication with someone: to be present with another person, to be open to what the other person has to say, and to be vulnerable to be

changed by what they have to say. Embodying these points is at the heart of Participant

10's work around culturally responsive library leadership:

> It doesn't matter the color, the race, the kind, the type, the gender, all those things are trivial, once you're fully present, open, and vulnerable with the person you're in dialogue or in relationship with.... I don't talk about equity and social justice. I talk about intimate humane relationships with another human being. When we can come as who we are, and let them be who they are, and find out our similarities and our differences in the act of conversation, social justice happens.

Participant 10 further elaborated on this approach, on being in dialogue with those we

serve, as the core of being a librarian and leader:

> When I've been in ally classes and anti-racism training, the biggest thing I walk away from any of those trainings is listen to what the person is saying because their story is not your story. And you won't know it until you listen. And we don't need to tell others how to live their life or how to succeed in the world. We need to hear what they have to say, and then walk with them.

"Their story is not your story" is a unique approach to social justice work. Participant 10

recounted a "Living Book Day" event, which he considered the "most appropriate DEI

training I could imagine." People from different backgrounds were invited as "living

books" or "human libraries" to share their stories to small groups of two or three at a

time. Again, he grounded this example in Buber's philosophy of dialogue, specifically

being present, open, and vulnerable, to connect in an intimately human and humane way.

In his own personal journey, Participant 10 came out as gay later in life due in part to his

religious upbringing by a devout Christian mother. He acknowledged that although his

sexual identity "colors the way" he sees the world— "I've often felt like I was on the

outside looking in"—it is not something he openly brings to his work.

> To this day, I don't fully show up as myself, as an individual. I come to work to do the work. Probably half of my staff don't know I'm gay. And it's not something I feel terribly necessary to talk about at work.

Unlike race, ethnicity, or a visible marker of identity, the participant may not have to disclose this part of his identity, but it nevertheless informs his leadership practices. Listening more than talking is a noteworthy characteristic where educational leaders are expected to have answers and expertise.

Participant 02, a White library director at a small HSI in Northern California, spoke to the inherent privilege of being in an academic leadership position: "At a minimum, that selects for a certain kind of person, a certain kind of background, and other privileges that have allowed people to attain that level of education and experience." To an extent, simply being in a position of library leadership mitigates some of the risks of speaking up and out. As a relatively young (compared with other administrators) and new (in terms of seniority) female on a senior leadership team predominantly composed of older men, Participant 02 is not innately protected in what she chooses to communicate. She has experienced patronizing, misogynistic, and ageist responses in her work. Nevertheless, Participant 02 reflected on utilizing her positionality to advocate for others:

> How do I help others who haven't had those privileges, make sure that the ladder behind me extends down as far as I can make it, rather than trying to pull it up after myself? ... How can I support and engage people who clearly want to do this kind of work too? And how do I encourage them, coach them, and support them as *they* need it? Not the way that I would want to be coached, but how do they want to be supported in their work?

She elaborated on needing to establish healthy communication with her direct reports, which include librarians, staff, and student workers: "How do you want to be in a relationship with me in this job, knowing that there are certain things I have to do with you, as your boss?"

Vulnerability is key to being an open and transparent library leader. Participant 02 shared the experience of advocating for a nonbinary colleague, working together to establish boundaries, pronouns, and other expectations. To this end, Participant 02 noted:

> I worked with them to find a way to make sure that they felt comfortable with what we were talking about, whether or not they wanted me to take the lead on certain parts of the conversation. It's not their job to educate about what it is, what it means to be non-binary, or trans. It's our job to educate ourselves and affirm that person and lift them up and make sure that they have a working environment that's comfortable and conducive for them to get what they need out of being part of our team.

Participant 02 demonstrated a commitment to seeing the humanity and lived experiences of others in their willingness to have direct and compassionate conversations. Part of having rich, vulnerable dialogue is also bringing your full self to the table. Reflecting on earlier parts of her career, Participant 02 acknowledged being "less assertive" and "making myself small." She said, "I listened to responses, but I didn't necessarily ask my own questions or questioned my own assumptions, or the assumptions other people made. And I'm much better at that now." Not taking things personally, according to Participant 02, helps her be more engaged and present in whatever the conversation may be. Showing up wholeheartedly, able to question oneself and others respectfully and with curiosity, is no easy feat.

Participant 14, a White library leader at an urban community college in Northern California, also connected her culturally responsive leadership to facilitating conversations about topics that matter. At her multi-college district, a racial justice book circle had been established a few years ago. Participant 14 explained that as part of the planning committee, she is committed to showing up each week to engage in conversation. The White folks in the book circle handle organizational tasks (making

slides, managing breakout rooms, and so on) so that BIPOC participants are not expected

to take on additional labor. The format of the book circle evolved away from a more

structured itinerary and prescribed roles, such as note taker and timekeeper, to its current

iteration without a formal introduction or chapter summary, simply launching into

smaller group discussions:

> Each semester, we've learned that less hands-on, seems to work much better.... If you're here, you've read, and if you haven't read, then you can listen, or can participate anyway. Then when we come back as a larger group for the last 10 minutes, it's open to anyone who just wants to share a takeaway. This sort of practice of having less structure and trusting participants to be responsible for their own experience has been really powerful.

Ultimately, bringing people together for dialogue is the most important outcome.

According to Participant 14,

> Maybe true of a lot of professional development, the book is kind of important, but it's really just a launching point to having meaningful conversations with a really big cross-section of people.... We're sort of subversively using this book circle to build coalitions and get to talk about hard stuff and see that it's messy being a person.

Indeed, facilitating "meaningful conversations," building coalitions, and connecting over

shared humanity are resonant with the themes that emerged from participants.

Unlike other library leaders interviewed for this study, Participant 14 said there is

no division between classified staff and faculty librarians at their institution. "Classified

staff feel very open about sharing what they think. And so, we usually just process it out

loud. It's like, okay, what is the thing? And then what are we trying to accomplish?"

Centering any disagreements or tensions around shared interests, Participant 14 can find

common ground, "I can—we can—often anticipate what the concerns will be and then

alleviate them before they come to be. I know that that's not the case in all the libraries."

Participant 14 credited having a small team that lunches together most days as providing

integrated community building. Her office, located near the team's workroom, positions

Participant 14 to take the "informal temperature" of her direct reports on a regular basis.

In small and large ways, being open to conversation facilitates connection.

Despite her team's willingness to have vulnerable conversations, it is not without

some sensitivity. One challenge observed by Participant 14 is engaging in dialogue

without defensiveness:

> That has been less comfortable for some people. And so it's hard because it puts
> us in this tension, this is my perspective, that people feel like their commitment to
> students is in question, or the level of service that they're delivering is in question,
> or that their motives are in question. And it's not really that. I do believe that you
> believe everyone is welcome here. The issue is that people may not feel welcome
> here, right? We can only say that we're welcoming so much, but if people are
> coming with a lifetime of experiences that communicated to them that they're not
> welcome, what do we do about that? How do we overcome some of those
> obstacles? It's gotten better, but it has just been a rough road.

Inevitably, improving library services for all students means recognizing those

historically marginalized by higher education. Some amount of reckoning occurs in these

critical conversations, accepting the impact libraries may have had on students of color

"with a lifetime of experiences that communicated to them that they're not welcome."

Acknowledging that impact (intentional or not) is the first step in moving forward

without blame or shame.

Participant 06 attributed regular, intentional communication with faculty and staff

as part of her culturally responsive practices. Participant 06, who identifies as a "light-

skinned" Latina, a Dreamer, and a first-generation college graduate, said that when she

began her role as coordinator, communication was lacking between the different levels

within the library. Like many community college libraries, the hierarchy spans from the

dean or VP to faculty and adjunct librarians, and full-time and part-time staff, including

student workers. Mid-level library leaders are called to disseminate information, gather feedback, and facilitate employee buy-in. As coordinator, Participant 06 described an ongoing process to create team norms, essential to involving everyone in the library—not to avoid conflict but to "lessen the resistance" of having difficult conversations and potential disagreements. Further, Participant 06 established weekly check-ins with her colleagues, even if only brief, informal conversations, to cultivate relationships: "I talk to them individually. Hey, how are you, I know you're on your shift." When she sees something employees are reacting or to, she'll reach out with empathy and seek understanding:

> That has helped me build more relationships. Okay, I'm just gonna shut up, and I'm gonna listen to you. And I want to see your perspective. But can I also tell you what I see or what I can help you with, or what can we do to make this better? ... Showing empathy, checking with them constantly, even if it's a little small talk or just kind of remembering their parents or their children or partner. And, to support them by drawing on their strengths.

For example, Participant 06 observed that a colleague loved creating online library guides, or "libguides," and was "damn good at it," so she gave that colleague access to be a libguide administrator. Calling out strengths helps make employees feel seen and valued. Further, Participant 06 indicated one benefit of her walk-around managerial style is to model openness, a way to intentionally incorporate visibility and accessibility for students and one another into their daily work.

Being open also manifests in taking risks and being vulnerable. Participant 06 admitted that she had no idea how "toxic" the environment was, a campus culture that had made other people of color left. "In the beginning, I thought it was going to be drama. And I didn't realize it was more than that. It was actual racism and microaggressions. Until it happened to me." Now Participant 06 uses her light-skinned

privilege to embrace difficult situations with faculty and administrators outside the

library:

> I think that's probably my privilege. You look at me, a White person that you
> probably don't know where I'm from, which is fine. Maybe that's why you're not
> pushing me as someone with a different complexion. So, I took advantage of that
> because now I don't hold back. Even if I cannot say something, I'll type it into the
> chat, "Hey, what do you mean by this?"

As with Participant 14, Participant 06 acknowledged the importance of being human,

however messy and imperfect that may be:

> When I mess up, I show it, I recognize, and I do it publicly. Because I'm role-
> modeling this intentionality. "Hey, I'm sorry, I messed up. How can I try to do
> better?' That's another thing, then, when someone messes up something and says
> I'm sorry. It's okay. Stuff happens."

Several participants recognized the challenges of speaking from a place of

vulnerability and authenticity. Participant 04, a Latina Library Services Supervisor, said

there is a difference between calling someone out versus calling them in, the latter being,

"I'm calling you in on what you said or what you did that could be different" to help the

recipient see alternatives positively and constructively. Participant 08, a White

Department Chair, said there needs to be compassion and respect to have disagreements:

"As long as we have kindness for each other, and we care about each other, it's always

possible to build consensus and alliances even if you don't completely 100% agree."

Although it won't always be easy concerning culturally relevant policies and practices,

Participant 08 clarified, "We also have to choose our allies carefully. If someone's going

to be really obstructionist, unfortunately, we have to avoid that person."

Participant 12, a Black library leader at a large, urban community college,

reflected on the absence of communication at her library when "peer-to-peer"

disagreements arise, "We're not there, we're not ironing out or discussing our differences

the way we should be.... I don't think we have successfully navigated or even mediated any conflict. We don't have conflict resolution here." Yet, Participant 12 felt strongly that she needed to speak up, particularly regarding issues of equity and social justice. She noted she is more inclined to speak up at this point in her career, "I'm going to push myself, maybe speak somewhere where I didn't want to speak before, or step up and advocate for someone, maybe when I was kind of hesitant to put myself out there in that manner." Speaking up from a place of vulnerability is again part of the theme of facilitating conscious conversations.

For Participant 07, a White library leader at a Southern California college, engaging in meaningful dialogue means actively listening and soliciting feedback:

> Our students come to us with so many backgrounds, so many lived experiences, so many ways that they come to us, that it's simply not responsible to interact without an equity lens. With the things we create, with the way that we speak, with the spaces that we have, all of those of those things, we want to be welcoming. We want to be understanding.

> What somebody brings to you, at first glance is such a small piece of who they are. And why they're doing and saying the things that they are, it takes a lot of understanding and listening and openness. We really work hard to try and hear what people need, respond to the need, so that we can reflect. And you can listen better when you've got all the voices at the table, because if you don't have the voices, you can't hear the voices.

At this large, urban institution, outreach and "building bridges" is in fact part of a dedicated Equity and Engagement librarian's position: "She goes out to groups that have either shied away from the library, because perhaps they had poor experiences with us, or they feel intimidated, including faculty, staff, and students." Within this theme, participants shared many strategies of facilitating and soliciting culturally responsive conversations.

Pedagogical Approach Dimension

The third dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework is the *pedagogical approach,* one that engages leaders in the work of establishing a culturally affirming and supportive school climate. Drawing upon the roots of culturally relevant and antiracist pedagogy, this domain speaks to the educational administrator's ability to continually learn and lead in ways that center the achievement of diverse students. How do culturally responsive leaders gather and utilize quantitative and qualitative data? How do they develop their organizational capacity to serve traditionally marginalized students? The first theme that emerged within the domain of the pedagogical approach is participants continually interrogate library policy and practice by gathering data. This theme had 14 sources with a frequency count of 69 occurrences.

Theme 5: Continually Interrogating Library Policy and Practice

Table 8

Continually Interrogating Library Policy and Practice

Theme	Sources	Frequency
Continually interrogate library policy and practice	14	69

During semi-structured interviews, participants were asked how they bring a pedagogical approach to their culturally responsive leadership strategies. The data demonstrate how library leaders build their team's capacity to serve culturally diverse students. One aspect of a participant's pedagogical approach is to continually interrogate library policy and practice by gathering data. This theme appeared 69 times in the data across all 14 interviews, indicative of a commitment to lifelong learning at professional, departmental, and institutional levels.

As a library leader identifying as Filipina/Chinese/White, Participant 05 used her professional responsibility as Public Services Librarian to rewrite many of the existing operational procedures at her large, metropolitan community college. This included removing fines and fees; no longer requiring a student ID to check out materials; not enforcing a 2-hour time limit for computers, if computers were available; easing strict food, drink, and noise policies; and releasing library holds on student accounts. Per Participant 05, releasing library holds and eliminating the underlying reasons students might have blocks on their accounts allowed the library to support student registration and retention efforts on campus. Further, when students are getting noisy in the common area (the "Library Living Room"), Participant 05 modeled how to approach with humor rather than rigid enforcement:

> It's a comfortable lounge area, and the students can get a little loud. And so, I walked up to a group, and I said, "Oh, my gosh, are you people are having a great time?" And I said, "Especially you, I love your laugh, you do have a great laugh, because I could hear it over there."

In this way, Participant 05 was able to reorient rules by appealing to students sharing space and being mindful of others, rather than more traditional "shushing" or shaming approaches.

Participant 08, a White female Department Chair at an urban multi-college district in Northern California, shared several examples of questioning and ultimately changing library policies. Early in her career, Participant 08 felt strongly that in order to create a welcoming environment for students, the library's restrictive food and drink policy had to loosen: "We want students to stay in the library, and they get hungry. We all remember what that was like when you're studying for hours." Seeing this change "as the most basic, low-hanging fruit," she was surprised, in retrospect, at the resistance it received.

Despite not having tenure at the time, Participant 08 found herself having to persuade

faculty and staff along with other services that shared the library facility:

> It was a struggle, and I had to try to get a lot of buy-in. We had to finally do a
> division-wide vote ... And it was this big controversy, I recall that most of the
> full-time librarians were on board. Ultimately the vote went the way I wanted it
> to, we changed the policy, and then things were back to normal and nothing
> horrible happened, you know? So that was surprisingly difficult to accomplish.

Along with the food and drink policy, Participant 08 challenged library norms in other

ways. One was a small but tangible change in the space, removing negative signage that

centered on rules and regulations. It is not unusual for libraries to post signage on

unacceptable behaviors such as no eating, no talking, limits on how many items can be

borrowed, and late fees if those materials aren't returned in a timely manner. By

eliminating signage that focused on, "You can't do this, you can't do that," Participant 08

made the library more affirmative and student-centered.

Similarly, Participant 08 created an internal policy regarding pronouns so that

library staff uses the default "they" when referring to students rather than assuming

gender with he/she pronouns:

> This is for when students come and ask for help, and maybe they have to go to the
> circulation desk, and then we would go along to explain maybe the background of
> what the student needs. So instead of saying he or she, and assuming their
> pronouns, we use "they" pronouns.

These overt and subtle practices, such as signage and language, not only make the library

services welcoming, but also help to integrate equity into the day-to-day.

Participant 08 acknowledged that library leaders can often be overwhelmed with

"quote, unquote, 'running the library,' ... If you're busy with operational things, it's a

challenge to be intentional about developing a climate." Although the college has

antiracism as part of its values, Participant 08 said she struggles with turning that into

action: "I think we've done okay, but I never feel like we're doing enough." To that end, she has begun cycling off some committees to "pare down" her service work to focus more time on operationalizing that value: "That's one of my goals to get some things in place where we can work on the intentionality of it, whether that's services or pedagogy, there are multiple places to approach it." Making time and space to incorporate culturally responsive practices was an important theme among participants as they shared how they continually interrogate library practices.

Relatedly, Participant 05 admitted that getting the entire library team together was difficult to navigate just in terms of logistics, "one professional development, culturally responsive topic at a time." At her large, urban community college library, Participant 05 had to negotiate to keep the library staffed for long hours while also dedicating time to building the team's capacity to serve diverse students.

> We need to be able to find a time to come together, the challenges of having a counter that needs to be staffed, but then wanting everybody to be at a gathering where we can have that time to build community, and to talk about different issues.

Participant 05 reflected on these complexities:

> It does come down to more of the middle management, working with our staff to be able to address team building or building staff perspective. And part of it is without communication. I don't know what they know. They don't know what I know. And most of it happens informally, in one-on-one conversations. And trying to be able to carve out that time and make that a priority. Because we keep talking about it, we keep talking about it. And then you know, the whole year has gone by, and graduation's on Friday, and I don't think we met once this year as an entire team.

Certainly, keeping a library running and its doors open can be challenging enough while also prioritizing "carving out" time to make culturally responsive pedagogy and training a priority.

In contrast, Participant 14 shared that focusing on library processes has allowed her team to address larger social justice issues in discrete and targeted ways. A White library leader in Northern California, Participant 14 said, "We've taken major steps to reduce punitive policies in the library, especially connected to fines and fees. It's been much easier to have conversations around these big topics, like anti-racism and equity, through the lens of something that we're very familiar with, and we actually have data on." Financial penalties, she said, are a straightforward entry point into understanding disproportionate impacts by race and socioeconomic status. Participant 14 elaborated:

> Sometimes the conversation is so abstract that there's no specificity to it, and it's difficult to translate it into practice. If we work the other way around, think of things we can control, and then how those things impact people, that seems to have been a better strategy, a better path forward for us.

Shifting focus from abstract to practical, in this case, to data on who is impacted by punitive late fees, was an effective way to translate discussions around equity into meaningful practice. This is one strategy for integrating equity into the daily work of the library.

Another illustration of bringing a critical eye to student-centered processes was Participant 14's experience with launching a 24/7 chat service during the pandemic. In theory, online chat is simply an extension of how librarians help students at any reference desk. When it came time for implementation, however, Participant 14 discovered that delivery varied based on age. She reflected on a "generational tension" and digital divide that many libraries face, with some faculty and staff having worked in the field for decades or more. To address this in a culturally responsive manner, she used chat transcripts as a professional development tool. Participant 14 led training sessions to model and discuss,

What does a warm or inviting or a welcoming transaction look like online? And so, we found that trying to help people move out of really formal language, very structured language to get immersed in how online interactions and online dialogue takes place.

This led to some uncomfortable but fruitful conversations, with responses ranging from "This isn't professional," to "You're the professional and you get to use your language however you want." Finding ways to connect with and support students during the pandemic was an opportunity for library leaders to challenge and reinvent old ways of delivering services. Participant 14 acknowledged:

We have a lot of momentum and a lot of interest and a lot of attention on, and commitment to, really making a difference for students, specifically students who may not have felt welcome in our spaces before, for whatever reason. And the last few years have been challenging because our connection with students has become so abstract, our interactions are online more than they are in person. That's starting to change again, which is really motivating.

The last few years have been marked by truly unprecedented times, and this disruption has crystallized the work that culturally responsive library leaders are called to do. At a fundamental level, leaders must address the policies and practices that have historically underserved students of color.

Participant 13 also questioned the traditional idea of librarians putting a sign over a reference desk and hoping students come. A White library leader from a Northern CCC, Participant 13 was an early adopter of embedded librarianship, noting how being integrated into the syllabus and curriculum of a class enabled him to connect with students from day one. Passively waiting behind a reference desk, Participant 13 said, has a built-in assumption "that if students don't come, they really don't need the help, that there's nothing we can do about it." Although the library had initially focused its

embedded efforts on the English department due to Assembly Bill 705, the pandemic provided a unique opportunity to test out embedded librarianship across the curriculum.

At the beginning of the campus closure, librarians were "assigned" to each class: "All of our sections of every class from organic chemistry or calculus to transfer-level English, to everything, every Arabic class, got an embedded librarian." They reached out to individual instructors with an email, recorded an introductory video, and shared some relevant electronic resources and a link to the library homepage. During the second semester of the campus closure, the library added an online calendaring tool to make it easy and convenient for students to sign up for one-on-one research consultations. Participant 13 indicated that of the faculty outreach efforts, approximately 80% did not respond "but 20% did," and those evolved into good working relationships in unexpected disciplines. Rethinking not only what services to offer, but also how those services are delivered, resonates with the theme of continually interrogating library policy and practice.

To speak openly and critically evaluate library policies required ongoing efforts to improve internal communication. Participant 13 was mindful of creating psychological safety on his team, providing regular opportunities for each staff member to share in a circle and answer a question or share their perspectives. Although team members were given the option of skipping or passing on a prompt, Participant 13 reinforced the idea that "all perspectives and experiences matter in how we function as a group." He elaborated:

> It really starts with connecting to each other as staff and creating a safe space and being vulnerable. Talking about our own experiences and our own doubts about how we're interacting with other people, or whether our policies and procedures or anything else, are creating harm or are benefiting.

In this example, building a team that values mutual respect and collaboration empowered staff to examine library procedures and consider unintended consequences. Part of that process was also soliciting the perspectives of constituents who were affected by a particular program or initiative, said Participant 13, including students, faculty, staff, and community members: "And if those voices are absent from the work that you're doing, you have to seek them out. You have to get them."

As a Black library leader at a large, urban campus, Participant 12 believed interrogating processes would look like removing barriers for marginalized students of color. Her college coined the phrase "culture of care" to indicate any programs and policies that are diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related. This culture of care had the opposite effect, "creating a general blanket policy or procedure because everyone doesn't fit into that mold." A one-size-fits-all approach is particularly problematic when students are not starting from an even playing field. Participant 12 used a popular DEI graphic, captioned equality versus equity, to illustrate her point (see Figure 3).

On the "equality" side of the graphic, three people of varying heights each standing on a milk crate to watch a baseball game over a wooden fence. On the "equity" side, the milk crates are stacked differently, as the tallest person can see clearly over the fence without a crate, the middle person needs one crate to stand on, whereas the smallest needs two crates in order to see the baseball game. The college's "culture of care," Participant 12 argued, perpetuates the old understanding of equality by creating blanket policies, giving each person the same crate to stand on but ultimately not addressing their disparate lived experiences. Even the equity side of the graphic is "myopic" because it does not address the problem itself, the barrier of the wooden fence. Per Participant 12,

"We keep talking about equity, equity, equity. But in the end, liberation is simply, hey,

let's remove the barriers altogether."

Figure 3

Equality, Equity and Liberation
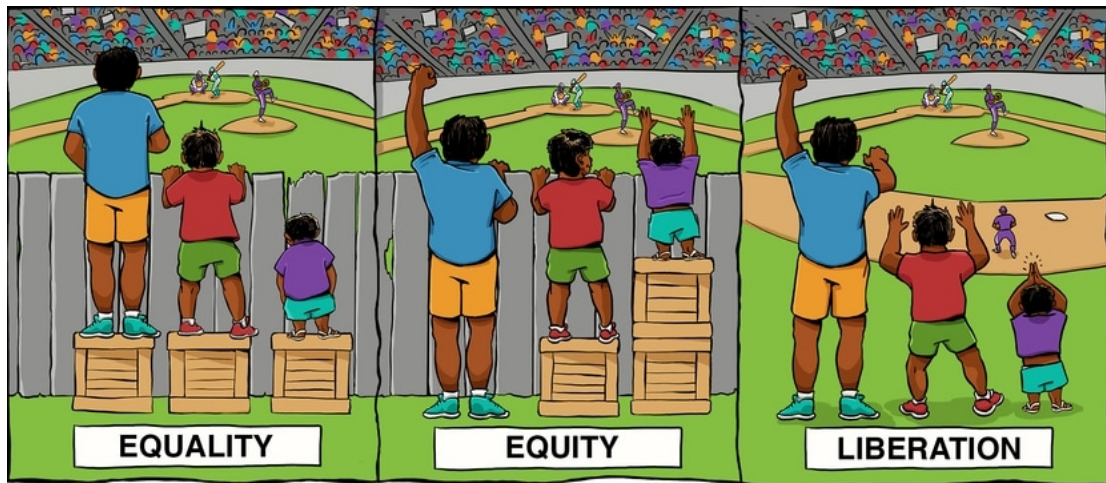
Note. Reprinted from Interaction Institute for Social Change, by Angus Maguire, 2016
(https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity). Creative Commons
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A Latina library leader in Southern California, Participant 06 recognized that

transforming existing library policy and practice sometimes requires compromises and

homework. She said: "That's what I tell my colleagues, we are the ones that need to

change. We are the ones that need to make that change, that cultural change. Not the

students." Participant 06 described setting up a shared librarian profile in the college's

learning management system before the pandemic. This "embedded" librarian profile had

the campus mascot, an animal, as its avatar. Part of the reasoning behind a shared profile

was so that students could receive help from a librarian regardless of who was working.

Yet during the pandemic, when more librarians were staffing the service, there was

resistance to using a shared avatar. To build consensus among the librarians, Participant 06 turned to research:

> So that was the system, we sat together and said, okay, we have the numbers, we have the data. We use the data, we rely a lot on the data. We have so many classes, and so many students participating in [the service]. I have been pulling research and data because we are librarians and we know what that is. If you tell me something, can you back that up? ... And not just looking into what we have built, but also through the whole college, getting the data from the college because once we connect that, we can say, "according to institutional research," maybe we can try to do that. Before we even have a discussion about something, I try to have all the backups.

In this particular example, ultimately, the library continued with its shared embedded librarian profile but changing the avatar from the mascot to the college. Participant 06 reflected,

> Little by little, we're building things and making different options for everybody. For our students, for our staff, and faculty, to make sure they can use the library. And we can be a little intrusive, so they know that we can assist them.

Her approach to making change was grounded in research, gathering data and best practices, and using it to illustrate the needs of students. Participant 06 also tried to empower staff in their own proposals and decision-making by saying, "I'm here to support you, tell me what you need. Or let's see what we can do to make that happen." She shared, "One of the clerks had this idea. Instead of charging students late fees, they could bring food to the food bank. That's awesome." Then Participant 06 encouraged her staff to take the initiative and coordinate with other departments to implement the change successfully.

As a White library leader at a large, urban community college in Southern California, Participant 11 used an unexpected opportunity to examine a longstanding library practice, that of security gates. Many academic and public libraries use some form

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of "inventory control," with RFID or embedded tags that get activated when items are removed from the premises without first being scanned or checked out. During the pandemic closure, the large glass entryway was retiled to provide acoustic dampening and the library's security gates were removed during construction. Rather than replace the security gates, Participant 11 led a cost/benefit analysis when her staff voiced their concerns about losing books:

> What is the worst-case scenario that could happen, and what could we gain? And try to compare that. Okay, we can lose some books, but we can buy them, or we can update them, right? We weed books all the time, right? We just update it. And now this person has a book that maybe they can use or give to somebody else. The books are not going in the trash. Let's do an inventory in a year. See what is gone.

> We don't have a huge crime rate in [city], we don't have a lot of theft in the library. Right now, we have this beautiful wide entrance into the library. To have those security gates that look like metal detectors, I would rather spend the money replacing a book that someone has decided they needed to have at home. Hey, you take a book, you keep it, you give it a new home, right? And we'll just buy a new one. I'd rather do that than have that visual "you're not welcome here," because our most valuable books are reference or the reserve textbooks anyway, and those are behind the desks.

A follow-up inventory assessment showed that the collection was primarily intact after a trial year without any real loss. Long held assumptions of books being stolen were proven not to be true; the library was able to retain its inventory while transforming its entryway into a welcoming, wide-open space that sends a message to students of, "You belong here."

As seen in previous dimensions, a culturally responsive leader can authentically honor their personal journey in their professional duty, and in this theme, articulate a philosophy of interrogating library policy and practice that was deeply rooted their lived experiences. Raising a non-binary teen who identifies as trans, Participant 11 found that

too often educators make assumptions of what's best for students, including policies on preferred names and pronouns. She noted:

> A huge part of education that we don't really work on is the level of security and competence students need in order to succeed. It's not always about how good you can take a test, but how confident you are that you can take it. And that's where the library can really help is to provide that sense of belonging and safety.

Participant 11 brought her lived experience not just to library leadership but to other roles on campus. As a faculty co-chair for Online Education, Participant 11 called to question some of the assumptions and practices of distance learning. For example, during the pandemic, many faculty required students to be on camera for Zoom class sessions. conceivably to ensure student attendance and the integrity of online learning. However, witnessing the stress it caused her teenager to be on camera for high school classes crystallized the complexities of the issue:

> Just seeing themselves on the camera, not being the person that they think they are, was so disturbing for them. That was a personal thing I had to share with the staff and the faculty, your students aren't always being naughty. Sometimes this is traumatic for them. Then it opened up other things like, students live in a one-bedroom house, their siblings are running around, or they don't have the space.... They can't have their camera on or maybe they don't have a camera. They don't have good enough WIFI that the camera won't work and their computer at the same time. Or they don't have the ability to buy a camera and they didn't know we had the services to give them one. Or they have a cheap laptop that doesn't have the right connector.

Acting as a leader in the library and online education while also being the parent of a trans teen enabled Participant 11 to raise these issues to faculty colleagues: "There are a lot of reasons why people can't have their cameras on. And if we're going to force that, then we're going to lose students. Is it making you comfortable? Then why? It's not about you." Within the library specifically, Participant 11 successfully advocated for Zoom-based library instruction sessions to utilize universal design practices by providing

students with options. Students could get participation points by choosing how they wanted to interact, including participating in a poll, typing questions and comments in the chat, unmuting to contribute, using emojis, and if they were willing and able, having their cameras on. According to Participant 11, "It needs to go beyond just the learning part because learning needs to incorporate safety and confidence." The notion of the library as a "third space" (Elmborg, 2011; Montgomery & Miller, 2011) helps cultivate a sense of community and belonging among participants.

Rounding out the theme of continually interrogating library policy and practice, Participant 01 shared her culturally responsive strategies in bringing change to her rural Central Valley community college. A White female library leader, Participant 01 has developed her ability to introduce a new idea and build consensus around it:

> I do my research on an idea, so that it's not coming out of left field, but there's a solid basis for making a policy change. I do the research, I pull it all together. I come up with a new policy draft. I vet it with my other full-time librarian.... Then we go to all the library staff, the adjunct librarians, and all our library technicians. They have viewpoints of looking at things, not only from their lived experience but from what they do working at the circulation desk, that I don't have. So, I give the opportunity for everybody to say, what about this? What about this?

Some of the culturally relevant ideas Participant 01 shared included weeding the library collection, updating library signage and policy language, and eliminating all library fees and fines. Although this process has gone slower than she would like, Participant 01 has the patience and willingness to see a project evolve through multiple iterations. The biggest barrier Participant 01 identified comes down to bandwidth. Simply keeping the library running can take every ounce of resourcefulness, particularly when library leaders must navigate their positionality as faculty prevents them from directly managing other faculty and staff. Participant 01 reflected on this challenge:

We have all this responsibility, and we have absolutely no authority whatsoever. We are supposed to manage systems and services, but we can't manage people because we're faculty.... It's this really difficult position how you bring about change, when you don't have the authority to say this is the change that we're going to do. I do it by suggestion. And we're so incredibly short-staffed that maintaining the status quo takes every bit of energy that I have, and then to say, "Okay, now we're going to do an equity audit, now we're going to look at culturally responsive practices of the library." I'm just trying to keep the Reference Desk covered.

In this excerpt, in addition to the time constraints many leaders face, Participant 01 observed a unique characteristic of library leaders: "We have all this responsibility, and we have absolutely no authority." Navigating limited positional power while working to make equity-minded organizational change is part of the challenge and nuance of culturally responsive library leadership.

Political Context Dimension

The fourth dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework is *political context,* an overarching variable that affects the professional, personal, and pedagogical domains. The political context addresses the leader's ability to "both recognize and negotiate the political terrain inextricably tied to everyday education policy and practices" (p. 596). How does a leader build consensus and alliances around culturally relevant policies and practices? As the fourth overlaying dimension in the CRL framework, Horsford et al. recognize the role of the political in the professional, personal, and pedagogical contexts of educational leadership. The first theme that emerged within the domain of the political context relates to when participants intentionally center students in telling the library's story. This theme had 13 sources with a frequency count of 67 occurrences.

Theme 6: Centering Students in Telling the Library's Story

Table 9

Centering Students in Telling the Library's Story

Theme	Sources	Frequency
Centering students in telling the library's story	13	67

During semi-structured interviews, participants were asked how they navigate political landscapes in their culturally responsive leadership practices. The theme of centering students in the data collection, assessment, and narrative of the library emerged 67 times in 13 interviews. Participants spoke about keeping students front and center to align library services, spaces, and collections with the equity-driven purpose of the CCCs.

As a Department Co-chair, Library Associate Professor, and Public Services Librarian, Participant 05 acknowledged that when she went back to school as a working professional and adult learner, that provided valuable insight into the lived experiences of students. Participant 05 explained,

> When I went back to school, ... I realized how difficult it is to negotiate the education space with all of your other life responsibilities. I became a lot more attuned to what our students are going through, and that we don't know what happens after they leave the campus and what happens before they get to campus.

Completing her own coursework, Participant 05 admitted having to ask for extensions in two of her doctoral classes and was grateful when her professors showed her grace: "They'd said, get it done, we want to see you succeed. And so that's really changed my emphasis here at work as well."

That reminder of what it is like to juggle school, professional, and personal commitments helped her better understand the student experience. As part of a faculty

learning community on equitable grading practices, Participant 05 reflected on discussions with colleagues on point systems, late work, and classroom expectations. She recalled being heartened at how many faculty members conceded, "Look, I'm not always on time grading. Why am I putting this expectation on the students that I'm not meeting myself?"

Participant 05 shared another example of centering students in culturally responsive teaching. Teaching a lesson on digital identity theft, she recalled the children's story of "Little Red Riding Hood" and how the wolf had dressed up as grandma and stolen her identity. One student raised his hand and said, "Professor, what are you talking about? I've never heard of Little Red Riding Hood." For Participant 05, "It was one of those things that suddenly it clicked and I'm like, I need to up my game because I did not even think about that." Something as innocuous as an example used in the class had the potential to alienate students rather than build connections. Instead, this was a wake-up call for Participant 05 about not making assumptions and realizing not all students would feel comfortable speaking up and asking questions. Most professors can take time during the semester to establish bonds and get to know who their students are, but in a learning environment as big and complex as a library, seeking to understand students' backgrounds takes on a higher level of intentionality.

For Participant 11, centering students is an equity issue, broadly "in the world, but on campus, and that feeling of what can I do?" A White library leader in Southern California, Participant 11 recalled these feelings early in the pandemic, and around the same time, professional development provided by the USC Race and Equity Center helped "solidify" and clarify her student-centered work:

> Because I feel like, as a community college, working in a community college, this should be our number one focus, right? And if we're not doing it, what's the point of us being here, we're only here for ourselves and not the students.... The biggest thing that came out of that [USC training] for me, was this one statement that changed the way I viewed everything. 'We should not expect students to be college ready, we need to remove that from our dialogue.' And we need to start saying how is the college ready for the students. And that just shifted my whole mindset on how things are, what we are doing, how we are doing it.

Institutions becoming "student ready" flips the traditional expectation that students must be "college ready." Culturally responsive practices challenge this deficit-minded approach, blaming students for their inequitable outcomes instead of examining the systemic factors contributing to their challenges (Cabrera, 2018). Participant 11 shared that when she became a department chair, the administration offered to remove her reference desk responsibilities, but she declined. Her rationale was: "If I don't know the students, how can I actually lead the building? If I don't talk to what the students need, and be there watching them and where their struggles are, how can I be an effective leader?" Being "student ready," at its core, is being present with students, seeing them as whole human beings, and meeting them where they are.

For Participant 06, a Latina library leader and self-identified Dreamer, centering students is what being culturally responsive is all about: implementing an equity audit of library materials, creating research guides to highlight books in Spanish or Tagalog, and showing up to support student organizations at her Southern California campus. Participant 06 admitted to pushing colleagues to think outside their comfort zones, without saying "you have to do this," but rather, "Let's do this because we can always go back, we'll do this for students, our students expect this from us." She elaborated on this:

> As educators, I feel like we have a moral duty of social justice, of being responsive so everybody's heard, and everybody has access, access to information, and all the things that we do in the library, access to everything, that

everyone has the same privilege, so you don't come across so many hurdles and barriers.... These will be strategies to ensure that students are successful, they know that they are heard, and that they are welcome. Many get really scared about asking questions, especially from the librarian that can be stereotypical.

One example of pushing boundaries was setting up a designated space inside the library for LGBTQ students, for workshops, related materials, and displays. "It was a battle with some librarians there, and some people didn't feel comfortable," said Participant 06. "But this is not your space. Yeah, we work here. But this is the students' space. Technically everything is theirs." To persuade colleagues, Participant 06 shared a business-minded approach toward students: "It's almost like they're our customers. If I'm gonna sell that product to them, I want to make sure I attract every single area on the market for them." A marketing mindset in this case not only centers the student, but also ensures some level of customer satisfaction in their educational experience, which in turn supports the institutional mission of retaining students and helping them achieve their end goals.

At an urban Northern California campus, Participant 14 brings a comparable customer service perspective to her work. After adopting a sister college's policy of referring to students by their preferred name and using they/their pronouns in any kind of email or written communication, Participant 14 wanted to apply similar "customer service best practices" to face-to-face and online reference interactions. "If we have their name in front of us, a student's name, we should be calling people by their names, and telling them what our names are." Participant 14 elaborated:

> Those kinds of things are important. Making sure people see that you see them when they come in, you can acknowledge them by name, you ask about their family, or you ask about the project they were working on, or whatever the case is. In my mind, it's high-quality customer service that could be modeled anywhere, but in libraries, we're part of this unique ecosystem.

And in community colleges, where we work closely with our student services, colleagues, nurses, counselors, financial aid, whoever, so that we can make use of that. It's not just a library transaction, right? It's attending to needs that go beyond that. Referring someone to the food pantry, if you notice some signs that somebody's not getting enough to eat. I am lit up by the idea of improving service beyond the transactional part of our work.

Being recognized by name can be deeply humanizing and is one strategy to make students feel seen and validated. Moving beyond a library "transaction," Participant 14 remarked on the importance of seeing students as whole human beings. She said, "We are pretty good at remembering that students are working, they're caretakers, they're parents, and they have all these other things. But we often forget about the messy stuff that happens." Although library interactions tend to be "generally positive"—in that, "we're often in a position that we're supporting or helping or guiding towards a goal that they have"—Participant 14 said her own experience starting and stopping college provided valuable insight into the challenges students might face.

> When we talk about students, it's often about what we are doing, the institution, what we are doing in the library, that is creating barriers or whatever. And I feel like having that experience of driving up to school, and just freezing, becoming paralyzed in the parking lot, and then having to leave and try again, a year later, or whatever it was, I feel like that has given me a lot of perspective. I just don't jump to conclusions so often about what it is that's the barrier because it's complicated, and sometimes it's all of it.

Having "disruption in my own path," figuring out how to navigate college as an older student, gives Participant 14 a unique and valuable perspective on centering students:

> That's why, for me, one of the most important things is that people have an experience here of being seen and feeling like they're welcome back at any time. Especially in community colleges, there's a lot of students who are going to go in and out, and in and out, and in and out. And eventually, they may land here or at another college somewhere else, and we don't always know what happened to them. But if we can create experiences for people where they feel like they belong here, and that they can always come back, and that it's not a great risk for them to go in and out, like it would be if we were at a 4-year school where they're paying

thousands of dollars a semester.

Many students will "go in and out," as noted by Participant 14. Persistence, retention, and

completion continue to be at the forefront for the CCCs, and libraries play a critical role

in seeing students and welcoming them back. Centering students and creating positive

experiences that cultivate a sense of belonging, ground the work of culturally responsive

library leaders.

Theme 7: Collaborating and Conspiring With Strategic Partners

Table 10

Collaborating and Conspiring with Strategic Partners

Theme	Sources	Frequency
Collaborating and conspiring with strategic partners	14	69

During semi-structured interviews, participants were asked how they navigate the

political context of their work as to their culturally responsive library leaders. As the

fourth dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) culturally responsive leadership framework,

the political context is an overarching one that intersects with the professional, personal,

and pedagogical dimensions of educational leadership. The second theme to emerge from

the data within the political context is the development of strategic partnerships across

the institution toward greater equity-minded work. This theme, "collaborating and

conspiring with strategic partners," had 14 sources and 69 frequency count, tying for

second place with the theme, "continually interrogate library policy and practice."

Presented here are excerpts and highlights from participant interviews that exemplify this

final theme.

The experience of Participant 14 on her large, urban college's Behavioral

Intervention Team is an example of unexpected intersectionality. A cross-functional,

interdisciplinary group including an administrator, a nurse, a counselor, and a campus

police officer was tasked with troubleshooting various issues. "We're working with

students in crisis, so that kind of work feels very, very meaningful. That's been a real

education, a new way I serve on campus." Partnering and problem-solving with allies

outside the library has helped provide unique insights into the student experience.

Participant 14 brings her own lived experience to her partnerships:

> That experience of having disruption in my own path, and then my experience
> with recovery, and figuring out how to navigate that ... I feel like that's given me
> a little bit more empathy for students who are just not doing well, students who
> disappear mid-semester. It's not always about what the instructor was doing, it's
> not always about what happened in the library. In fact, it may often be something
> we can't control.

Prioritizing the needs and well-being of students as part of this team has brought

Participant 14 back to the beginning of her own journey: "when I was 19, I was getting

sober." She described the interruption in her own education as the single most important

experience enabling her to connect with students and understand how hard they work to

meet their goals.

Like many participants in this study, the assigned responsibilities of Participant 07

encompass several positions, including Learning Resources, Academic Support, Online

Services, and Acting Instruction Librarian. As a White library leader at a large, urban

campus in Southern California, Participant 07 is well-positioned to engage with various

departments across campus. Participant 07 reported an immense sense of pride in what

her college offers its students: weekly farmers markets; a food pantry; free professional

clothing; affinity groups; spaces for different groups such as veterans, LGTBQ, and foster

youth; lactation rooms and resources for parents; mental health counseling; and more.

She noted that these resources help students "bring their best self to their college

experience," to be the best student they can be. Coordinating the efforts of several

departments and actively involved on numerous committees, Participant 07 uses her role

to connect and build relationships:

> When you see a new program that starts on campus, we reach out to them, and we
> say, hey, we've got these resources for you. Then they become your friend, right?
> And then you know them, and the more people that know you and hear you and
> understand you, the easier it is to build consensus, the easier it is to get them to
> understand what you're doing and why you're doing it. And the easier it is for you
> to respond to their needs.

Participant 07 encourages her direct reports to do the same, "just showing up and being

present at these things outside is super impactful." This work is time-consuming but

invaluable in the political context. As Participant 07 stated, the more people you relate to,

"the easier it is to build consensus, the easier it is to get them to understand what you're

doing and why you're doing it. And the easier it is for you to respond to their needs."

Uncovering the needs of each constituent group is also an important part of

collaborating. For example, staff at the recently opened Pride Center wanted to have their

own library of LGBTQ materials, so Participant 07's colleagues collaborated on curating

resources and establishing the center's lending processes. Similarly, Participant 07 met

with students at the foster youth center to find out: "What they are interested in? What are

they excited about? What do they feel they need? What do they know, and not know,

about library resources?" Per Participant 07, this is particularly true in reaching and

supporting traditionally marginalized groups, "because those tend to be the students that

we see the least." Showing up and finding ways to say "yes" to new partnerships is

mutually beneficial.

As a library leader in Northern California, Participant 13 took an analogous approach to developing partnerships, because "being visible and saying 'yes' has always been a strategy for me." Although this strategy may not work for everyone, Participant 13 acknowledged that he, an approachable White man with a K12 teaching background, was able to get a seat at some proverbial tables simply by showing up:

> I am somebody who, in the old face-to-face days, I would walk around a lot and pop in on people and say hello to people, and make sure that they knew me, I would figure out where people ate lunch, I would sit on any committee I could reasonably find a way to sit on. And sometimes, even if it wasn't reasonable, I would just be there. And I would show up and make sure that people saw me, I would say something, I would offer a perspective about whatever that committee was involved in that included library support.

Even being generally well-received, Participant 13 recommended to "start with your friends" when building a new initiative. He reflected on trying, and failing, to get a co-requisite library course established with a transfer-level English course. There was a contingent of "very enthusiastic faculty," and the rest "adamantly opposed." Participant 13 said:

> So, I worked with the faculty that were enthusiastic, and we built something together. And we didn't win over the whole faculty. And we tried something that didn't wind up being successful. But we built some respect among the other people who didn't agree with what we were doing. They saw that we were coming from the right place in terms of our intentions and that made a difference in my relationships with those faculty later on.

He spoke to first conspiring with supportive colleagues to develop something new before taking it on more extensive "dog and pony shows" with other constituents. With each iteration and each initiative, Participant 13 would seek out broad representation, including students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members: "If those voices are absent from the work that you're doing, you have to seek them out. You have to get them." In this way, Participant 13 built coalitions from the ground up. One example

was establishing a learning commons space, to promote "an integration between library

support services and other academic supports." For the learning commons, it took years

for the initial vision to get traction: "everything takes time and having the willingness to

be in for that long game." The "long game," as Participant 13 noted, can sometimes span

an entire career.

Indeed, Participant 13 took collaboration to a statewide level. He served on a

coordinated, system-wide initiative to advocate for, and successfully implement, an LSP

at 110 participating community college libraries across the state. Building support for a

massive statewide effort required deliberate and thoughtful coalition building from the

start, gathering diverse representation from small, mid, and large colleges with differing

student populations and staffing levels. For Participant 13, the years spent on this

initiative were ultimately about equity:

> You look at the disparity in funding with the colleges, between colleges that have
> the highest spending on resources versus the lowest. It's really stunning. The
> disparity of funding and so the quality of resources and tools that students have
> available to them really depends on where they are getting their community
> college experience. And if that's not an equity issue, I don't know what is.

Like negotiating consortia database contracts but on a much larger scale, the LSP project

harnessed the political power of the CCCs to advocate for six million dollars in state

funding and implement a statewide library platform. The "long game" for this project

took well over 5 years, but the result is a system that levels the playing field for students

regardless of the location, size, and resources of the college they attend. In retrospect, as

he neared retirement, Participant 13 reflected on the culturally responsive work of the

CCCs:

> It's a fundamental obligation that I hope we all feel in public education. From
> preschool on, we interact with students and with each other in our educational

communities in really pivotal ways. And we're in a position to create positive change. It's really kind of woven into the fabric of what we do.

For some participants, collaborating with allies around campus and across the system provides an opportunity to validate and fuel continued equity efforts. Participant 01, a library leader at a small, Central Valley college, said she has been "really blessed to be involved in partnering with and working with like-minded people" serving on Academic Senate and the Student Success and Equity Committee, acting as an advisor to diverse student groups like Umoja and participating in professional development groups. Connecting with "like-minded" colleagues is affirming but "insular:" "The same folks show up, so I've developed strong relationships with them. And the reason why is because we're like-minded. So how do we get those with other people on campus?"

At many community colleges, this issue is compounded by most classes being taught by part-time faculty. As Participant 01 noted:

> I used to be an adjunct, you go from one job to the next, you can't hang around and really be involved on your own dime. I get it. We've got to find some equitable ways for adjunct faculty to participate because we need their voice.

Furthermore, at her institution, Participant 01 said that a "revolving door" of administrators at all levels has led to a sense of fatigue:

> How do you build an equitable culture and climate when you're constantly starting from scratch? ... It's hard to move the ball forward, even within our own little group of people in the library. The turnover, just when you feel like you are starting to get some headway, and then we have to start over.

To combat this fatigue, Participant 01 finds rejuvenation in professional development on topics such as racial literacy, courageous conversations, and equity audits. She is comfortable acknowledging her own White privilege and engaging in critical dialogue while remaining committed to learning and owning her mistakes along

the way. One challenge that remains, according to Participant 01, is taking time to sit with people who espouse racist ideas and "peel the proverbial onion," digging under the layers to find common ground. She understands that changing minds has to come from a place of shared humanity, while at the same time feeling a desperate need to move forward.

> I get a great idea. And I want it to happen tomorrow, and unfortunately, it takes time to peel those layers off. I say "unfortunately," because I'm very aware that people of color are being killed because of White people and their inability to see what has to be done. It has to be changed. I'm aware of that, and that's why I want to move it faster. And in my goal to move faster, I can become strident, and telling people how they're wrong isn't going to make it happen any faster.

This excerpt, also coded under theme four of facilitating conscious conversations, resonates here with the theme of finding and collaborating with allies. She said, "So what I do instead is I participate in conversations like this, where we're co-conspirators, and it gives me hope that things can change for the better."

For Participant 12, a Black library leader at a large, urban campus, seeking co-conspirators across campus is both a culturally responsive and a political strategy: "On the institutional level, I wanted to be on committees, and be a part of different groups who are working towards creating true and genuine changes for our students." Per Participant 12, genuine change would look like equitable access to resources and corresponding success rates for students traditionally marginalized by higher education. Like Participant 01, Participant 12 had difficulty moving the needle forward within the library and sought equity-minded peers in shared governance: "Outside of the department, there's a lot of folks who are really, really committed to change." Admittedly, "not everyone's on board," but Participant 12 said she is more likely to find strategic allies outside of her department.

But lately, all of the folks who have joined committees and joined these different work groups, we all pretty much have the same ideology in terms of we want to connect, we want to make change, and we're trying to figure out how to get it done and successfully do it.

At first, becoming involved in external committees was intimidating, "I had no clue what these people were talking about. Everything was going over my head, but I just kept going to stuff, kept meeting people." Continually showing up eventually led to understanding and making connections. Participant 12 encourages students, faculty, and staff. "Don't be afraid to go to something, even if you have no clue what's going on. Just go, just participate, because you never know when they will click." Lastly, Participant 12 observed that even when having critical dialogue in her committee work:

> Even when there's a disagreement. People are giving their opinions back and forth. We're like, okay, I see it this way, or you see it that way. And then we have all these meetings, and we break them down. But because we're not afraid to dialogue, because we're not afraid to speak to one another, and express our perspective, our truth. I think barriers are broken down more frequently outside of the department, rather than inside.

For this study participant, a level of vulnerability and speaking truth came from external, strategic alliances based on the values of culturally responsive leadership.

Rounding out the political context, Participant 02, a White library leader at a medium-sized community college in Northern California, said she has equity-minded colleagues at her college, "I look for partners in leading for equity, and social justice and anti-racism, because I can't do it by myself." Collaborating and conspiring with allies across campus strengthens the efficacy and impact of her leadership. As stated by Participant 02:

> The faculty and staff at my college are incredibly focused on equity and justice. And that makes a really big difference and we're able to pull along the people who aren't as ready for making those changes and just through demonstrating

again and again that this is, this is the way forward, here are the real impacts we're having on our students' lives, on the lives of our colleagues.

Finding common ground with culturally responsive peers is essential: "looking for those partners, those accomplices," said Participant 02, "not just allies, but accomplices, people who really want to make that change." Navigating the political context is inherent in this theme. As a member of a learning community on student equity, Participant 02 was able to better understand the landscape at this institution:

> I'm learning about the politics from all of the different parts of the college, because this is something that crosses all classification boundaries, and we are all equals in that room together. And in our Canvas modules, no one's job is higher up in the hierarchy, we're all learning together. And that has helped me a great deal with meeting folks outside the library and getting to be myself instead of my title.

The idea of "getting to be myself instead of my title" also resonates with engaging in vulnerable, conscious conversations.

The nature of library work is inherently access driven, and thereby intersectional and equity-minded. As seen in the seven themes that emerged across 14 hours of ethnographic interviews, the data shows how CCC library leaders are culturally responsive in their leadership strategies. The strategies span the four dimensions of the CRL framework by Horsford et al. (2011). Indeed, library leaders exist at a critical intersection of professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and political context, and can leverage their positionality toward more equitable, culturally responsive organizations.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Chapter V summarizes the study, the key findings, and the conclusions based on the data collected and analyzed in Chapter IV. Chapter V provides implications for action based on the research findings and recommendations for future research. The findings, conclusions, and implications for actions presented in this chapter are based on the analysis of the data collected and the review of the literature conducted in Chapter III related to culturally responsive leadership and libraries. The chapter ends with the researcher's reflections and remarks. It is worth noting that this study is part of an extensive thematic study on culturally responsive leadership in the CCCs. The other research studies focused on senior-level leaders of color, Latina leaders, mid-level student services leaders, EOPS leaders, and financial aid leaders.

The purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study was to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organizations. The four dimensions of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework served as the theoretical foundation for this study: professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and political context. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher explored the professional, personal, pedagogical, and political contexts in which participants lead equity-minded, student-centered libraries in the CCC system. The study was guided by the following research question: *How do community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies?*

The target population for this study included all 116 library leaders in the CCCs. Based on the target population, the sample population was narrowed to 14 library leaders

that met at least three out of five predetermined criteria: a master's degree in LIS or related field; 7-10 years of experience in higher education; 3-5 years of experience as a library leader in the CCCs; a published, peer-reviewed author; and/or workshop facilitator on topics related to the research question.

Ethnographic semi-structured interviews allowed for meaningful, information-rich responses describing the participants' lived experiences, attitudes, and beliefs around culturally responsive leadership. Interviews, approximately 60 minutes in length, were conducted via Zoom between May-October 2022. Transcripts were recorded using Otter software and verified by the researcher and participants. The transcripts were then coded by the researcher using NVivo software into the four dimensions of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework: professional duty, personal journey, pedagogical approach, and political context.

Major Findings

The researcher made the following findings based on the data collection, coding, frequency counts, and analysis of emergent themes utilized by CCC library leaders based on the semi-structured interviews conducted, as well as the review of the literature. The major findings are organized by the four dimensions of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL theoretical framework.

Professional Duty Dimension

The first dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework focuses on the idea that one's professional duty informs their culturally responsive practices. The first research sub-question asked: How does one's sense of *professional duty* influence CCC library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies? Presented

subsequently are two themes that emerged from the data with respect to the dimension of professional duty.

Major Finding 1: Library Leaders' Sense of Professional Duty is Driven by Routinely Amplifying Access to Advocate for Students

All 14 library leaders interviewed strongly identified with being a librarian, not just as a job, but as a profession and calling. Totaling 50 frequency counts across 100% of participants, participants commented on their sense of professional duty to advocate for students, which totaled 50 examples in the data. One of the many examples that highlights the importance of advocating for students can be seen in the response of Participant 11, who said,

> So that's where I feel the library fits now: we provide for the cracks that other people can't see, because we're the first line. It's not the counselors, it's not admission, it's the library. When a student doesn't know where else to go or what else to do, they come to the library.

As such, Participant 11 felt a sense of professional duty to make libraries accessible to all students, especially those that are unlikely users of the library. The overwhelming sentiment of all participants was central to the idea that they had a duty and responsibility to advocate for students and their access to education.

Major Finding 2: Library Leaders are Culturally Responsive When Decolonizing Collections With Culturally Relevant Materials

Eleven participants spoke of leading efforts at their institutions to diversify library materials and withdraw outdated titles. Although maintaining collections is a routine part of professional duties, these library leaders articulated a renewed sense of urgency to ensure students could see themselves represented on the shelves and in their access to learning materials. For example, Participant 02 was in the process of changing her

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library's collection development policy to be "explicit about what it is that we collect and what we don't, and evaluating materials that are by, for, and about minoritized communities." With a frequency count of 15, participants shared some burgeoning efforts to conduct regular equity audits—removing offensive titles, intentionally selecting authors of color, and addressing the ways in which library collections historically centered Whiteness.

Personal Journey Dimension

The second dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework is the personal journey, considering the ways in which lived experiences impact leadership. Research sub-question 2 asked: "How does one's *personal journey* influence California Community College library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies?" Two themes emerged within this dimension exploring how leaders are affected by their own personal journeys and core beliefs.

Major Finding 3: Library Leaders Honor Their Personal Journeys When Bringing Their Whole Selves to the Table

This theme appeared 70 times in the data, the highest frequency count of any other theme, with all 14 participants reflecting on how they integrate their lived experiences into their daily work. For Participant 12, a core memory was Black high school teacher saying, "Look, we're not allowed to teach certain stuff, but if you want to know, this is what you do. You go to the library, you look at these books." Certainly, this was a pivotal moment of being seen and empowered to learn, which in retrospect planted a seed of librarianship: "Everything I do, personal and professional, stems from who I am and how I grew up, and how I finally had to learn how to love myself and love

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Blackness." Being grounded in her own history informs her advocacy and actions. Every participant shared profound examples from their own histories that impact and ground how they "show up" as culturally responsive leaders today.

Major Finding 4: Equity-Minded Library Leaders Create and Hold Space for Diverse Lived Experiences

The second theme that emerged from the personal journey domain was a willingness to engage in, and hold space for, critical conversations. This was referenced by all 14 participants with a frequency count of 66 references. As Participant 10 stated, "Their story is not your story." In his philosophical approach, the real work of equity is to connect on a deeply human level with colleagues and those we serve: "When we can come as who we are, and let them be who they are, and find out our similarities and our differences in the act of conversation, social justice happens." This finding speaks to the culturally responsive work of library leaders being truly present with those we serve, to "sit with" difficult emotions and conflicting perspectives, and create brave and vulnerable spaces for critical conversations.

Pedagogical Approach Dimension

The third dimension of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework is the pedagogical approach*,* one that engages leaders in the work of establishing a culturally affirming and supportive educational environment. Sub-question 3 asked: How does one's *pedagogical approach* influence California Community College library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies? This dimension speaks to the library leader's ability to continually learn and lead in ways that center the

achievement of diverse students. One theme emerged in the domain of the pedagogical approach.

Major Finding 5: Culturally Responsive Leaders Continually Interrogate Library Policy and Practice

This theme had 14 sources with a frequency count of 69 occurrences, indicative of a commitment to lifelong learning. Library leaders approached policy and procedure the same way they might tackle students' research questions, with a rigorous curiosity and an open mind. Participant 13 challenged the traditional idea of waiting behind a reference desk for students to show up: "As a philosophy and as a strategy, maybe even as part of a pedagogy, the notion of embedded librarianship really provides the best possible opportunity for equity in terms of the academic support that we provide students." Tied as the second most frequently referenced theme, participants were passionate about their efforts to provide a student-first, equity-minded learning environment, including removing fines and fees, encouraging dialogue rather than silence, partnering with food pantries, and referring to students with gender-neutral pronouns. In this finding, there is no "sacred cow" or stone unturned.

Political Context Dimension

The fourth dimension of the framework for CRL is what Horsford et al. (2011) calls the *political context*, an overarching variable that impacts the professional, personal, and pedagogical domains. Research sub-question 4 asked, how do *political contexts* influence California Community College library leaders' ability to be culturally responsive in their leadership strategies? The political context addresses the leader's ability to "both recognize and negotiate the political terrain inextricably tied to everyday

education policy and practices" (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 596). Two findings emerged from the data.

Major Finding 6: Library Leaders are Culturally Responsive When They Center Students in Telling the Library's Story

This theme had 13 sources with a frequency count of 67 in participant interviews. Seeing students as whole, complex human beings is also seeking to better understand their lived experiences. As Participant 14 stated,

> Making sure people see that you see them when they come in, you can acknowledge them by name, you ask about their family, or you ask about the project they were working on, or whatever the case is.... It's not just a library transaction.

Further, culturally responsive library leaders "create experiences for people where they feel like they belong here, and that they can always come back." Keeping students front and center helps align library services, spaces, and collections with the CCCs imperative of eliminating achievement gaps for students of all backgrounds.

Major Finding 7: Equity-Minded Library Leaders Collaborate and Conspire With Strategic Partners to Make Change

This theme had 14 sources and a frequency count of 69, tying for second place with the theme of continually interrogating library policy and practice. Collaborating and conspiring speaks to the inherently political nature of any educational landscape. Building alliances and unlikely partnerships, finding common ground, this work is time-consuming but invaluable in the political context, according to Participant 07:

> The more people you are connected with, the easier it is to build consensus, the easier it is to get them to understand what you're doing and why you're doing it. And the easier it is for you to respond to their needs.

Participants also spoke to seeking like-minded co-conspirators for renewal, validation, and moving the work forward.

Unexpected Findings

In addition to the seven major findings detailed previously, a few unexpected findings emerged from the data in small but significant frequency counts. Of the 14 participants, only one felt "very prepared" by their educational training for DEI work, with the overwhelming majority identifying as "not prepared," or "partially prepared." Five of the 14 participants, approximately 35%, mentioned navigating the library's unique positionality as a department between academic and student affairs. Four of the 14 participants noted having responsibility without positional authority in supervising the work of faculty colleagues. The top two dimensions from Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework represented in the data were personal journey and political context, with 136 frequency counts combined.

Conclusions

This ethnographic study sought to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organizations. Fourteen library leaders from across the CCCs were interviewed, and the data collected from these interviews resulted in seven major findings. Based on the findings, organized by the four dimensions in Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework, the researcher drew the following seven conclusions that offer more insight into the findings of the study.

Conclusion 1: In Order to Better Advocate for Students, Leaders Must Align Library Services with Initiatives That Focus on Closing Achievement Gaps for Students of Color

One research sub-question explored how library leaders' sense of professional duty informed their culturally responsive leadership practices. During the interviews, a majority of participants spoke to "showing up," being visible, representing on committees, identifying resources, building relationships, and saying "yes" all contributed to their advocacy of increasing student access. Showing up became even more critical and creative in all its modalities during the pandemic: providing Chromebooks, boosting WIFI, and shifting services online while staying connected in meaningful ways. Given the CCC guiding principle of pairing high expectations with high support, integrating library services into other wraparound academic support services offers timely and regular student contact while raising the visibility of the library. Based on the finding that library leaders routinely amplify access, and access is an issue of equity at its core, it can be concluded that in order to better advocate for students, leaders must align librarian services with initiatives that focus on closing achievement gaps for students of color.

Conclusion 2: In Order to Address Matters of Representation in the Learning Environment, it can be Concluded That Library Materials Must Reflect the CCC's Diverse Student Demographics

A foundational responsibility of librarians is ensuring the freedom of access to information, including the careful curation and maintenance of resources in all formats, including books on the shelves, periodical subscriptions, and electronic resources. Eleven

out of 14 participants explicitly referred to the importance of removing outdated materials and intentionally updating library collections to include more diverse authors. The CCCCO (2020b) identified faculty and staff diversity as a key driver for student achievement and as a means of integrating culturally responsive pedagogy. Based on the finding that library leaders have a responsibility to ensure free access to diverse perspectives, in order to address matters of representation in the learning environment, it can be concluded that library materials must reflect the CCC's diverse student demographics.

Conclusion 3: In Order to Build a More Inclusive Campus Climate, Library Leaders Facilitate a Sense of Belonging and Support Student Integration

One interview question asked how their identities and experiences influenced their ability to be culturally responsive library leaders. Within the dimension of personal journey, the theme of honoring the impact of one's own lived experiences had the highest of all the frequency counts. All 14 participants shared deeply personal and profound stories indicative of bringing a whole and reflective sense of self to their work, like Participant 06:

> Now I feel comfortable enough that I can voice out and be that support, not just to the undocumented students, the Dreamers ... not just that specific population, but anybody that doesn't feel welcome, I want to be that support system for them and be able to voice out. Because I know what that can be like when they get scared. So, I make sure if we're gonna be there, that they know we want to be there for them, supporting and giving a voice to them.

Further, Participant 06 noted that being human, however messy and imperfect that may be, gives others permission to be their authentic selves. Cultural identity is powerful as students navigate their educational journeys. As "third spaces," libraries help cultivate a sense of belonging as community hubs (Montgomery & Miller, 2011). Based on the

finding that culturally responsive leaders honor the impact of lived experiences, in order to build a more inclusive campus climate, leaders facilitate a sense of belonging and support student integration in their libraries.

Conclusion 4: In Order to Protect Their Institutions Against Increased Calls for Censorship, Libraries Must Hold Space for Courageous Conversations

The second theme that emerged from the personal journey dimension is a willingness and ability to have vulnerable, critical conversations about topics that matter. According to the ALA's *Code of Ethics* (1939/2021):

> In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

This core value of librarianship is explicitly political: for democracy to function, there must be an informed citizenry. Similarly, with their longstanding policy of full and open access, the CCCs are designed around the radical idea that higher education should be available to everyone. Based on the finding that equity-minded library leaders create and hold space for diverse perspectives, in order to protect their institutions against increased calls for censorship, libraries must "hold space" for courageous conversations. In this role, library leaders preserve and elevate diverse perspectives and counter-narratives of people historically underserved by higher education.

Conclusion 5: In Order to Support Institutional Learning Outcomes, it can be Concluded That Librarians Help Foster a Passion for Rigorous Curiosity, Inquiry, and Critical Thinking

A CCC library, with its integrated, wraparound academic and social supports, in a free and open-access educational environment, is a vital intersection through which

students can find a sense of belonging while building their own community and connections. Based on the finding that culturally responsive library leaders continually interrogate library policy and practice in order to support institutional learning outcomes of information literacy, it can be concluded that librarians help foster a passion for rigorous curiosity, inquiry, and critical thinking. By "*shining a light,*" culturally responsive library leaders demystify misinformation by providing students with the tools they need to succeed in today's complex information landscape.

Conclusion 6: In Order to the Support the Most Vulnerable Students, Libraries Act as a Critical Bridge Between Academic and Student Services

Most participants spoke to "*showing up*" being visible at campus events, trainings, and initiatives; and saying "yes" to potential partnerships. Several acknowledged the benefits and drawbacks of the time-consuming, ever-multiplying, service commitments. This positions library leaders to build bridges and form connections, to better support the CCCs' diverse student populations. Heller and Cassady (2015) found that social and environmental factors are "most predictive for community college student performance outcomes" (p. 448). Certainly, the library exists within both the social and environmental factors. Based on the finding that library leaders are active participants across campus, in order to the support the most vulnerable students, libraries act as a critical bridge between academic and student services.

Conclusion 7: In Order to Bring Student Equity Efforts to the Forefront, Strategic Library Partnerships Align and Amplify Institutional Resources

The last theme in the political context dimension emerged from 14 sources and 69 frequency counts. Serving the "whole" student, library leaders must elevate their

collaboration and referral efforts by connecting with the college's various support

services, from food pantry to free clothing and weekly farmers' markets. According to

Participant 07, "just showing up and being present" is impactful in developing

relationships and alliances:

> We really work hard to try and hear what people need, respond to the need, so that
> we can reflect and we can, you can listen better when you've got all the voices at
> the table, because if you don't have the voices, you can't hear the voices.

Based on the finding of "collaborating and conspiring," in order to bring student equity

efforts to the forefront, strategic library partnerships help align and amplify institutional

resources.

Implications for Action

This ethnographic study sought to understand the factors that influence the

culturally responsive practices and strategies of library leaders in the CCCs. In-depth

interviews with 14 library leaders were transcribed, coded, and organized within the four

dimensions of Horsford et al.'s (2011) CRL framework: professional duty, personal

journey, pedagogical approach, and political context.

The findings and conclusions indicate that library leaders utilize various culturally

responsive strategies in leading for equity at their institutions. These strategies include

amplifying access, decolonizing collections, honoring the impact of personal journeys,

facilitating critical conversations, continually interrogating policy and practice, centering

students, and collaborating and conspiring with strategic allies. The following

implications for action are recommendations for library leaders, community college

administrators, and senior leadership working toward more culturally responsive

institutions.

Implication for Action 1: It is Recommended That to be Culturally Responsive, Library Leaders Partner with Students and Academic Advisors in Co-Creating and Supporting Students' Educational Plans by Meeting Early and Often with Students Throughout Their College Careers

Findings from this study indicated that in order to better advocate for student access and success, library leaders need to be more holistically integrated into the fabric of their institutional retention efforts. This recommendation suggests that a system-wide initiative such as Guided Pathways will better position the library along with academic advisors in co-creating educational plans. After the initial ed plan, students would meet on a regular basis with the librarian throughout their college career to provide personalized "just-in-time, and just-for-you" library services (Oakleaf, 2010, p. 7). It is further recommended that culturally responsive library staffing and resources are aligned with and embedded within degree pathways to strengthen student access and retention efforts. This concept of *intentional intersectionality* positions the library and its partners to support students with a holistic equity lens. It resonates with Crenshaw's (as cited in NMAAHC, 2017) metaphor of intersectionality as intersecting roads where the potential for multiple forces to crash together is compounded for vulnerable populations. By recognizing the interconnectedness of academic and student services within libraries, library leaders can amplify their impact in supporting student access and success.

Implication for Action 2: It is Recommended That Library Leaders Conduct a Regular and Collaborative Equity Audit of Library Collections Tied to Course/Program Proposals and Modifications at the Curriculum Level

Collection development is a core responsibility of most librarian positions. Also known as curating, the act of collection development includes selection, acquisition, circulation, promotion, preservation, and weeding. Unless otherwise limited in terms of shelving and square footage, academic libraries tend to accumulate material for long periods of time. Materials can easily become outdated, inaccurate, or worse; the content could be actively discriminatory or harmful to marginalized populations. A regular, collaborative, equity audit of library materials needs to be part of a routine practice, for example, shelf-reading sections assigned by subject expertise, or addressing related materials with each new or modified curriculum course proposal.

It is recommended that culturally responsive materials are evaluated by library and disciplinary standards, such as currency, multiple perspectives, diversity of authors, frequency counts of equity-related subject headings, alignment with external institutions and bibliographies, and best practices in the field. Collection guidelines should be clearly articulated and posted, including what will happen to materials that are withdrawn from the collection. It is further recommended that student reviews of the collection are routinely gathered and centered as part of an introductory writing course, highlighted on the library website, tagged in catalog records of materials, and showcased in thematic displays. This centers the student voice and prioritizes their lived experiences in the selection of library materials.

Implication for Action 3: It is Recommended That Library Leaders Create Intentional, Culturally Responsive Spaces for Curiosity and Connection

In order to build a campus climate conducive to the physical and psychological well-being of students, staff, and faculty, the library leaders facilitate an inclusive educational environment that fosters open inquiry and collaboration. Library leaders can create conversational "corners" with tea, healthy grab-and-go snacks, and comfortable and flexible seating options. Ideally, displaying representational artwork or library materials by diverse authors throughout the space will contribute to students' sense of belonging. Additionally, library leaders must get to know their students, their struggles, and their successes. To this end, it is recommended that library leaders serve at least one front desk shift per week in order to better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities of supporting diverse students. Observations and lessons learned should be regularly shared and reflected on with team members.

Holding space for the student experience while recognizing we may never know exactly what others are going through is certainly part of culturally responsive leadership. In fact, this aligns with the idea of cultural agility, specifically, "perspective taking," defined by Caliguiri (2021) as the ability to "imagine what another person is experience with some level of accuracy" (p. 115). Perspective taking, honoring the lived experiences of students as whole, messy, and complex, is indicative of what makes community college libraries truly unique. It is further recommended that library leaders integrate cultural agility with informal and formal opportunities for culture-sharing at all department meetings. Community builders, discussion prompts, and trainings to be

selected and facilitated on a rotational basis will strengthen the team's equity leadership capacity.

Implication for Action 4: It is Recommended That Campus Leadership Allocate Ongoing Resources to the Equity-Focused Professional Development of All Deans, Directors, and Department Chairs, Whose Institutional Positionality Empowers Them to Make a Difference Toward an Inclusive Campus Climate

Mid-level leaders, including library directors and deans, have the potential to influence numerous students, faculty members, and staff each day as they "manage up" to administration and "manage down," coordinating the work of team members and student assistants. Ongoing professional development for the middle management group of CCC leaders must be established and replicated, for example, a "train-the-trainer" model that can continue as more leaders receive and deliver training. Furthermore, equity-related service, committee work, event planning, professional development, and so on, should be written into position descriptions and evaluation processes across the institution. It is not enough to have diversity resolutions or DEI-related supplemental questions when equity-minded work is not specifically integrated into the job duties.

Furthermore, it is recommended that library leaders set and model standards for academic discourse, civic engagement, and intellectual freedom as founding principles for library collections and spaces. Librarians have a professional obligation to ensure free and open access to information and promote lifelong learning at all ages. It is further recommended that the library serve as a hub and center for academic discourse, partnering with the Offices of Equity and Student Life to host an ongoing series related to critical conversations, information literacy, and civic engagement.

Implication for Action 5: It is Recommended That Library Leaders Serve on Peer Accreditation Teams to Immerse Themselves in the Culture, Policy, and Practice of Other Academic Libraries, in Order to Bring New Ideas and Ways of Learning to Their own Institution

This will be augmented with informal networking opportunities with other librarians. It is recommended that library leaders embrace their roles as educators to integrate and model academic inquiry and information literacy in the form of student research interactions, embedded in the classroom, during professional development workshops, and on shared governance committees. Highlighting practical Google search tips, using a library database, finding a book on the shelf, even using newspapers to teach valuable lessons on media literacy—these are areas of expertise for librarians "to *shine*" that can go beyond an information literacy session. Lastly, based on the data from the interviews, it is recommended that library leaders partner with other student services to regularly identify, review, and streamline policies and procedures to increase access and remove barriers.

Implication for Action 6: It is Recommended That Library Leaders Actively Engage with Student Focus Groups to Make Recommendations Regarding Library Services, and That Student Feedback is Incorporated Into Annual Program Review and Resource Allocation

It is recommended that leaders partner with departments such as Work Experience and Service Learning to offer credit-based opportunities for students to become involved in the library's work. While non-credit internships and volunteering are valuable, more formal positions for students to participate in library focus groups or advisory boards

must be appropriately compensated with a stipend, hourly contract, and/or for college credit. Further, library leaders partner with Institutional Effectiveness to responsibly collect and disseminate disaggregated library analytics, such as access to learning materials, alongside other student success metrics like advising and financial aid.

Implication for Action 7: It is Recommended That Library Leaders Create Intentional Opportunities for Intersectionality to Bring Together Diverse Perspectives and Resources in Support of Serving the "Whole" Student

A library commons ("collaboratory") may include a blend of academic and student support services such as workshops and office hours with counseling, financial aid, EOPS, and more. It is further recommended that library leaders prioritize equity-based committees and partnerships, dedicating time and staffing to ensure intersectional work remains on the forefront. Additionally, as part of an annual program review process, library team members would identify areas that can be de-prioritized or streamlined. Library leaders must not only "*show up*" but deliberately and strategically amplify their work at the intersection of academic and student services.

Recommendations for Further Research

This ethnographic study explored the lived experiences of 14 library leaders in the CCCs, to better understand their culturally responsive leadership practices and strategies. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following areas for further research:

1. This study was part of a larger thematic group studying culturally responsive leadership in CCC leaders. It is recommended that a meta-analysis be conducted to identify common culturally responsive leadership strategies

utilized among the six groups of CCC leaders. These research studies focused on senior-level leaders of color, Latina leaders, mid-level student services leaders, EOPS leaders, and financial aid leaders.

2. This study was conducted during an unprecedented global pandemic, amidst mandatory lockdowns and campus closures. With this data as a baseline for a longitudinal study, a follow-up study with CCC library leaders might reveal how their culturally responsive strategies persisted or evolved post-pandemic.

3. It is recommended that this study be replicated with library leaders across the three California higher ed sectors. An in-depth comparative analysis of library leaders from the CCC, CSU, and UC systems might provide insight into culturally responsive library leadership in the largest system of higher education in the country.

4. It is further recommended that this study be replicated in other higher education settings. This was a gap in the literature review as much of the published research on culturally responsive leadership looks at K12 pedagogy and school leadership.

5. One study might examine culturally responsive library leaders working to deliver services and academic support to "rising scholars," the growing number of CCC students who are currently incarcerated, or justice impacted.

6. Lastly, further research on culturally responsive leadership might focus on the lived experiences and counternarratives of librarians of color, highlighting their practices, emergent themes, and unique challenges of serving diverse students from a predominantly White profession and training.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

"I was made for the library, not the classroom.
The classroom was a jail of other people's interests.
The library was open, unending, free."
–Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015, p. 48)

Embarking on this doctoral journey, I wanted to listen to and lift up the lived experiences of library leaders. What I received was an incredible outpouring from participants generously sharing their struggles, strategies, and successes in building equity-minded libraries. For me, libraries have always been safe spaces, spaces for curiosity to be nurtured and grown, to find your own voice, to be seen and heard, and reflected back in the words of others. Spaces that provide a glimpse into the past, new ways to think and learn about the world around you, and to dream of the possibilities the future may bring. These spaces are hard-fought, and the behind-the-scenes work of librarians often goes unsung.

In some ways, CCC librarians are unlike any other CCC faculty in the sheer amount of access to students across days of the week and weeks of the academic year. Unlike traditional teaching faculty whose contact hours are concentrated but condensed during class time and online discussions, and counseling faculty who meet with every student but for short periods of time during registration and advising, librarians may interact with students every hour the library is open. The influence and impact librarians have in supporting student integration, retention, and achievement is powerfully transformational.

It has been an honor and a privilege to sit with fourteen library leaders from across the California Community Colleges and hear their stories. The themes that

emerged through the data collection, coding, and analysis were rich, complex, and profound. Yet one interview question in particular elicited powerful responses: "Looking back at your experiences…what advice would you give your younger self, regarding cultural responsiveness?" Three lessons learned continue to resonate with me as I complete this study, distilled (simply) here: show up, shine your light, and speak your truth.

Participants shared how they "show up," both in the literal sense – insisting on a seat at the table, actively participating in governance groups, representing the library at campus and community events – and also metaphorically, showing up authentically as one's own self, as an unabashed advocate for students, as an ally and co-conspirator with equity partners, and as someone who deserves to be there, taking up space.

"Shining your light" is an extension of showing up. Some participants shared their unexpected journey to becoming a leader and having to combat imposter syndrome or feelings of inadequacy, particularly in rooms where they might be the only woman or person of color. Many spoke to navigating the unique positionality of library leaders within the institution: existing in a space between academic affairs and student services, as a faculty member with administrative duties, and having responsibility – over colleagues, services, budgets, buildings, and so on – without real authority to make change. Shining also goes back to honoring the identities, lived experiences, and education that shaped us into the leaders we are today, and to sharing the valid and valuable insights and expertise of being a librarian.

Lastly, "speaking truth" echoes aspects of showing up and shining. Participants shared a willingness to have critical conversations, to listen carefully to and amplify the

voices of students, and to make difficult decisions with limited resources. Speaking truth is about leading with authenticity and vulnerability, owning one's mistakes and missteps, calling folks "in" when necessary, and demonstrating a commitment to lifelong learning. Speaking truth and holding the line is singularly imperative in today's politicized and polarized climate with libraries under attack for the diverse materials collected and populations served.

The library is a vital, intentional intersection within higher education, a bridge between academic and student services. At this intersection, library leaders can leverage their positionality toward more culturally responsive organizations: connecting at an individual and institutional level, building open and brave spaces, and acting as allies, advocates, and co-conspirators in moving equity work forward. Indeed, there has never been a more critical time for librarians to show up, shine, and speak truth.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

PROFESSIONAL DUTY

Equity is a focal point in the CCCs. Given this current climate, culturally responsive leadership is at the center of building equity-minded institutions and campus cultures. The first set of questions will look at your sense of professional duty in leading for equity and excellence.

1. In what ways do you feel a sense of professional duty or obligation to lead for equity, social justice, and anti-racism in your institution?

2. Are there strategies that you use to promote social justice and ensure student success? If so, can you share what some of those strategies are? (who developed these strategies, who is involved, when are they used?).

3. Part of leading in this space is building an equity minded culture, how do you and your team/institution accomplish this?

PERSONAL JOURNEY

As I shared earlier, Culturally Responsive Leadership takes into consideration the identities and experiences of team members, students, and communities that we serve, to create more inclusive environments. This set of questions focuses on your personal journey which includes your experiences and personal identities. I encourage you to share openly and I want to hear any stories you are comfortable sharing.

1. Please tell me about your personal identity (for example, race, ethnicity, language, gender, religion, etc.) I am interested in how those identities influence your view of the world and how you lead.

2. Considering your lived experiences, how have they influenced your leading equity efforts at your institution?

3. Have there been times when you felt like an insider, or an outsider, leading equity efforts at your institution? Please share an example. How has this impacted your leadership approach?

4. Can you live out your personal identities (can you bring your authentic self) in your workplace, or are there incongruencies? And if so, how do you mediate the differences in your personal and professional worlds?

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

Culturally responsive leaders work to build an inclusive environment that actively values the identities and lived experiences of all students and staff. This set of questions focuses on pedagogy, in other words, your approach to building inclusive environments.

1. As a leader, how do you develop a climate of cultural affirmation within your department and across the institution?

2. How do you build a team that has the capacity to serve ethnically and culturally diverse students?

3. In your effort to build an inclusive environment, inevitably challenges come up. What is your approach to working with these challenges?

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The last set of questions explores the political context. When leaders seek to be culturally responsive, one approach is to be mindful of the political contexts in which we lead. In the Community Colleges, teams are quite diverse and as such, varying degrees of points of views are often present. In fact, some political points of views can differ quite dramatically.

1. How do you build consensus and alliances around culturally relevant policies and practices?

2. As a leader, how do you develop meaningful and positive relationships with students, staff, faculty and community constituents so that you can be culturally responsive to your team?

   a. How do you deepen your understanding of your staff's perspectives?

3. Looking back at your experiences in leading within the political context, what advice would you give your younger self-regarding cultural responsiveness.

Appendix B

Interview Script

Participant #:_____ Date:_____

Introduction
Hello, my name is Melanie Aponte Chu and I am a doctoral candidate at University of Massachusetts Global. Thank you for participating in this interview. I understand how busy you are, and I appreciate you spending time with me today. You've been selected to participate in this study based on your wealth of knowledge and experience as a leader in the community college system.

First, I would like to review the Informed Consent Form that was provided to you when the interview was scheduled. I understand that you have already read and reviewed this form. I will provide an additional copy. Please let me know if you have any questions.

To review:
• Your name, responses, and opinions will be kept confidential.
• The interview will take approximately 1 hour.
• Research findings will be shared with you upon request.
• Do you have any questions before we begin?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the lived experiences of library leaders within California Community Colleges in order to gain insight into the culturally responsive leadership practices and strategies they use to develop engaging and inclusive environments. The study used the Culturally Relevant Leadership Framework.

Before we begin the interview, I want to inform you that this research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of UMass Global. This committee reviews and approves research that involves human beings. I would like to remind you that this interview will be recorded so I can make sure to transcribe your answers correctly. Again, this transcription will be sent to you upon request or so you can review it for accuracy. Please remember that your name will be anonymous. Additionally, all names will be removed from the transcript as well.

Once again, thank you for taking time to allow me to interview you. If you have any questions or need a break, please feel free to pause the interview. As previously agreed upon, we will end the interview at _____.

Conclusion
Thank you for your time today. I will send you a transcript of your responses so you can review it for accuracy.

Appendix C

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Certificate

Invitational Email to Participants

Dear (Name),

My name is Melanie Aponte Chu. I am a doctoral candidate at UMass Global University and am conducting my dissertation research on culturally responsive leadership. More specifically, my study seeks to explore how library leaders in the California Community Colleges utilize culturally responsive leadership practices. You have been identified as an equity-minded library leader and are in an ideal position to share your culturally responsive leadership approach to meet the needs of your diverse student population and campus community.

As California Community College leaders, we are called to focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and lead change efforts to address the persistent achievement and opportunity gaps of students from historically marginalized backgrounds. This study aims to illuminate how community college library leaders draw upon their lived experiences, cultural wealth of knowledge, and personal identities to lead their libraries in culturally responsive ways. The results of this study may reveal strategies that library leaders use to improve campus climate, create equity-minded hiring and retention practices, and promote culturally relevant and anti-racist pedagogical approaches to better serve students.

I am requesting your participation in my study. Participation would involve a 60-minute interview held virtually using Zoom at an agreed upon time that is convenient for you and possibly a virtual observation of you engaging in equity efforts within your institution.

Your participation in this study will be anonymous and the interview completely confidential. No names will be attributed to any notes or records from the interview and observation. All information will be identifier-redacted and all recorded interviews, observation documentation, and artifacts will be stored in a locked file drawer accessible only to the researcher. No employer, supervisor, agency, or other college will have access to the interview information. The dissertation chair for my study, Dr. Jeffrey Lee, may be contacted at jlee1@mail.umassglobal.edu.

Should you agree to participate, I will be contacting you to arrange a time and date that is convenient for you to conduct the interview and subsequent observation.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach me at mchu@mail.umassglobal.edu or by phone at (phone number). Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Melanie Aponte Chu
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E

UMass Global Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures,drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that mayhappen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what thebenefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worsethan being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing tobe involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without anyadverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree tobe in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteersin research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 orby writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Informed Consent Form

Information About: Culturally Responsive Library Leadership in the California Community Colleges

Responsible Investigator: Melanie Aponte Chu, EdD candidate

Purpose of Study: You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Melanie Aponte Chu, a doctoral student from UMass Global. The purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study is to identify and describe how community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies when leading their organization. The study used the Culturally Relevant Leadership Framework.

Why is this research being done? This study investigates the lived experiences of community college library leaders, specifically how they use culturally responsive practices to create inclusive, student-centered libraries. This study is guided by the following research question: How do community college library leaders utilize culturally responsive leadership strategies? This question is designed to explore the Culturally Relevant Leadership framework (Horsford et al., 2011) in the lived experiences of library leaders in the California Community Colleges, leading organizations that support and engage diverse students.

Who are potential participants? Potential participants include library leaders, also known as directors, deans, chairs, or lead librarians.

What is expected of the participants? For those who agree to be participants, they will decide to take part in the research study by signing the informed consent document. Participants will complete an interview with Melanie Aponte Chu, researcher. All interviews will audio recorded. A transcript of the interview will be sent to the participant for review and correction. The interview can be paused or discontinued at any time by the participant. Artifacts gathered by the researcher will be kept strictly confidential and in a locked location only accessible to the researcher.

How much time is required from the participant? The individual interviews will take approximately one hour. The interviews will be audio recorded and a transcript of the interview will be sent to the participant for review and anything that the participant feels is in error or should be omitted, will be addressed by the researcher.

The audio recordings will be kept in a secured electronic file, accessible to only the researcher for review of the conversation for validity of the responses. The electronic files and transcription will be destroyed no longer than five years after the research is

completed. The observations will take approximately one to two hours depending on the activity/setting being observed.

Where will the interviews and observations take place? In compliance with federal and state guidelines due to COVID 19, the interviews will take place online via Zoom at an agreed upon time. In addition, the observations will also occur online via the time recommended by the participant in either academic or non-academic setting.

What benefit can the participants consider? Participants will not be compensated for his/her contribution but will agree to participate on a voluntary basis. Participants may feel rewarded knowing that contribution to the field of inclusive higher education has been made.

How will the participants' confidentiality be protected? The researcher will keep all recorded interviews, observation documentation, and artifacts in a locked location only accessible to the researcher. Pseudo names will be used for all participants with the exception of the signed consent form which will be kept secure by the researcher and then destroyed at no longer than five years after the research study is completed.

What risks can the participant expect? There is minimal to no risk of physical, psychological, social, or financial risk to participate in this research.

By participating in this study, I agree to complete an interview with researcher Melanie Aponte Chu. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be scheduled at a location comfortable and agreeable to me. Completion of the interview will occur between Spring 2022.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with the research. I understand that the researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping my identifying documents in a locked drawer accessible only to the researcher.

b) Potential benefit of this study will include my contribution of experience to the literature on culturally responsive school leadership. The findings of the study will be available to me at the conclusion of the study. I will not be compensated for my participation. I willingly participate on a voluntary basis. If at any time I wish to discontinue my participation in the research, I can do so; however, I will need to contact Melanie Aponte Chu to alert her of my discontinued participation.

c) If I have any questions or concerns, I can contact Melanie Aponte Chu at mchu@mail.umassglobal.edu or (phone number),

If the study design or use of the data is changed, I will be informed, and my consent reobtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the

study or the informed consent process, I can contact the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I can also contact the dissertation chairperson, Dr. Jeffrey Lee at jlee1@mail.umassglobal.edu

CONSENT: I hereby give my permission to Melanie Aponte Chu, researcher, to use audio recorded material taken of me during the interview and/or observations. As with all research consent, I may withdraw permission at any time for audio recording to be used in this research study.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant'sBill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it, and I hereby consent to the procedures set forth.

_____   _____   _____

Printed Name of Participant   Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____   _____

Printed Name of Researcher   Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix G

UMass Global IRB Approval

IRB Application Approved: Melanie Aponte Chu

1 message

Institutional Review Board <my@umassglobal.edu>   Fri, May 20, 2022 at 4:34 PM
Reply-To: webmaster@umassglobal.edu
To: mchu@mail.umassglobal.edu
Cc: ddevore@umassglobal.edu, jlee1@umassglobal.edu, irb@umassglobal.edu

Dear Melanie Aponte Chu,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at IRB.umassglobal.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

IRB
Academic Affairs
UMass Global
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
irb@umassglobal.edu
www.umassglobal.edu

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at irb@umassglobal.edu.

Appendix H

Synthesis Matrix

Abbreviated Citation (matrix compiled in 2021-22)	Community colleges / higher ed	Value / impact libraries	Diversity in libraries	Ed equity theories	Diversity / equity in higher ed	Culturally relevant leadership	Qualitative research methods
Am Assoc. of Colleges & Universities (2022).	X						
American Library Association (ALA). (1939).		X					
American Library Association (ALA). (2022).		X					
Bailey, T. W., & Morest, V. S. (2006).	X						
Banks, J. A. (1993).				X			
Barnett, B., & Felten, P. (2016).					X		
Beach, J. M. (2010).	X						
Bell, D. A. (1980).				X			
Benitez, M. J. (2010).					X		
Blummer, B., & Kenton, J. M. (2017).		X					
Brooks, J. S. (2007).						X	
Brown, K., & Malenfant, K. J. (2016).		X					
Cabrera, N. L. (2018).					X		
CCCCO (2017).	X						
CCCCO (2020a).	X						

CCCCO (2020b).	X						
CCCCO (2021a).	X						
CCCCO (2021b).	X						
CCCCO (2022).	X						
Callan, P. M. (2009).	X						
Carlson, S. (2001).		X					
Cervantes, E. (2015).	X						
Chu, C. M. (1999).		X	X				
Cochran-Smith, M. (1995).					X		
Cochrane, L. S. (2002).		X					
Cooke, N. A. (2018).			X				
Cooke, N. A., & Sánchez, J. O. (2019).			X				
Cox, A. M., et. al (2019).		X					
Crawford, J., et. al (2004).		X					
Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000).							X
Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018).							X
Data USA. (2021).			X				
Delgado, R. (1983).				X	X		
Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017).				X			

Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. (2018).				X	X		
Douglass, J. A. (2010).	X						
Drury, R. L. (2003).	X						
Dunbar, A. W. (2005).			X				
Emmons, M., & Wilkinson, F. C. (2011).		X					
Espinal, I. (2001).			X				
Ettarh, F. (2018).			X				
Farkas, M. (2013).		X					
Fike, D. S., & Fike, R. (2008).	X						
Freeman, G. T. (2005).		X					
Freire, P. (1970).				X			
Galizio, L. (2019, April 18).	X						
Gallagher, S. (2019, September 19).	X						
Galvan, A. (2015).			X				
Gay, G. (1994).				X			
Gibson, A., et. al (2018).			X				
Gilson, C. B., et. al (2020).	X					X	
Goodall, D., & Pattern, D. (2011).		X					
Haddow, G. (2013).		X					

Haddow, G., & Joseph, J. (2010).		X					
Hall, T. D. (2012).			X	X			
Harris, C. I. (1992).				X			
Hathcock, A. (2015).			X				
Heller, M. L., & Cassady, J. C. (2015).	X	X					
Herther, N. K. (2018).		X					
Honma, T. (2005).			X	X			
Horsford, S. D., et. al (2011).						X	
Howard, T. C. (2019).					X		
Hurtado, S., et. al (1998).					X		
Johnson, L. (2006).						X	
Jones, D., & Grote, A. (2018).		X					
Khalifa, M. (2012).						X	
Khalifa, M. A., et. al (2016).						X	
Knoell, D. M. (1997).	X						
Koltai, L. (1993).	X						
Kramer, L. A., & Kramer, M. B. (1968).		X					
Kuh, G. D., & Gonyea, R. M. (2003).		X					
Kuh, G. D., & Gonyea, R. M. (2015).		X					

Reference							
Ladson-Billings, G. (1995).				X			
Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995).				X			
Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1990).						X	
Leung, S. (2019).			X				
Lindsey, R. B., et. al (2020).						X	
Lo, G. (2019).			X				
Lombard, M., et. al (2004).							X
Mallinckrodt, B., & Sedlacek, W. E. (2009).		X					
Mayhew, M. J., et. al (2006).					X		
McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010).							X
Mezick, E. M. (2007).		X					
Moran, R. F. (2000).				X	X		
Murray, A. (2015).		X					
Nevarez, C., et. al (2013).						X	
Northouse, P. G. (2010).						X	
Oakleaf, M. (2010).		X					
Oliveira, S. A. (2018).		X					
Oluo, I. (2019).				X			
Parnell, A. (2016).				X	X		

Patten, M. L., & Newhart, M. (2018).							X
Patton, M. Q. (2015).							X
Pawley, C. (2006).			X				
Pew Research Center. (2021, June 22).		X	X				
Pezalla, A. E., et. al (2012).							X
Potapchuk, M., et. al (2005).				X			
Public Policy Institute of California. (2015).	X						
Quaye, S. J., & Harper, S. R. (2007).					X	X	
Ramsden, B. J. (2018).		X					
Remembering Maya Angelou. (2014).		X					
Roberts, R. L. (2007).		X					
Robinson, P. A., et al (2013).	X				X		
Romero, A.J. (2017).					X		
Roselle, A. (2008).	X	X					
Santamaría, L. J., et. al (2015).					X	X	
Santamaría, L. J., & Santamaría, A. P. (2012).					X	X	
Santamaría, L. J., & Santamaría, A. P. (2016).					X	X	
Schlesselman-Tarango, G. (2016).			X				
Seabi, J., et. al (2009).	X						

Reference						
Simmons-Welburn, J., et. al (2008).		X				
Skrla, L., et. al (2004).				X	X	
Sleeter, C. E. (2012).					X	
Stewart, D. L. (2013).				X		
Smithsonian Institute. (n.d.).			X			
Solorzano, D., et. al (2000).			X	X		
Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001).			X	X		
Sullivan, R. M. (2010).		X				
Taylor, O., et. al (2010).				X		
Taylor, S., & Sobel, D. (2011).				X	X	
Tinto, V. (1975).	X			X		
Tinto, V. (1987).	X			X		
Topham, S. (2016).	X					
UC Berkeley. (2009).			X			
Virtue, A. (2019).	X	X				
Winter, C. G. (1964).	X					
Wolcott, H. F. (2010).						X
Yosso, T. J. (2005).				X	X	
Zhong, Y., & Alexander, J. (2007).		X				